



LITTLE PETER
THE SHIP BOY.

W.H.G. KINGSTON



THE HISTORY
OF
LITTLE PETER THE SHIP-BOY.

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CAPTAIN HAUSLAR CARRIED FROM THE ROCK.

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CHAPTER I.

PETER'S HOME AND FRIENDS.



“ARE you better, mother, to-day?” asked little Peter, as he went up to the bed on which Widow Gray lay, in a small chamber of their humble abode.

“I trust so, my boy,” she answered, in a doubtful tone, as she gazed fondly on the ruddy, broad, honest face of her only child, and put aside the mass of light hair which clustered curling over his brow, to

imprint on it a loving kiss. "I tried to get up to help Betsy when she came to tidy the house, but did not feel strong enough; and the doctor, who looked in soon after, said I had better stay quiet, and gave me some stuff which I trust may do me good. Betsy kindly stopped and put everything to-rights, but since she went I have felt lonely, and have been longing for you to come home."

Betsy was an old woman who lived nearly half a mile off, on the hill-side. She had known Mary Gray from her childhood, and came every day, without fee or reward, to assist her during the grievous illness from which she had long been suffering, while little Peter was away tending Farmer Ashton's sheep on the neighbouring downs.

Widow Gray's cottage stood towards the bottom on the sloping side of some lofty downs, which extended far away east and west, as well as a considerable distance southward towards the ocean, which was, as the crow flies, about ten miles off from the highest point above it. The hill formed one side of a valley, through which flowed a sparkling stream bordered by trees, with here and there scattered about the cottages of the hamlet of Springvale. Far away at the lower end rose amid the trees the slender spire of the little church. On the other side of the valley was

a further succession of open downs, crossed only by a single road a considerable distance off, so that a more secluded nook than Springvale could not be found for many a mile round.

The widow's cottage gave signs of decay, though it was evident that such attempts as required no expense had been made to keep it in repair. The holes in the roof had been stuffed full of furze and grass, kept down by heavy stones from being blown off by the wind; the broken panes in the windows were replaced by pieces of board or stout paper; and rough stakes filled up the spaces where the once neat palings had given way. Each foot of the small garden was cultivated, though clearly by an unscientific hand. Indeed, little Peter was the sole labourer, he devoting to it every moment he could spare from attendance on his sick parent after his return from his daily work, patching up many a rent in the cottage produced by weather and time.

Peter, indeed, did his very utmost to support his mother, by working early and late—not a moment was he idle; but do all he could he often was unable to gain enough to find food for her and for himself, though he was content with a dry crust and a draught from the bright spring which bubbled out of

the hill-side. The little cottage and garden was her own, left to her by her father, Simon Field, a hard-working man, who by temperate habits and industry had been enabled to purchase the ground and to build the cottage, though that, to be sure, was put up chiefly by his own hands. Simon Field, however, was more than an industrious man, he was a pious and enlightened Christian, and had brought up his children in the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. Mary, the youngest daughter, had gone to service, and had obtained a situation in the house of a lately married couple, of whom Simon had heard a good report, and felt confident that she would be treated with Christian kindness and consideration. One by one, Simon Field's wife and children were taken from him, and when Mary's kind mistress also died, she returned home to live with her father.

Just at that time Jack Gray, a fine, open-hearted and open-handed sailor, came to the hamlet, where his widowed mother lived. He made love to Mary Field, and won her heart, unhappily before she had ascertained his principles and character. To her simple mind, ignorant as she was of the world, he appeared all that she could desire. As he attended church with her, and behaved with propriety and apparent devotion, she sup-

posed him to be religious, and before he went away to rejoin his ship she promised, with her father's permission, to be his wife on his return.

Soon afterwards Simon Field, who had for some time been ailing, followed his wife and children to the grave, and Mary became the owner of the little cottage with its acre of ground. Though she had many suitors, she remained faithful to Jack Gray. Nearly three years had passed away before he returned. She then fulfilled her promise and married him, but before long she could not help confessing to herself that he had changed for the worse. Instead of being the quiet, well-behaved young seaman he had before appeared, he was noisy and boisterous, and more than once got into a broil at the public-house in the hamlet; still, as he was kind and affectionate to her, her love in no way diminished. He laughingly replied to her when she entreated him to be more circumspect in his conduct :

“ Why, old girl, I am quiet as a lamb compared to what I am afloat. They call me on board ‘roaring Jack Gray,’ and roar I can, I tell you, when I am doing duty as boatswain's mate.”

Jack Gray, who would not look for employment on shore, in spite of Mary's entreaties

that he would do so, determined when the greater part of his pay and his prize-money had been expended, again to go afloat.

Mary's home was certainly quieter when he was gone, though she would willingly have detained him. She had, however, enough to occupy her in looking after her new-born child, little Peter, who, when his father next came home from sea, had grown into a fine, sturdy boy.

The navy was at this time reduced, and "roaring Jack Gray," who soon grew tired of a life on shore, had to seek for employment in the merchant service. All Mary could hear of him was that he had gone away on a long voyage to foreign parts. The news at length came that the ship he had sailed in had been lost, and that all the crew had perished. For some time she lived on in hopes that her husband had escaped, and might some day return. Not without difficulty was she at length persuaded by her friends that she was really a widow.

While her husband was in the navy, she had received a portion of his pay—now she had to depend entirely on her own exertions for the support of herself and little Peter. On her child she devoted all her care and attention, and brought him up faithfully in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and

when he did wrong corrected him carefully and wisely. She had taught him especially to love the Book of books, and at an early age little Peter could read fluently and well. When she fell ill he repaid her loving care with the most tender devotion.

“Mother, shall I read to you?” he asked, as he took his accustomed seat by her side.

“Do, my boy,” she answered, taking a small strongly-bound Bible, carefully secured in a leathern case, from under her pillow. “I have been trying to do so, but my eyes are dim, and I could not see the print; but, praised be God, I can remember parts, and I have been repeating to myself our merciful Father’s blessed promises to us His children.”

“That’s true, mother,” said Peter, opening the book at the third chapter of St John’s Gospel.

“‘God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved;’” and Peter read on to the end of the chapter.

“Shall I read more, mother?” he asked.

“Read, read,” she whispered, “for it will soon be too dark.”

At length Peter could see to read no more,

and closing the book, he put it carefully back into the case.

“Keep it, my child,” said his mother, solemnly; “cherish it, and never part with it while you live. Put it in your breast-pocket now; I would like to see it there, next to your heart, where I pray its truths may find a firm lodgment. It was a gift to me from my dear young mistress on her deathbed. She had intended it for her own child, and she charged me, should I ever have one, to instruct him from his earliest days in its glorious truths. Peter, I have done so, not trusting in my own strength and knowledge, but with earnest prayer that those truths may be imparted to you. And oh, Peter, while you take care of the book, make it a lamp to your feet and a light to your path. Read it with prayer, seeking the aid of God’s Holy Spirit to instruct you in its truths, and you will not read in vain.”

Mrs. Gray spoke with solemn earnestness, and Peter promised to follow her counsels, uttering a petition to Heaven at the same time that he might have grace to do so.

“Peter,” she continued, “I am soon to be taken from you, but I die in peace, for I know that God has heard my prayers, and will watch over you and guard you from evil, and support and comfort you, but do you yourself

seek comfort and guidance from Him, and you will not be left destitute."

She was silent for some minutes.

"Peter," she said, drawing him closer to her and speaking in a low voice, "I grieve to part from you, but I grieve more when I think of your poor father. God knows how earnestly I have prayed for him, and I cannot even now believe that he was taken out of the world still ignorant of God's love and free pardon to all who believe in His Son. I have often dreamed that he has come to me, looking just as he was when he went away, only paler and more careworn; he seemed to ask me to fetch him from some far-off land whence he could not escape. It may have been but an empty dream working on my fancy, and yet I cannot believe that it was so. Oh, what joy it would bring to my heart could I know that he loved the Saviour, and that he is yet alive and the door of mercy still open."

Peter's heart was too full of sorrow to let him speak. The waning light prevented him from clearly distinguishing his mother's countenance, but there seemed to be a strange brightness in her eye as she spoke with failing voice, and the hopes her dying words expressed were imparted to him.

"Bless you, my boy, bless you!" she murmured, in a scarcely audible voice.

His hand was in hers, she pressed it as she spoke, and tried to draw him nearer to her heart. He leant over her, and put his other arm under her head ; gradually he felt her hand relax its loving grasp, but many minutes passed before the fear came over him that her spirit had fled.

“Mother, mother!” he earnestly cried ; “speak to me.”

There was no answer. He had never been with death before, but he knew too well that she was indeed gone from him.

He sat there long with his face on the bedclothes, too much overwhelmed with grief to move. He longed to go and call Betsy, yet he could not bear to leave his mother’s body. Soon, however, a step was heard, and the old woman herself entered the room.

There was still light sufficient to enable her to see at a glance what had occurred. She stepped up, and closing her dead friend’s eyes, gently led little Peter into the outer room. She had brought a couple of candles with her, purposing to spend the night at the cottage if she was required, and lighting them, she left one with Peter, bidding him sit down while she took up the other.

“When you feel sleepy, my boy, go to bed ; the rest will do you good. I’ll stay

with your mother ; it will be nothing strange to me. I have had so many I loved taken from me, that I am accustomed to watch by the bodies of those who, I hope, went where I am sure she is gone. It's a blessed thing to know that she is happy in heaven ; let that comfort you, Peter, and don't take on so, boy."

Saying this, she returned to Mrs. Gray's room.

Peter's head sunk on the table—he wept sorely and long. As he bent down, he felt the book his mother had just given him, which he had placed in his bosom. He took it out and began to read it. Promise after promise beamed forth from its sacred pages on his young soul, lighted by God's Holy Spirit, for he took God at His word, and was comforted. After awhile he crept up the ladder to his little attic room, as Betsy had desired him, and was soon fast asleep.

He awoke at daybreak, not forgetting his duty to Farmer Ashton's sheep, and when he got down-stairs he found his kind old friend waiting for him with a crust of bread and a bit of cheese.

"You must not disappoint the farmer," she said ; "I'll do all that's wanted for your poor mother."

"I hadn't forgot the sheep," said Peter ;

“but, Betsy, may I see her? I could not go without!”

Betsy led him into the room. His mother's face looked so calm and peaceable, just like an angel, he thought; he almost fancied she was asleep.

“Now go,” said Betsy, after he had gazed at her for some moments. “The red streaks are already in the sky.”

Peter lingered for a moment, then recollecting his duty, hurried down the hill to Mr. Ashton's farm.

His mother's funeral took place a few days afterwards, he and Betsy and two or three other friends being the mourners.

He found to his dismay that he could not return to live at the cottage. He had had thoughts of taking up his abode there all by himself. During Mrs. Gray's illness debts had accumulated, and creditors claimed the little property, which had to be sold, and when his mother's funeral expenses had been paid, four or five pounds only remained as the young orphan's inheritance.

Betsy took him to her cottage, where he shared the bed of one of her grandchildren, and he continued as before to tend Farmer Ashton's sheep.

Often, as the motherless boy sat watching his flock on the sunny downs, he cast his eyes

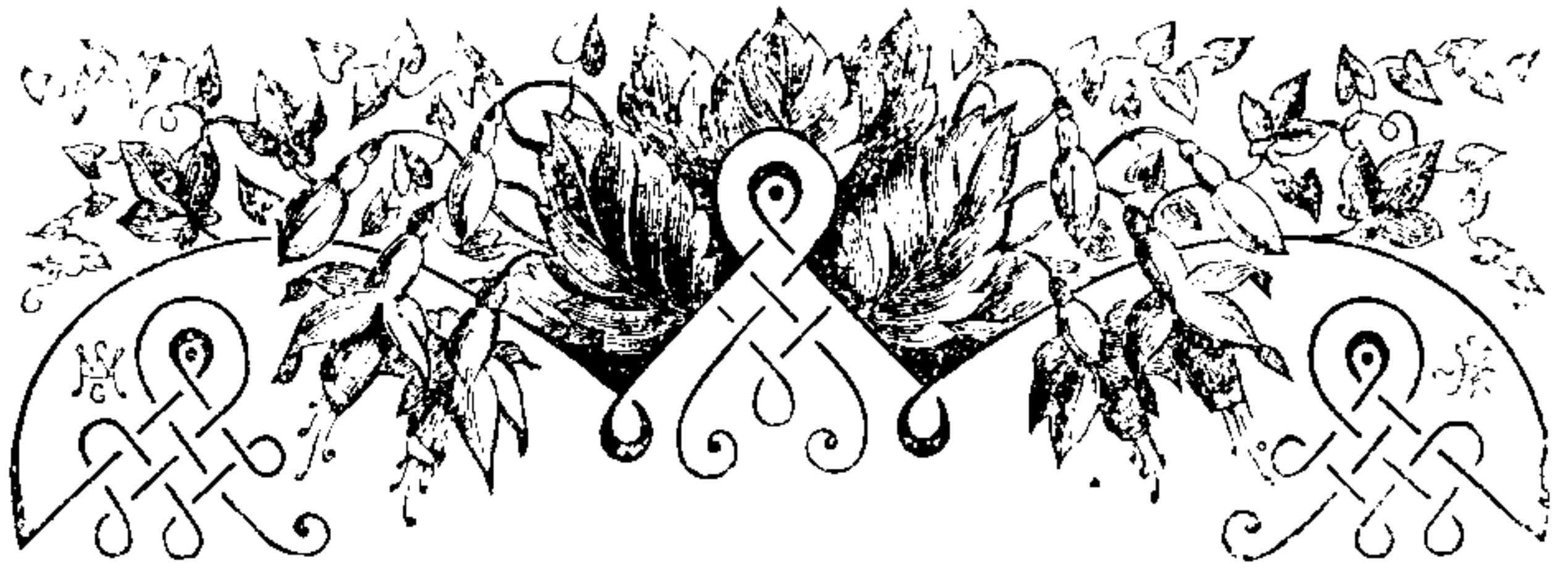
towards the distant blue sea, and wondered what strange lands might be beyond. The thought of his father would then come across his mind. His imagination pictured him still living in those far away unknown regions. What if he could find him and tell him the glorious gospel news! He should be obeying his mother's most earnest wishes. He knew but little of geography; he had read of Palestine and Egypt, and other distant countries, but he had a very indefinite idea as to where they were situated, and as to the rest of the globe, it was, although not quite a blank, yet filled up by his own vivid imagination with strange lands, in which wonders of all sorts existed.

Day after day, as he gazed in the same direction, his desire to visit those wondrous regions increased, till he resolved to go on board a ship, and sail forth over the ocean to visit them.

Little Peter was in earnest in all things; his faith was earnest, his speech was earnest; truthfulness beamed from his eyes, he was in earnest in whatever he was about. Farmer Ashton discovered this by the way he looked after his sheep. Peter knew every one of them, and reported the least sign of disease—not a sore foot escaped his vigilant eye. The farmer offered to increase his wages

if he would stop, when Peter told him he wished to leave his service and go to sea, and was very angry when, though thanking him kindly, he said that he had made up his mind on the matter and meant to go. The farmer warned him that he would have to endure all sorts of dangers and disasters, and was a fool for his pains. Betsy also had used every argument to dissuade him from his purpose, but nothing could change it. When she found that all she could say had no effect, she gave him the money she had charge of, and assisted him in getting ready some clothes that he might set forth in a respectable manner to the neighbouring port to which the carrier, who passed through the hamlet once a week, undertook to convey him.





CHAPTER II.

A START IN LIFE.



THE carrier's cart stopped on a height above the little town of Oldport. Peter gazed with wonder and admiration on the wide ocean spread out before him, now bright and shining under a blue sky and light summer breeze. It surpassed his utmost expectations — a beautiful highway it seemed to those distant regions he had longed to visit, and he fancied that there could be no impediment in his course till he could reach them.

As soon as the carrier had deposited him and his bundle at the inn close to the harbour, he set out to walk along the quay,

and looked at the vessels whose tall masts rose in a long row above it. As he had never before seen a vessel, he was unable to judge of their size ; to his eyes they seemed mighty ships, capable of battling with the wildest waves which could ever rage across the bosom of the deep. They were in reality colliers or other small coasters, as no vessels of any size could enter the harbour. He was ready to go on board the first which would receive him.

Peter had never had any playmates or young companions. He had lived alone with his mother, who had taught him to read, and trained him in the love and fear of God. The Bible was almost the only book he knew. He was, in consequence, grave beyond his years. The few neighbours used to laugh at him as "an odd, old-fashioned little fellow," as, indeed, he was ; but everybody respected and trusted him.

He walked up and down the quay once or twice before he could make up his mind what to do. At last he determined to address a sailor-looking man who was leaning against a stout post round which two or three hawsers from the neighbouring vessels were secured.

"Is one of those ships there yours?" asked Peter, in a hesitating tone.

“Why do you want to know, my lad?” inquired the seaman.

“Because I want to go and be a sailor in one of them,” said Peter.

“Then take my advice, and give up wanting,” said the seaman. “Better by half remain on shore, and tend sheep and cattle, as I have a notion you have been doing. None of the vessels are mine; I am only mate in the *John and Mary*, yonder,” pointing to a schooner which lay alongside the quay. “We have got a boy, and I would not have a hand in taking any youngster away from home unless he knew more about what he would have to go through than I suspect you do. Now go back, lad, whence you came,” continued the mate, folding his arms and puffing away at the pipe he had in his mouth.

One or two other sailors laughed at him or roughly turned aside without deigning to answer.

At last he reached a two-masted vessel, in reality a brig, somewhat larger than the rest, but her deck was black with coal-dust, and everything about her had a dark, grimy look. A rough, black-bearded, strongly-built man, better dressed than some of those he had spoken to, was stepping on shore by the plank which formed a communication between

the vessel and the quay. Peter guessed rightly that he was the captain. Beginning to feel that his hope of going to sea was less likely to be accomplished than he had expected, he determined, with a feeling somewhat akin to desperation, to address him, though the expression of his countenance was far from encouraging.

“Do you want a boy on board your ship, sir?” he said, touching his hat, as his mother had taught him to do when addressing his betters.

“What, run away from home?” asked the man, stopping, and looking down upon him.

“I have no home, sir,” answered Peter.

“What, no father and mother?”

“No, sir,” said Peter. “Mother is dead, and father, they say, is dead, too.”

“Then you will do for me. As it happens, I do want a boy. Here, Jim,” he said, turning round, and addressing a sailor as rough-looking as he was himself, but much dirtier, who appeared at the companion-hatch; “here’s a lad for you. You had better keep an eye on him, as maybe he will change his mind, and run off again. Go aboard, boy,” he added, turning to Peter, “Jim will look after you, and show you what you have got to do.”

The captain went into the town, and old

Jim, who proved to be the mate, took charge of Peter.

Old Jim asked him several questions. The answers which Peter gave appeared to satisfy him.

Peter inquired the captain's name.

"Captain Hawkes; and our brig is the *Polly*," answered Jim. "You won't find a finer craft between this and 'No man's land,' if you know where that is."

Peter saw that she was the largest vessel in the harbour, and so readily believed what the mate said.

The old man asked him if he was hungry, and Peter acknowledging that such was the case, he took him down into the cabin, and after giving him some bread and ham, offered him a tumbler of rum and water. Peter, who had never tasted spirits, said he would rather not take the rum, whereon old Jim laughed at him and drank it himself.

"We shall all get under weigh with the evening tide if the wind holds fair, for it's off the land you see, and will take us out of the harbour," he observed. "You had better lie down till then on the locker and get some sleep, for may be you will find your first night at sea rather strange to you."

"Where is the vessel going to?" asked Peter, who fully expected to be told that

it was to the Holy Land, or India, or some of the few other distant countries of which he had heard.

“We are bound to Newcastle first to take in coals, and it’s more than I can tell you where we shall go after that.”

“Is Newcastle in a far-off country?” asked Peter.

“It’s a good bit from here,” said old Jim; “and if you want to be a sailor, you will have a fair chance of learning before the voyage is out, and so take my advice and don’t trouble yourself about the matter. Do as I tell you, just lie down—you would have slept all the sounder if you had taken the grog, though.”

Old Jim was afraid, perhaps, that Peter would get talking to the rest of the crew, and hear something about Captain Hawkes which might induce him to go on shore again, the last boy having run from the ship, though shoeless and penniless, rather than endure the treatment he had received.

Peter, not suspecting old Jim’s motive, sat down on the locker in the cabin. Not feeling disposed to sleep he took up his Bible, as he had been accustomed to do when tending sheep on the Springvale downs, and began to read. Old Jim gazed at him with open eyes. To see a ship’s-boy reading a book,

and that book the Bible, as he guessed it to be, was entirely out of his experience. "He must be a curious chap," he said to himself; "I don't know that he will suit us, after all; but then he will soon get all that knocked out of him I have a notion."

Peter, who never failed to pray that God's Holy Spirit would enlighten his mind when he read the Bible, was so completely absorbed in perusing the sacred page, that he did not observe old Jim's glances, nor hear his muttered words. At length, feeling his eyes heavy, he closed the book and replaced it in his bosom. Then he lay down, as he had been advised, on the locker, and was soon fast asleep. The fatigue he had gone through, and the heat of the cabin, made him sleep soundly, and he did not hear the noise of the men's feet on deck as the warps were cast off, or their "yeo! yeo! yeos!" as they hoisted the sails.

The captain, who came into the cabin to deposit his papers and several articles he had brought on board, did not rouse him up, and the *Polly* gliding smoothly out of the harbour, was some distance from the land before he awoke.

The sun, a bright ball of fire setting the heavens all ablaze, was sinking into the ocean astern when Peter made his way on deck;

the coast with its sandy bays, rocky cliffs, and lofty headlands, their western sides tinged with a ruddy glow appearing on the left, while the calm ocean of an almost purple tint with a golden hue cast across it, stretched away to the right.

Peter felt its beauty and majestic tranquillity far more than he could have found words to express. The dark sails, the dirty deck, the begrimed countenances and slovenly dress of the crew contrasted with the purity of the sky and ocean all around.

The captain and old Jim his mate were standing aft, speaking to each other. They were apparently talking about him, for they cast their glances towards where he stood looking round and uncertain what to do.

He was aroused by the captain shouting to him : " You are one of the sleeping order, youngster, I see ; you have had a long snooze ; you will have to keep your eyes open in future. What is your name ? "

" Peter Gray, sir," answered the boy.

" Peter is enough for us," said the captain. " Now go forward ; your berth is in the fore-peak, you will understand ; and Jim and the cook will find you work enough. You don't expect to be idle ? "

" No, sir," said Peter, " I came to learn to be a sailor. "

“They will teach you, and fast enough, too, with a rope’s-end if you don’t look sharp about you,” said the captain, with a laugh, “and soon make you dip your hands in the tar-bucket and swash-tub. Have you got any working duds with you?”

“I don’t know what duds mean, sir,” answered Peter.

“Not know what duds mean, and you a sailor’s son, as you tell me? Clothes, to be sure,” cried the captain, laughing again.

“I have got another suit for Sundays, when I go to church, sir,” answered Peter.

The captain and old Jim laughed in chorus at the reply.

“We have no Sundays aboard here, and don’t carry church steeples at our mast-heads,” cried the former, again laughing at his own wit as he considered it.

He and his mate were in a merry mood, for they had just had one successful voyage, and as the weather was fine they hoped to make another. The captain himself had taken a parting-glass or two with his friends on shore. So little Peter found him and his mate in their best humour.

“Do you hear, boy?” cried the captain, seeing that Peter did not move; “go forward and see what they have got for you to do.”

Peter did not know where forward was, but observing the direction in which the captain was looking, supposed it to be at the other end of the ship.

“I left my bundle down-stairs there, sir ; shall I take it with me ?” he asked.

Again the captain and mate laughed. Of course they felt their superiority to the poor ignorant little shepherd-boy.

“We have no down-stairs here, no more than we have Sundays ; but your bundle is not to stop in my cabin, I should think. Get it and take it with you.”

Peter, having got his bundle from below, went forward, accompanied by old Jim.

“Now, lads,” said the latter to the four unkempt beings who formed the crew of the *Polly*, “here is a boy for you, and just see he don’t go overboard or run away ; the skipper is tired of getting lads to do your work.”

The men looked at little Peter and grinned. “Now, boy,” said old Jim, turning to Peter, “come below and I’ll show you your berth. You must keep your eyes wide open, or may be you will not see it.”

The mate descended through a small hatch-way by an upright ladder into a dark place, where Peter, as he was bid, followed him. He could hear the mate’s voice, but could

not distinguish him in the gloom, which at first appeared impenetrable.

“Come here,” cried the mate. “What, are you blind?”

Peter was stretching out his hands trying to grope his way. By degrees a glimmer of light which came down the hatchway enabled him to distinguish old Jim, and as his eyes became more accustomed to the gloom, he discovered that he was in a triangular-shaped place, with shelves on either side which formed the bunks or standing bed-places of the crew, the heel of the bowsprit making a division in the fore part. Some chests were on the floor, and thick coats, sou'-westers, with numerous other articles, were hung up against the bulk-heads, which formed the third side of the forepeak.

“That’s your berth,” said old Jim, pointing to the foremost sleeping-place in the bow of the vessel. “The boy who has gone has left his blankets, so you will have the use of them. And mind when you are called you turn out pretty quick; we cannot have laggards aboard the *Polly*.”

“Thank you, sir,” said Peter, depositing his bundle in the dark, close-smelling bunk. “I am accustomed to be afoot by daybreak, to look after Farmer Ashton’s sheep.”

“You will have something different from

sheep to look after; and night and day at sea are the same. All hands don't turn in and sleep till the sun is up, or the ship would be apt to lose her way."

A laugh at the mate's wit from some of the other men who had followed them into the forepeak, was heard out of the darkness. When the mate was gone, they gathered round Peter and began to amuse themselves at his expense. He, however, took their jeers quietly, not attempting to reply; indeed, as he did not clearly understand their meaning, the jokes generally fell harmless. Finding at length that they could not irritate him, they told him to go on deck to help Bill. Bill was the man who did duty as cook. Peter found him in the caboose; he was as black and grimy as a negro, with grease and coal dust.

"They told me you wanted me, Bill," said Peter.

"Yes," growled Bill, "clean out those pots and wash up the dishes and plates in that tub. Here is some hot water for you."

Peter performed the work to the cook's satisfaction. He gave him some bread and a piece of bacon for his supper, as he had eaten nothing since the afternoon.

Peter was standing watching the moon, whose full orb as it rose in the sky shed a

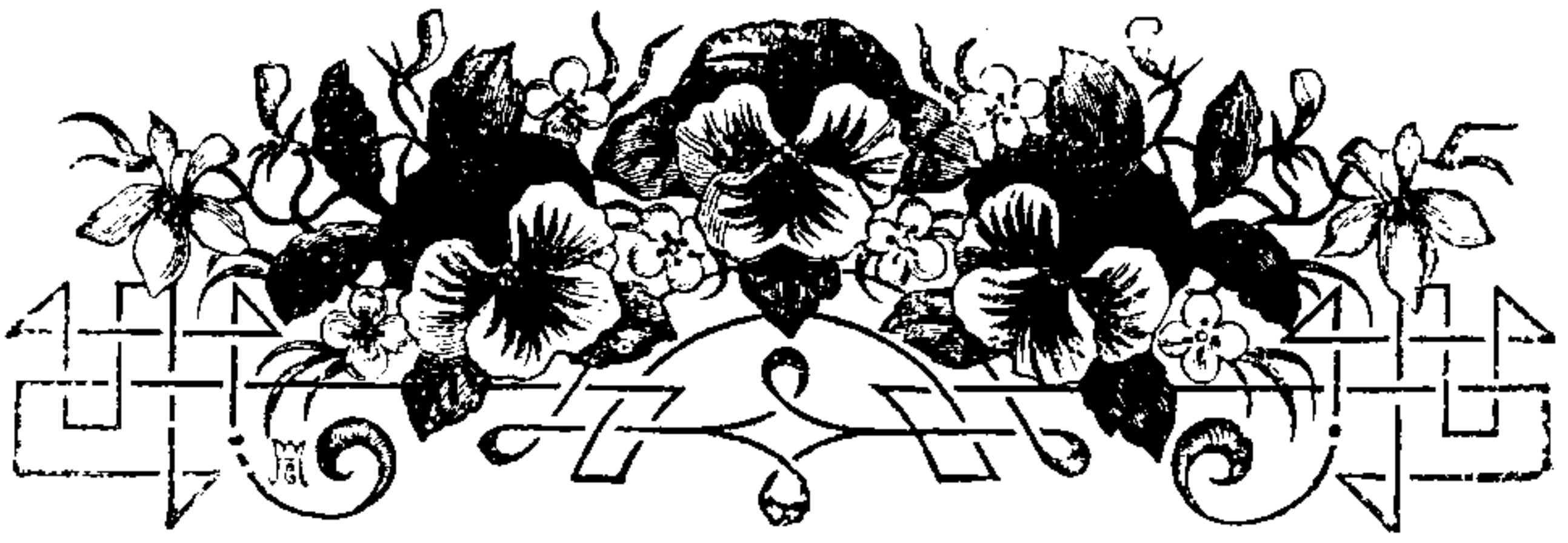


PETER IN THE CABOOSE.

silvery light over the ocean, a spectacle novel and beautiful to him, when old Jim, in a gruff voice, told him to go and turn in. Though he would infinitely have preferred remaining on deck, he did as he was bid.

He did not omit, before he took off his clothes, to kneel down and pray for protection for himself and all on board. No one saw the young boy in the attitude of prayer, or he would not have escaped interruption, but Peter knew that God saw him and heard him. Young and humble as he was, and unpromising as were the manners of those among whom he had been thrown, he felt no fear. His mind was at rest. He climbed into his berth and was soon asleep.





CHAPTER III.

PERILS AT SEA.



THE *Polly* had made good progress on her voyage, the North Foreland had been rounded, and with a fair breeze under all sail she was running to the north. There were numerous other colliers, brigs and schooners and vessels of all sizes, scattered far and wide over the sea, some close at hand, others mere specks, their loftier canvas just rising above the clearly-defined horizon.

Poor Peter had had a hard life of it, ordered about by every one on board, often receiving an undeserved cuff and kick, or finding the end of a rope laid sharply across his shoulders when he did not understand an order which

he had never before heard issued. His clothes and face and hands were now almost as dirty as those of his companions, although he did his best to keep them clean, but he had received a rope's-ending from the cook for taking fresh water for the purpose of washing himself, and he found that the salt water had little effect on his skin. But he did not complain. He had a source of comfort within him of which those around knew nothing. What grieved him most was the fearful language he heard hourly uttered, God's holy name profaned, foul oaths, and obscene conversation. Whenever he could he endeavoured to escape from it. He either tried to get on deck when his shipmates were below, or below when they were on deck—to get anywhere where they were not. Still, so persistent are depraved human beings under the influence of Satan, in showing their enmity to those who love God, and to God Himself, that they often followed him with their ribald shouts, and kept him forcibly down among them.

Alas! this is no uncommon scene on board, not only many a collier, but many a proud ship that sails over the ocean. Still, Peter had not read his Bible in vain. Influenced by God's Holy Spirit, he knew that he must return good for evil. Now and then, when a

retort rose to his lips, he sought for grace to repress it, and he either remained silent or gave a mild reply. He persevered, too, in reading his Bible. Often when the lantern was lit in the forepeak, and the watch below were asleep, he would rise from his berth, and by its pale light sit on a chest beneath it and read from the sacred page, although he could with difficulty make out the words. At other times he would stow himself away forward, and opening his beloved book, draw comfort and consolation from it till he was summoned to some duty by one of his task-masters. Two or three times he had stolen aloft unnoticed by those on deck, and read uninterruptedly for an hour or more, but the mate at length discovering him, called him down.

“I told you we don't allow idlers aboard,” exclaimed old Jim, bestowing several cuts with a rope's-end on his shoulders. “Don't let me ever catch you again with your book aloft doing nothing, or overboard it goes; we don't want psalm-singers or Bible-readers among us. Remember my words.”

Peter trembled with alarm for the safety of his book. The mate might put his threat into execution, and what could he do to prevent it? Yet he would fight hard before he would give it up, of that he was determined.

At the same time he knew that he must obey orders, and he dare not again venture aloft to read. Even if he read on deck, he might run the risk of losing his book. Yet read he must. He asked for guidance and direction from above. The fear which had thus been aroused of losing his Bible made him consider how he could still better secure it. Hitherto he had carried it inside his shirt, with his waistcoat buttoned over it. He now determined to make a canvas case and sling it round his neck. One of the men had some canvas for mending his clothes. Peter purchased a piece, together with some twine, with one of the few shillings he had in his pocket, and borrowed a sail needle from the mate, who lent it, not knowing the object it was for. Peter had watched the men at work, and by perseverance manufactured a case to his satisfaction, with a canvas strap to go round his neck. He could now carry his Bible night and day, and if summoned suddenly on deck, he would still have it with him, and should it enter the head of one of his shipmates to try and take it from his bunk while he was on deck, he would be disappointed. Peter now felt far more content than heretofore about the safety of his Bible. He had frequently to go into the captain's cabin to carry his meals from the

caboose and to clean it out. Generally Captain Hawkes took no notice of him, but one day, being in a facetious humour, he exclaimed,

“Well, boy, have you got through your book yet?”

“No, sir,” said Peter, “I don’t expect to do so for a long time to come.”

“Look sharp, then,” said the captain; “you will never be a sailor till you have.”

“I am afraid, sir, then, I never will become a sailor,” said Peter, quietly.

“How so?” asked Captain Hawkes.

“Because I shall wish to read the book till the last day of my life. I want to read it to know how to live, and just as much to know how to die.”

“We can live very well without it, I have a notion,” said the captain; “but as to dying, that may be a different matter.”

“Beg pardon, sir,” said Peter, “but I have been taught that it is one and the same thing. If you like, sir, I’ll read to you all about it from the book.”

“No, no; I want none of your Bible reading,” answered the captain.

“But, sir,” said Peter, feeling a bold spirit rise within him, “if the ship was to go down, and we all were drowned, and had to stand before God, how those who had the words,

‘Depart, ye accursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels,’ spoken to them would wish that they had listened to God’s word, and been prepared to meet Him as their Judge.”

“Get out of the cabin, you little canting hypocrite,” exclaimed the captain, fiercely, for God’s words uttered by the young boy had struck home to his conscience; but he “loved darkness rather than light, because his deeds were evil,” and he sought to avoid the light.

Peter went on deck with a feeling of deep sorrow at his heart that the captain would not listen. He wished, however, that he had spoken to him rather of God’s love to sinners than of his threatenings. “The mention of that great love might have touched his heart,” he thought; “I will tell him of it another time.”

He often tried when he could speak alone to any of the men to get them to allow him to read from his book; but he was told to keep it to himself, no one on board wanted it. He hoped, however, to succeed by perseverance; and perhaps when they found that he was becoming a smart and active sailor, and could lay out on the yards and reef and steer as well as any of them, they would be more ready to listen. He did his utmost, therefore, to learn his duty as a seaman.

Old Jim began to treat him with less harshness than at first, and in his rough way gave him instruction in the art he wished to acquire; he taught him to box the compass and to steer, and even explained why various manœuvres were performed. Still, when Peter began to speak about the Bible, or anything contained in it, he either turned a deaf ear or angrily told him to mind his own business.

The Tyne was at last reached, and Peter's wonder was excited by the large city he saw stretching up the hill, and the numerous other towns and villages which lined the banks of that important river, but still more by the numberless vessels taking in their cargoes of coal, shot down into their holds from the cliffs above them. Much as he wished it he was not allowed to go on shore, the captain suspecting that, like his predecessors, he might not return. Though he had harder work than ever, yet, having fewer task-masters, he was less ill-treated than before.

The *Polly* having received her cargo, again put to sea, bound, Peter heard, for the Thames.

Hitherto the weather had been fine, and he had escaped sea-sickness and wet clothes. A few nights after leaving the Tyne it came on to blow hard, with the wind right ahead,

and the *Polly* began to tumble about in a way which made Peter feel very miserable. Sometimes, though under close-reefed top-sails, she heeled down so much that he could scarcely stand on the wet slippery deck, and he fancied that she would go over altogether. The dark green seas, with their foaming crests, rolled up on either hand, and frequently broke on board in showers of spray, as the brig ploughed her way amid them : now she rose to the top of a mountain billow ; now she plunged down on the opposite side, with her bowsprit almost under water, and now the sea struck her and made her frame quiver fore and aft. The scene was a terrible one to look at—how different from that Peter had witnessed the first day he had been at sea !—still he did not fear ; he knew that the same Almighty hand who guarded him then protected him now, but he did feel that he might at any moment be summoned into the presence of One he had loved on earth, and who would, he knew, welcome him in heaven, not on account of any merit of his own, but because he took Him at His word and trusted His Son, whom He had sent to save sinners.

The men, and even the captain and mate, were more silent than usual, though when they did speak they gave utterance to the

same oaths which had so often issued out of their mouths.

It was trying work on deck, and when Peter's watch was over, wet and weary he was glad to go below; but when he lay down in his narrow berth, the fearful blows which struck again and again on the bows of the ship prevented him from sleeping. When he did at last drop off he was quickly aroused by another blow, heavier than the former, which made him fancy that the brig must have struck a rock; but on she again went, battling her way across the stormy ocean.

The gale was increasing. At night, when he had again to go on deck, the seas, though not so clearly visible as during the day, appeared much higher, and threatened every instant to roll down upon the deck and sweep every one off it. The fore-hatch was battened down, the crew collected aft. When day dawned their faces looked pale and anxious, and even Captain Hawkes and old Jim seemed to wish that the gale was over. Peter heard the mate report to the captain that he had sounded the well, and feared that the brig had sprung a leak. The pumps were rigged, and the crew set to work on them. The quantity of clear water which came up left no doubt about the matter. The men grumbled and swore, but worked

away. Peter was ordered to take his spell, and even old Jim and the captain took theirs. All day long they worked away, and at night also. No fire could be lighted in the caboose, for the seas broke so heavily over the bows of the ship that they dashed in upon the fore-hatchway. Such provisions as could be eaten without cooking were their only fare. Peter wished to read the Bible to his shipmates, but the spray broke over them in such dense showers that the leaves would have been wetted through in an instant. He could recollect, however, many portions, and great was the comfort they gave him. When he ventured to repeat them aloud to those crouched down under the bulwarks near him, they told him to be silent; it was not the time, with a gale blowing, to trouble them with his notions.

“But where should we be if the brig does go down?” he asked, for he saw the too great probability of that event occurring to make him hesitate about speaking.

The men told him to hold his tongue and not trouble them. Numbers do the same when warned of danger not more imminent than that which threatened the brig’s crew.

“Spell ho!” was the cry, and Peter and those he had spoken to took their places at the pumps.

Another day came to an end. During the next night the water gained so much on the pumps that Captain Hawkes resolved to head the brig in for the land in the hopes of making some sheltering port. Whereabouts he was he could not exactly tell. Again and again the well was sounded. The night was pitchy dark, the wind blew harder than ever, and the foam-topped seas raged round the hapless brig. The men laboured at the pumps, the captain and mate working as hard as the rest, for they all knew that their lives depended on their exertions.

Hour after hour passed by. Day was approaching. The captain thought that they must be nearing the land. The men at length cried out that they could work no more without food. Peter was sent down to get it. He crept about in the dark searching in the lockers for what could be found. He felt the water above his knees, but he was so wet that he did not heed it; it was his duty to get the food, he would not return without it. He fancied that he heard loud cries and shouting on deck, though the howling and whistling of the wind and the roar of the sea almost drowned all other sounds. Presently he was sensible that the vessel had received a heavy blow. Another and another followed. He had found the food he was sent

for, and was making his way with a heavy load up the companion ladder, when a sudden heave of the vessel threw it over him, and he fell to the bottom. He was stunned with the fall and lay insensible for awhile—how long he could not tell—but he recovered after some time, and the ladder being jerked back into its place, he scrambled up on deck. He saw no one. On looking over the side he discovered the boat, with the captain and crew, pulling away a few fathoms off. He shouted to them, entreating to be taken in. Old Jim cried out in return :

“ We will come for you.” But either they found it impossible to return, or feared that the boat would be stove in in making the attempt. Peter supposed truly that they had quitted the brig, believing that she would immediately sink. At that moment another sea struck her, and lifting her up, she once more glided on. Fearing that she would again ground, and that the next sea might sweep over her deck, he sprang to the main rigging and climbed up into the top. Scarcely had he left the deck when the water rushed completely over it. The brig, pressed by the sails still set, glided slowly on. Lower and lower she sank ; as she did so, Peter climbed up to the topmast-head, and there he clung. He did his utmost to escape death, though he

was prepared to meet it. He caught sight for a moment of the boat tossing amid the mass of foaming waters; when he again looked in the direction he had last seen her, she was nowhere visible.

In a little while he became conscious that the brig had ceased to sink.

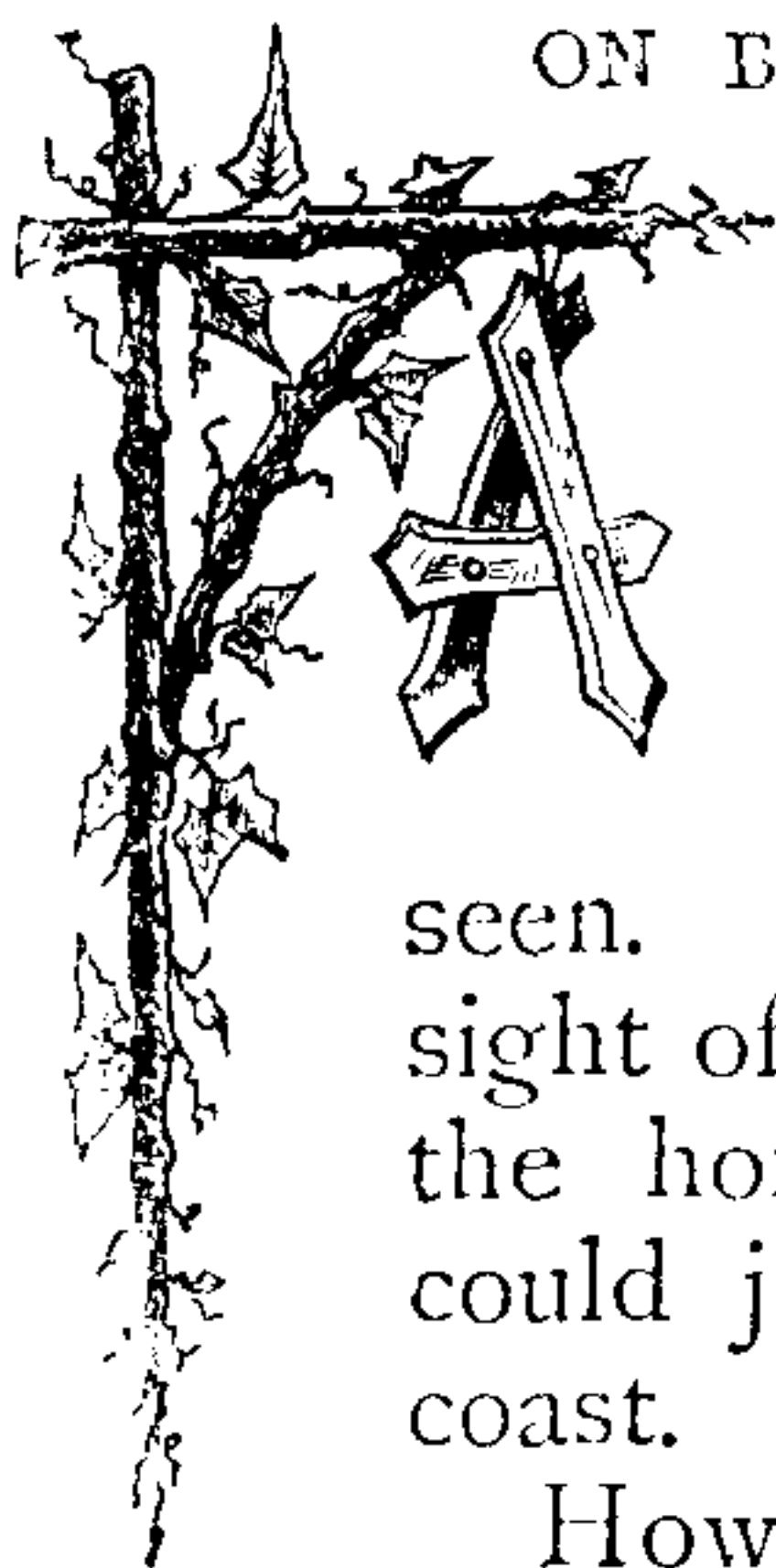
In the east, towards where the faint streaks of returning day appeared in the sky, the sea tumbled and tossed as wildly as before, but where the masts of the brig rose above the surface the water was comparatively calm. The vessel had indeed driven first on the tail or extreme point of a bank, and then being forced over it, had drifted inside it some little distance before she had gone down, being then protected from the fury of the waves by the bank itself. All Peter knew, however, was that he was clinging to the mast-head of a sunken vessel, that a storm raged around him, and no human aid was at hand. He had no food, for he had lost that when thrown from the ladder, and it was some time since he had eaten; but he had saved his Bible, and he knew that his Father in heaven would take care of him.





CHAPTER IV.

ON BOARD THE PRIMROSE.



As day dawned Peter looked out for the boat, earnestly hoping that the captain and crew had escaped destruction. It was nowhere to be seen. Here and there he caught sight of a dark sail just rising above the horizon, while in the west he could just distinguish a line of low coast.

How solitary and wretched he would have felt, how ready to give way to despair, had he not known that, all alone as he was, God his Father was watching over him.

He had thus clung on for some time to the mast, when he became aware that the wind had greatly moderated; the waves no longer dashed so savagely over the sand-bank as

before. Gradually the sea became calmer and calmer; the clouds cleared away; the bright sun shone forth and dried his wet clothes. He felt hungry, but his strength did not desert him. He descended to the cross-trees, now above water, and seating himself, searched in his pocket and discovered two biscuits which he had put into them when in the cabin and had forgotten. He ate one of the biscuits and felt revived, and then finding that there was no danger of falling off, he drew forth his beloved Bible and read. How full of comfort and assurance it was to him who read with an eye of faith! There was no one to disturb him now. Alas! where were those who had been wont to interrupt him? What would they now have given to have trusted to that book, and obeyed its precepts? Peter did not, however, allow such a thought to enter his mind. He only hoped that they had escaped, and were making their way to the land; not a particle of bad feeling was in his heart against those who had so ill-treated him.

He read and read on till, feeling a drowsiness come over him, he restored the book to its case, and then once more climbed up the mast to look round in the hopes of seeing some vessel or boat approaching.

The sun had completely dried his clothes.

and warmed him. A soft air blew off the land. He knew well that vessels would generally give the sands a wide berth. "Still, if God thinks fit to send me help He will direct some craft this way," he said to himself. "Perhaps some fishing-boats will be passing, or Captain Hawkes may send out to learn what has become of the brig."

As he looked northward, he saw afar off a large ship under all sail standing to the south. Whether or not she was inside or outside the shoals he could not tell. She came on but slowly, for the wind was light. He judged, however, that she would not pass at any great distance from where he was. How beautiful she looked, with her spread of white canvas shining in the sun. Nearer and nearer she came. He was convinced at last that she was outside the shoals.

"Those on board will scarcely notice the thin masts of the brig above the water," he thought; "still God will turn their eyes this way if He thinks fit."

Let no one suppose that little Peter placed a presumptuous confidence in God's protecting care of a young boy like himself. He had read that not a sparrow falls to the ground but He knows it; that the hairs of our heads are all numbered, and he well knew that he should be offending his kind Father if he

doubted His words. What strength and fearlessness did this simple faith give him.

The proud ship glided on, her canvas swelling to the breeze; it seemed that she would quickly run past him. He could almost distinguish the people on her deck. He shouted, fancying that his feeble voice would be borne over the water towards her. Presently he saw the hitherto full canvas flap against the masts; her courses, and her topsails, and top-gallant sails hung down uselessly; the breeze which had hitherto fanned his cheeks died away.

The ship was almost abreast of him, but rather to the southward, so that those on her deck saw the rays of the sun striking directly on the brig's masts. Without thinking of this, however, he took off his hat and waved it again and again. The ship appeared to be drifting in towards the bank. How eagerly he watched her. Presently he saw a boat lowered from her quarter; several people jumped in, and with rapid strokes pulled towards him. The tide had again risen, and scarcely a ripple was observed on the bank. The boat crossed it, and an encouraging cheer reached his ears; he waved his hat in return, and descending the rigging stood ready to step into the boat as soon as she came.

“Glad to rescue you, my lad,” said the

officer, who was steering. "How long have you been on the mast? What's become of your shipmates?"

"Since last night," answered Peter; "and I hope they have reached the shore in the boat."

"I should think if they have deserted you, you would wish rather that they had gone to the bottom as they deserve," said the officer.

"We should wish harm to no one, and do good to our enemies," answered Peter.

"Very good," said the officer, "though the other is most natural. But how were you left behind?"

"I was in the cabin getting up provisions for them, when, as the brig appeared to be going down, they, I suppose, shoved off in the boat and forgot me."

"Scoundrels! I can only hope their boat was swamped," exclaimed the officer. "But give way, lads; the ship is closer in to the bank than is altogether pleasant, and we shall have to tow her head off if the breeze does not spring up again."

The boat was quickly alongside, and Peter soon found himself on the deck of a ship larger than he had ever before seen. He looked round with astonishment and admiration. Every one was busy in lowering the

boats to tow the ship away from the dangerous proximity to the bank. Peter was, therefore, for some time left alone. The breeze, however, soon again returning, filled the sails, and the boats were hoisted in.

The captain, a fine-looking young man, with a frank countenance, then called Peter aft, and put to him nearly the same questions the mate had asked.

“How came you to escape, my lad? You don't even look much the worse for your adventure.”

“God took care of me, sir,” answered Peter, simply.

The captain smiled. “Well, I suppose it's something to fancy that,” he observed.

“But I know it, sir,” said Peter firmly.

The captain cast a somewhat astonished glance at him. “Well, lad, you must be hungry and sleepy; the steward will give you some food, and find you a berth forward. If we have an opportunity, we will put you on shore, that you may return to your friends.”

“I have no friends on shore, sir,” answered Peter, “and I want to go to sea.”

“Then do you wish to remain on board?” asked the captain.

“Yes, sir, please; I wish to visit foreign lands.”

“Very well, you will have the chance with us, and I’ll enter you as one of the ship’s-boys,” said the captain. “Below there!” he shouted, and the steward, a black man, appeared. “Give this lad some food, and find him a berth, Emery,” said the captain, in a good-natured tone. Turning aft he said to himself, “There is stuff in that lad, though he has evidently been brought up among the Methodists.”

The black steward took Peter into his pantry, and having given him a good meal, pressing him to eat as much as he wanted, led him forward. On the way he told him the ship was the *Primrose*, of 600 tons, bound out to the Mauritius, and that afterwards she was to visit other places in the Eastern Seas. Entering the seamen’s berth, he pointed to one of the standing bed-places on the side, and told him he might turn in and go to sleep as long as he liked. Little Peter, who had never before seen a black man, and fancied that all such were savages, was much surprised to hear him speak English and address him in so kind a manner.

“Thank you,” said Peter, “I do feel very sleepy, and am glad to go to bed.”

Before Peter took off his clothes, however, he knelt down, and from the bottom of his heart returned thanks to God for having

preserved his life and brought him on board so fine a ship.

If Peter was surprised at the appearance of a black man, much more astonished was the latter at seeing the boy in the attitude of prayer. He stood a moment at the door gazing at him.

“What! the little chap pray and not afraid of being seen!” he muttered to himself; “that beats anything I ever heard; I can’t make it out.” Yet Emery did not feel angry at what he had seen; but as he went aft to attend to his duties, he kept muttering, “Dat is strange; he not afraid; can’t make it out.”

He was soon afterwards sound asleep, when the men, with a fellow-feeling for what he had gone through, took care not to arouse him, and he slept till breakfast time the next day.

Peter found a considerable difference between the crew of the *Primrose* and that of the *Polly*. They were generally a hearty, merry set; but, alas! he soon heard oaths and curses coming out of the lips of most of them. Some, too, were morose and ill-tempered and discontented with their lot, and all seemed utterly indifferent about their souls.

Peter, however, was treated kindly, though of course he had to perform the usual duties

of a ship's-boy, shared by the two other lads somewhat older than himself, apprentices on board.

The first day he got into the berth when no one was there, and was able to read his Bible without interruption for nearly an hour. He was thinking that it was time to go out lest he should be wanted, when a tall handsome lad entered the berth.

"What! young chap!" exclaimed the latter, "are you a book-worm? I used to be fond of reading tales and adventures; let us have a look at the story you have got hold of."

"It's no story, it's all true," answered Peter; "it is God's word."

"Is that your style of reading? I have no fancy for it, though each man to his taste, I say," observed the youth.

"You would find it a very interesting book, though, Owen Bell," said Peter, who had heard the youth's name. "I never get tired of it, but I read it whenever I can; for it's only by reading it that we can know how to obey Christ, and be prepared to live with Him in heaven."

"Oh, but I have to live down here and knock about at sea," answered Owen Bell, with a careless laugh. "It will be time enough when I become an old chap, like

Simon Hixon, to think about matters of that sort."

"Who is Simon Hixon?" asked Peter.

"The oldest man on board. You might have heard him growling away and swearing at the cook, after dinner to-day, because the soup was not thick enough," answered Bell.

"Does Simon Hixon read the Bible?" asked Peter.

"Not he. You had better just try and persuade him to do so, or to listen to you, for I doubt if he can spell his own name," said Bell.

"Perhaps when he was young he might have said that he would begin to read the Bible when he was old, and you see he has not begun yet," observed Peter.

"No, because he is such a sulky, swearing old ruffian. If he had been a decent sort of fellow, I dare say he would have begun, if he had intended to do so, just like my father, who used to read the Bible to the day of his death," remarked the lad.

"But if Simon had begun to read the Bible when he was young, he would not have become such as you say he now is," observed Peter. "Jesus Christ would have changed Simon Hixon's heart, and then he could not have become a sulky, swearing old ruffian."

"You are too deep for me," said Bell, with

a forced laugh. "I never quarrel with anybody, and don't want to quarrel with you; but let me advise you not to go on talking in that sort of way to the other chaps aboard; you won't hear the end of it if you do. The cook was shouting for you as I came along the deck; just hide away your Bible and go and see what he wants."

Peter put his Bible into its case.

"You will let me read it to you sometimes, Owen?" he said, as he went out of the berth.

"Well, I don't mind if I have a spell of it some Sunday," said Bell, with apparent carelessness. "It would put me in mind of old times at home; but I should not like to be seen reading it on a week-day. I have no fancy to be called a Methodist, as you will be if you are found out."

Peter, going to the caboose, asked the cook what he wanted, and was told to clean the pots and pans. He set to work with right good will.

"You have done it handsomely, boy," observed the cook, when he had finished. "I have not had my pans so bright for many a day."

The *Primrose* had a fine run down Channel. On her passage a sudden squall struck her; the watch on deck flew aloft to shorten sail.

Peter, who was aft, lay out on the mizen top-gallant-sail yard, and taking the weather carring, succeeded, with Owen Bell and two others, in handling the fluttering sail. As he reached the deck the captain called to him.

“You did that smartly, youngster; it’s not the first time I have observed you. I’ll keep my eye on you. Go on as you have begun, and you will make a famous seaman.”

“I thank you, sir,” said Peter, touching his hat as he went forward.

“I didn’t expect it from a psalm-singer,” observed the captain to the first-mate with his usual good-natured laugh.

“There is no harm in the lad for all that,” was the answer.

Peter, however, had his trials. Being placed in a watch, he had to turn in and out with his watch-mates. The first night, as usual, he knelt down to say his prayers. He hadn’t been long on his knees, before he was interrupted by a suppressed titter, which soon broke into a peal of laughter from all hands, and several shoes came flying about him. He knelt on, however, trying to keep his thoughts calm, and his heart lifted up to God.

“Well, that young chap does sleep soundly,” cried one; “wake him up, Bill.”

“Hilloa, Peter! are you acting parson?” cried Bill, one of the wildest of the crew.

Peter made no reply, and endeavoured, though it was a hard task, to continue his prayers. Similar jeers and questions were now showered on him from all sides.

“Oh, my Father in heaven,” he mentally ejaculated, “help me to continue to pray and soften the hearts of my shipmates towards me and towards themselves. May they see what a fearful state they are in when thus obeying Satan, and strangers to Thee.”

The men and boys, who, prompted by them, had been the worst, were silent for some minutes, and Peter had nearly finished his prayers, when a fresh volley of all sorts of articles was hove at him. Still he persevered. Now his tormentors burst forth afresh with ribald jests and shouts of laughter.

“If he stands all that he will stand anything,” growled out old Simon Hixon, who, though not taking so active a part as the rest, had encouraged them in their conduct.

Peter at length rose from his knees without saying a word, took off his clothes, and turned into his berth. Although he never lay down without commending himself to God, he did not kneel down before turning in after the middle watch was over, and it was not till the second night he again went to bed during the first watch. The same conduct as before was pursued towards him, but although he

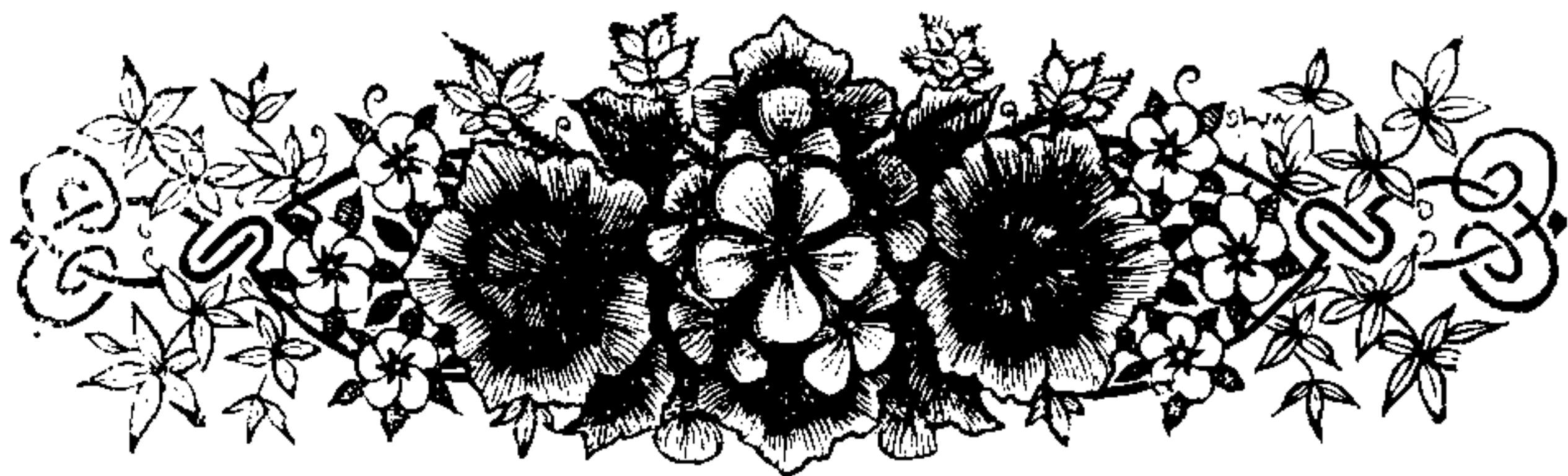
received two or three severe blows he persevered.

“Well, for my part, I shall be ashamed to try him any more,” he heard Owen Bell exclaim as he rose from his knees. “Peter, you are a brave little chap, and if you had followed my advice this would not have come upon you,” said Owen, addressing him.

“You meant it kindly,” answered Peter; “but as God gives me everything, and takes care of me, I am sure it is my duty to thank Him night and morning for all His benefits, and to ask Him to continue them to me. I would rather not have the things hove at my head, but you know it would not be right for me to put God aside for fear of what any of you may choose to do.”

When on another night two or three began the same sort of work, the rest cried out and told them to let the little psalm-singer alone; even old Hixon held his tongue, and from that time forward Peter was allowed to say his prayers in peace.





CHAPTER V.

STRENGTH IN WEAKNESS.



WHEN little Peter read his Bible on a Sunday while other men were mending their clothes, or sleeping, or amusing themselves with old newspapers or story books, he was generally allowed to do so in peace, but he wished to study it on week-days, as well, convinced that it was intended to guide him in every affair of life. On each occasion that he was found doing so, however, he was sure to be interrupted. The other boys would play him all sorts of tricks, and the men would send him to perform some work or other, and if they could think of nothing else, would despatch him with a pretended message to the man at the helm. Simon Hixon was his greatest foe,

and frequently as Peter passed gave him a blow with a rope's-end.

One day as Peter was quietly reading his Bible in the berth, Hixon swore that if he found him again at it, he would throw the book overboard.

"It would be a great shame to do that," answered Peter, "and I hope you won't try. God would, I am sure, not allow you to go unpunished."

"You see, youngster, if I am not as good as my word," growled Hixon.

Peter prayed that the old seaman's hard heart might be softened, and that he might be prevented committing such a crime.

"I don't think if you read the book you would wish to destroy it," said Peter. "It is full of such beautiful things, that you would like to read them over and over again if you were once to begin."

"I can't read, so there's little chance of that," said Hixon.

"But will you let me read them to you?" asked Peter. "I shall be very glad to do that."

"What! when I have told you that I would heave the book overboard if I found you reading it?" said the old man.

"That makes no difference," said Peter, "only just listen to one or two."

“Not I. I don’t want to hear your yarns,” said Hixon, turning away.

Peter went on reading, and the old man did not further interfere with him.

The ship sailed on. When she was crossing the line the usual ceremonies were performed. Peter heard what was to take place, and, fearing that his Bible would get wet, hid it away carefully. He felt very anxious, however, lest any one should suspect what he had done, and look for it. He and the other young seamen who had not before crossed the line, were ducked, and had all sorts of tricks played on them by Neptune and his attendants. Peter took everything in good part, though he was nearly drowning in a sail triced up on deck and filled with water, when Owen Bell jumped in and pulled him out. He made his escape as soon as the amusements were over, and hurried to the berth to look for his book. To his great joy he found it safe, and immediately hung it again round his neck.

Some more weeks passed away. Hitherto Owen Bell, even on a Sunday, had always made some excuse for not reading with Peter. At length one hot Sunday, when the ship was becalmed in the tropics, and even Owen felt no inclination for sky-larking, Peter got him to sit down while most of the

crew were asleep, or occupied in some of the few shady spots they could find. Peter, opening the book, read the account of the visit of Nicodemus to the Lord.

“He was a learned and important man, and yet you see he wanted to be taught, and the Lord did teach him. He showed him he was a sinner by nature, as all of us are, and that he must become a new creature.”

“I cannot understand how he could become that of his own accord,” said Bell. “It’s hard to tell a man to do what he cannot.”

“The Lord never did that,” said Peter, “when He told him that he ‘must be born again.’ He showed him clearly how it must be brought about. You remember what He said about the Israelites when bitten by serpents in the wilderness, and how they were cured immediately they looked on the brazen serpent, taking Moses at his word when he told them to do so. So if we only take God at His word, and look to Jesus on the cross suffering for and bearing our sins, we shall be forgiven, and through the power of the Holy Spirit be born again. What I am sure God wants us to do is to take Him at His word, to believe that He will do whatever He says; and Jesus Himself tells us that he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.”

“What an old-fashioned little chap you are,” said Owen, laughing. “You talk like a book.”

“It seems all very clear to me, and I wish that it did to you, Bell.”

“Well, the truth is, that I have been such a bad fellow, and have so many sins to answer for, that I don’t fancy when God comes to count them up He can pardon me. Even when I seemed most careless and full of jokes, I have often had my heart pressed down with the recollection of all the bad things I have done.”

“But Jesus tells us in another place that ‘He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance,’ and when He says, ‘God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life,’ He means by ‘whosoever,’ everybody, good people and bad people.”

“But do you think if I was to try and please God and serve Him He would pardon me?” asked Bell.

“He doesn’t say that,” said Peter. “He promises to forgive only those who trust in Jesus Christ, because Jesus was punished instead of them, and if one person was punished instead of another He will not punish that other; it would be unjust to do that. Oh, Bell, why don’t you take God at

His word, and believe on Jesus, and then you would be able to obey Him and serve Him, because He will send you the Holy Spirit to help you as He has promised ? ”

Much more to the same effect the young boy urged on his friend, while he read numerous portions of Scripture to him to prove his words.

The boys were now called off to their duty on board, and the conversation was interrupted. Owen seemed very quiet and serious ; but he had no opportunity of speaking to Peter for some days. At last, when they were alone together again he said to him :

“ I am sure you are right, Peter ; I never before understood that Jesus died instead of me on account of my sins, and therefore if I believe on Him I shall be helped to overcome my sins, and shall not be punished for them, but shall go to heaven, and live with Him in happiness ; I see it, and believe it now. The Bible is no new book to me, Peter, I have heard it read often and often at home, and have read it myself too, though I could not understand its meaning.”

After this, Owen Bell took every opportunity of reading with Peter, and as he was as strong as a man, and respected by the crew, no one interrupted them.

One evening they had been reading

together, when Owen turned suddenly to Peter, and said :

“ Do you think if I was to die to-night I should go to be with Jesus ? ”

“ I know you would, for I am sure you believe on Him.”

“ That I do, with all my heart and soul,” exclaimed Owen Bell. “ And I wish that I could serve Him and make known His love to others. I feel it myself, and I have been trying to speak to Emery about it, and though he is little better than a heathen, he said he should like to know more about one so good and kind as Jesus must be who died to save others ; and Bill, the cook, was ready to listen. I think, Peter, if you offered to read to them they would let you, and tell them all about the love of Jesus, as you told me, and I cannot but fancy that they would trust to Him as I have done. It will be a hard matter to get at the captain and mates ; but I should not despair of them if they were to hear of the glorious things which the Gospel contains.”

Peter often afterwards recollected this conversation with Owen Bell.

That night he was aroused from his sleep by the cry of “ All hands shorten sail ! ”

The men rushed on deck half-clothed, for they knew the summons admitted of no

delay. In an instant they were flying aloft. A heavy squall had struck the ship, and she was heeling over, her masts bending like willow wands and threatening to go every instant. The sheets were let fly, but before the sails could be furled there came a crash, and the fore-topmast with its yard, to which several of the crew were clinging, was carried away. Their cries were heard as they struggled in the foaming waters under the lee, but no help could be rendered them. Away the ship flew. Every effort was made to clear the wreck and to furl the sails. Some time passed before it could be done. The gale continued to increase.

The captain stood back over the spot in the hopes of picking up some who might have clung to the spars. The names were called over. Among those who did not answer was Owen Bell.

“Poor fellow,” said several.

“A fine young lad,” said the captain, “I hope we may pick him up.”

Peter hoped so too ; but he did not mourn for his friend as his shipmates did, for he was sure that if Owen Bell was drowned he had gone to be with the Master, who, though lately found, he had been brought truly to love.

The search was vain, the ship wore round

and continued her course. Peter missed Owen Bell greatly. The rest of the men treated him, for his friend's sake, perhaps, with less unkindness than before, and a more subdued tone was perceptible among them; even the captain and mates seemed to feel for the loss of the men, and fewer oaths were heard than usual.

Peter found an opportunity of speaking to Emery, the negro. "That just what Owen Bell say," answered the steward; "If Jesus die for me, and love me, I ought to love Him."

"Yes," observed Peter, "but not only that; you must believe that He died to take away your sins, and that your sins are taken away; that God looks upon you as free from sin, and will receive you into heaven when you die."

"How can that be?" asked the black.

"Because God says it," answered Peter; "what He says must be true."

"In that book you read?" asked the black.

"Yes, that book contains God's messages and promises to man. It is through this alone, and the leading of the Holy Spirit, that we know anything about God. Without that we should be worshipping blocks of stone, just as Owen Bell was telling me the other day your countrymen do."

"Yes, and many other people in the world,

and in the countries we are going to," observed Emery. "But I can't stop to listen longer; another day you tell me more of this."

Peter gladly promised that he would do so.

To his surprise one evening, after he had cleaned up the pots and pans, the cook asked him to come and sit in the caboose, and begged him to read a chapter or two in the Bible. Peter did so, and explained it to the best of his power, and frequently after that he spent an hour in the evening in the same way.

The ship had now rounded the Cape of Good Hope. The wind was fair, the weather continued fine. Peter had determined to try again to get Hixon to let him read to him. It seemed so sad that an old man should continue to refuse listening to God's message of love. One Sunday he found him sitting by himself, as he usually did, stitching away on the sleeve of a jacket. Peter sat down near him and began to read to himself. Hixon eyed him, but not with that angry look which he generally cast when Peter was reading.

"Would you like to hear some of it while you are at your work?" asked Peter at length.

"Well, boy, as you are a good sort of chap after all, and axes me so often, I don't mind hearing one of your yarns out of your book;



PETER AND OLD HIXON.

though I don't see how it can do me much good," he replied, after a little time.

This was all Peter wanted. He read the parable of the "Pharisee and Publican."

"Which of them do you like the best?" asked Peter.

"Can't say I care for that proud chap who thought himself better than anybody else. I like t'other more, a good deal."

"Because he says, 'Lord, be merciful to me a sinner'?" asked Peter.

"Ay," said Hixon, bending down his head. He had for some time ceased to ply his needle.

"Then do you know how God says He alone will be merciful?" Peter asked.

"No, 'cept to them as be sorry for what they have done bad, and try to do better."

"Oh, no, no! God does not say that; Satan is always trying to make people believe it, because he well knows that if people try to make themselves better, trusting only in their own strength, they will fail. God says that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. By faith ye are saved." And Peter, in his own simple way, went on to explain that Jesus Christ, by dying on the cross for our sins, has become our Saviour, and that if men will lovingly

trust to Him, God will not punish them, but, on the contrary, will look on them as possessed of the righteousness of Christ.

“That’s wonderful,” exclaimed old Hixon, after Peter had explained the truth in several ways to make him understand it. “I can hardly believe it; and yet I suppose if one chap deserved a thrashing from me, and a bigger one said, ‘Thrash me instead,’ and I did thrash him, and well too, I could not thrash the little one also.”

Hixon continued silent for awhile and said nothing. He was evidently in deep thought, as though perplexed with something he was trying to make out, but could not understand.

“But I suppose a chap must not go and do what he likes after that?” said old Hixon at length, eagerly fixing his eyes on Peter.

“No. If he really loves Jesus, which he must do when he knows that Jesus suffered so much for his sake, and saved him from hell, he will try and be like Him and serve Him, and turn away from and hate his sins,” was Peter’s answer.

“For my part, I don’t feel as how I could ever be good, and give up swearing, and getting in a rage, or drunk, too, if the liquor came in my way. I could only cry out—loud enough, too, like the man you were reading about—‘Lord, be merciful to

me a sinner!’ and I don’t think God would hear such a wicked chap as I have been,” muttered the old man.

“The Bible says that Jesus Christ came into the world to save the worst of people as well as the best; ‘I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.’ These are the words of Jesus Himself. God promises to hear all who come to Him. He says, ‘Knock, and it shall be opened unto you; seek, and ye shall find.’”

“I will try and ask Him for what He knows I want,” said the old man. “And, Peter, just do you pray for me, and if you see me growing sulky, come and speak to me those words you spoke just now, ‘Jesus loves you.’ I don’t think I could stand hearing that and go on fighting against Him as I have been so long doing—though it’s wonderful! very wonderful!”

Peter did not fail to do as Hixon asked him. He seldom had occasion to repeat the blessed announcement. The old man got into the habit of saying to himself whenever he found his anger rising, “Jesus loves me, Jesus loves me,” and his ill-feelings were subdued.

How blessed would be the result if all who read this, and many more, too, were to act like that rough old sailor.



CHAPTER VI.

SAVED FROM THE WRECK.



WITH the exception of the gale spoken of in the last chapter, the *Primrose* had enjoyed fine weather for the greater part of the passage. But dark, heavy clouds now rolled across the sky; the wind blew fiercely, and the seas rose up in mountainous billows, such as Peter had never before beheld. The wind, however, was fair, and with her after-sails furled, and closely-reefed topsails only set, the ship flew on before it. As Peter stood on deck he watched sea after sea rolling up astern and threatening to break on board, but with a loud roar, just as they reached her, their foaming summits came hissing down, and she glided up the side of a huge billow ahead.

For an instant she seemed to hang on the top of the watery ridge, and then slid down into another valley, up the opposite side of which she climbed as before.

She had thus run for some distance when the wind dropped, and she lay rolling in the trough of the still heavy sea. The sky overhead was dark and lowering, a drizzling rain fell, and the air was oppressive. The captain and officers looked anxious. They had cause to be so, for suddenly the wind again rose, now blowing from one quarter, now from another, and all hands were kept on deck ready to brace round the yards as might be required. For several days no observation had been taken, and old Hixon told Peter that he feared the ship had been driven considerably out of her course.

“Will the captain soon be able to get an observation to steer the right way?” asked Peter.

“If the sky clears he may, but I have known it to remain like this for days and weeks together, and though Captain Hauslar is as good a seaman as I should wish to sail with, he may be out in his reckoning, and there are some ugly rocks and shoals to the eastward, which on a dark night it is a hard matter to see till one is right upon them,” answered old Hixon.

After the ship had been knocking about for some days, the wind again came fair, though somewhat strong, and the captain, anxious to make up for the long delay, and hoping to escape all dangers, with the ship under moderate canvas steered to the eastward, ordering a bright look-out to be kept. The middle watch had been called, and the fresh look-outs, rubbing their eyes, had just gone to their posts. It was Hixon's turn at the wheel. Peter, who was in the same watch, followed him aft, for the old man had undertaken to give him lessons in steering. As he stood by his side he frequently quoted passages of Scripture from his Bible, and sometimes, by the light of the binnacle lamp, he referred to the book, and read long portions.

Hixon having just received the course from the man he relieved had taken hold of the spokes, when there came a sharp cry from the look-out forward, of "Breakers ahead!" followed quickly by "Land! land!"

"Down with the helm!" shouted the officer of the watch. "All hands on deck; brace up the yards!"

Almost before the ship's course could be altered, a fearful blow was felt, which made the masts quiver and the ship tremble from stem to stern—another and another followed.

The sea dashed up wildly over her, throwing her on her beam ends; then came a fearful crash, and the tall masts fell over her side towards the dark rocks which rose close to her. The captain and all below had rushed on deck. Awakened suddenly out of their sleep they stood aghast, expecting instant death. Some seemed to have lost their senses and cried wildly for help. The captain took his post by the companion-hatch, gazing around and considering what orders to issue.

Hixon, when he found that all hope of the ship moving off the rock was gone, quitted the helm, and seizing Peter dragged him to the weather bulwarks. The next instant loud shrieks were heard. A tremendous sea washing across the deck had carried several of the crew overboard, sweeping some away as it receded, and dashing others against the rocks. The stern, which had been driven furthest in, afforded the most secure place. The captain shouted to the crew to come aft; some heard him, but the roaring of the breakers drowned his voice. Sea after sea struck the devoted ship, and the crashing sound which followed each blow showed that she was breaking up. Still the darkness was so great, and so fiercely did the waters rage between the ship and the shore, that destruc-

tion appeared to await any who might attempt to reach it. Already the stern of the ship was quivering under the blows of the fierce seas.

“Hold on where you are, Peter,” said Hixon; I will try if there’s any way of getting on shore.”

“But you may be washed off,” said Peter.

“My life is worth little,” said the old man, “I am not afraid to die now, and I may, if I succeed, help to save others.”

Fastening a rope round his waist which he secured to a ring-bolt in the deck, he struggled to the side of the ship nearest the shore. Peter could no longer distinguish him.

The captain was standing still, undecided what to do, with the third mate and five or six seamen who had succeeded in getting aft, when old Hixon was seen making his way along the deck from amid the mass of wreck which cumbered it.

“The foot of the mainmast still hangs to the ship and the head rests on a rock,” he said; “what is beyond I cannot tell, it may be water or it may be land, but the sea does not break over it; it is our only chance if we can manage to reach it.”

“Well, lads, we had better follow old Hixon’s advice,” said the captain. “Those who wish it can go.”

The mate and the other men hung back.

“Come, Peter,” said Hixon, “you and I will set the example then. To my mind the ship won’t hold together many minutes longer; and if we succeed, as I think we shall, they will follow if there’s time. I’ll go sir,” he cried to the captain, and grasping Peter, he led him along, holding on to the rope. They reached the mast, when Peter, keeping close to his companion, scrambled up it. Alone he felt that he might have been unable to succeed, but supported by his old friend he made his way along the mast, which all the time was swayed up and down by the movement of the ship. He feared lest it should be hurled from its position, and the rest might be unable to escape by it.

They gained a rugged rock of some extent, but the water washed round them and the spray occasionally flew over their heads. They were still at a distance from the mainland, but for the moment safer than on board the ship. They shouted as loud as they could to induce the rest to follow them. Every instant they feared that the mast would give way. Again and again they shouted. At last they caught sight of some one moving along the mast. He reached them, and it proved to be Emery, the black steward.

“Are the rest coming?” asked Peter eagerly.

“Hope so; captain tell us to come first,” was the answer; and soon afterwards Bill the cook made his way to the rock. They all shouted together to give notice of their safe passage. At length several seamen were seen creeping along the mast, one after the other, as fast as they could move.

“The ship is breaking up fast!” said one of them; “and if the skipper don’t make haste he will be lost.”

“Oh, I wish you had all come at once!” cried Peter. “I’ll go back and hasten him.”

“No, no, boy; you will lose your life if you do!” said Hixon. “It’s his own fault if he delays.”

“That is no reason why we should not try to get him to come,” said Peter.

“You are right, boy,” cried Hixon, “but if any one goes, I’ll go.”

Hixon was just getting on the mast, when he exclaimed that the skipper and mate were coming along it. At that moment the end of the mast began to rise. Hixon threw himself off it.

“Stand clear of the rigging,” cried several voices. The mast moved more rapidly, the end lifting up in the air, then with a crash came down on the rock, against which it was

at once violently dashed by a sea which broke over the wreck. One of the poor fellows who had escaped was dragged off into the seething waters.

“The captain is gone,” cried several voices.

“I see a man close at hand,” said Peter “Will any one pass a rope round my waist? I am sure I could clutch him.”

There were several ropes scattered about the rock. Old Hixon did not hear Peter, but two or three of the other men did. One of them fastened a rope as he requested. While they held on, Peter sprung off from the rock into the water close to where the person he saw was floating. He clutched him tightly. The next sea which came roaring up would have dashed him against the rock, and his burden must have been torn from him had not his companions, roused by the example set by the young boy, whom they had been in the habit of laughing at, rushed forward and dragged them both up together.

“It is the captain,” cried one. “But I am afraid he is gone,” exclaimed another.

“No! I trust he is still alive,” said Peter, sitting down by the captain’s side, and taking his head on his lap. “He is breathing; he will come to, I hope.”

Peter rubbed the captain's chest while the steward and Bill moved his arms gently up and down. He uttered a groan ; it showed that he was in pain, and had been injured against the rocks, but it was an encouraging sign. They persevered, and at length the captain spoke in a low voice, asking where he was.

"You are safe on a rock," answered Emery. "We shall know better when sun rise."

Just then a voice was heard at no great distance, shouting.

Hixon hailed in return, "Where are you?"

"On an island of some sort," was the answer. "Many more saved?"

Hixon replied that the captain and ten men had escaped.

Although the channel between the rock and the land might be deep, with the help of a man on the latter, if a rope could be passed to him, they might all cross in safety.

They waited anxiously till daylight. The wind had gone down by that time, and the sea was much calmer. A rocky island of some height rose before them, but as the sea rushed in and out in the intervening space, even a good swimmer might have hesitated to cross.

The larger portion of their gallant ship had disappeared, but the afterpart still remained entire.

Several lengths of rope were cut from the rigging of the mainmast, which had been thrown back on the rock. They were eager to get across, for they had no food and no water on the rock. Several attempts were made to heave a rope to the man on the island, but in vain, the distance was too great. At length a short piece of a spar was fastened to the end of the signal halyards. How eagerly it was watched, as it floated now in one direction, now in another; gradually it drew out the line; it was hoped that it might be drifted by some surge towards the man, who was eagerly on the watch to catch it.

“We must not despair,” said Peter to Hixon, who had come to see how the captain was getting on. “If we pray that God will send the spar to shore He is certain to hear us, and He will do it if He thinks fit.”

“What you say is true, I know,” observed the old man; and together they knelt and prayed that a way to serve them might be found.

The captain, who had returned to consciousness, looked at them with astonishment, but said nothing. In a short time a shout

came from the men who held the line on the inner side of the rock that the spar had reached the shore, and that Tom had hold of it. A stronger rope was soon hauled across, and then one which could bear the weight of two or three people at a time, if necessary. That was secured between the rock and the mainland. First one man made his way along it, then another and another, and all were going, with the exception of Emery and Bill, who, with Peter and old Hixon, stayed by the captain. The latter, seeing this, cried out, "Shame, lads; would you desert the captain when he is unable to help himself?" The men, however, did not heed him: they were eager to get hold of a cask of provisions which, with another of water, Tom told them had been thrown up on the island. The news made even Emery and Bill inclined to go.

"Go, if you wish it," said the captain; "only come back and bring me some water, for I am fearfully thirsty."

This made the men no longer hesitate. Peter sat still.

"Are you not going?" asked the captain.

"I could not leave you, sir, while you are suffering," said Peter.

"But you want food and water as much as they do," said the captain.

“They will bring it to me, sir,” answered Peter.

Notwithstanding what the captain said, neither Peter nor old Hixon would leave him. The latter was busily hauling pieces of planking and rope. Having collected enough for his purpose, he set to work to manufacture a cradle sufficiently large to contain the captain. Having arranged his plan he shouted to the other men to come and assist him. Two only, however, responded, Bill and the black; the remainder were wandering along the shore, looking out for whatever might be washed up. The black set the example. Bill followed him back to the rock, but they brought only a small piece of salted tongue and some biscuits, almost soaked through, but no water. The captain could only taste a very little, but there was enough to satisfy Hixon's and Peter's appetites. In vain the poor captain cried out for water—nothing had been found to carry it in.

“The more reason we should make haste with the cradle,” observed Hixon.

It was at length placed on the rope, with a line attached, which Bill carried across. Peter volunteered to go in it, and safely passed over. It was then hauled back, and the captain was drawn across. Hixon and

the black followed. By this time the rest of the men had disappeared. The captain was soon sufficiently revived by the water which had been obtained to look about him. He told his companions that he believed they were on one of the many wild rocky islets which exist in that part of the ocean, and that they must carefully husband the water, as possibly no spring might be found.

As the captain wished to ascertain whether his surmises were correct, Peter volunteered to climb to the summit of the height above them. It was fatiguing and very dangerous work, but he succeeded at length. On looking around him, he found that they were nearly at one end of a rocky island, which extended for three or four miles to the eastward. Not a tree, or scarcely a shrub, was to be seen. In every direction all was desolation and barrenness. He returned, not without difficulty.

“I thought I was right,” said the captain. “You must do your best, my men, to collect all you can from the wreck; we shall need it; and, Gray, I have a word to say to you. You saved my life, I am told; if we ever get away from this, I will prove your friend.”

“I only did my duty, sir,” said Peter. “I thought I could save you, and God helped me.”

“ You seem to have great trust in God.”

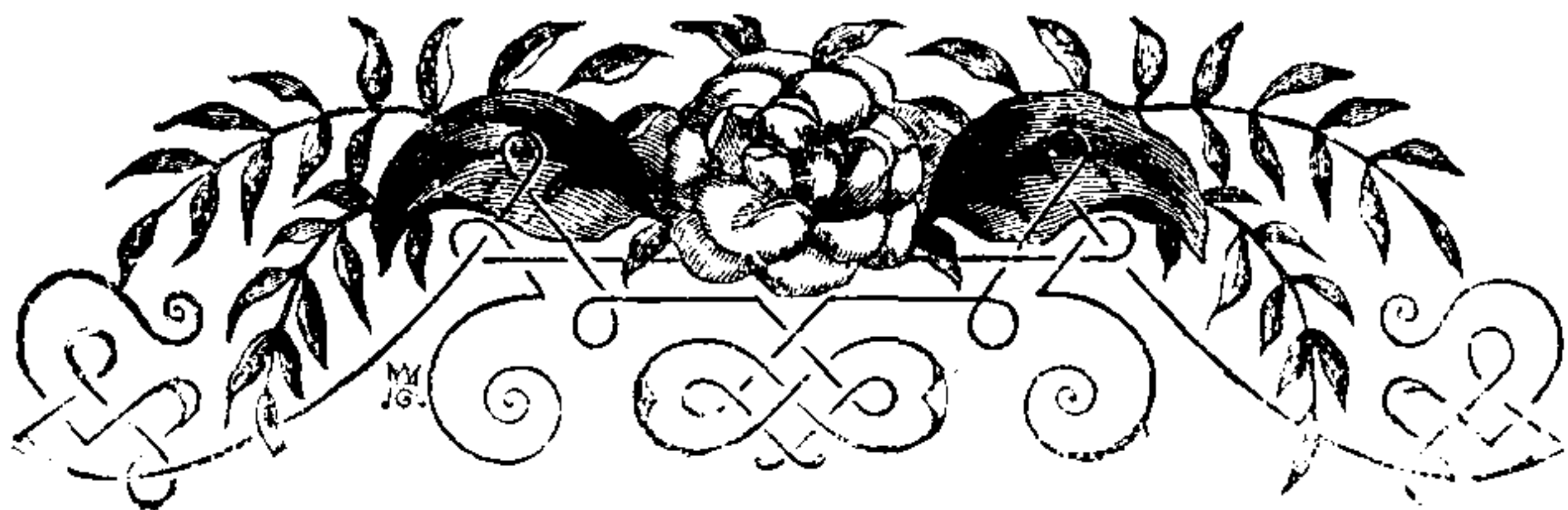
“ Yes, sir,” said Peter. “ He is a very present help in time of trouble, and we all have reason to trust Him.”

“ I have never done so before,” whispered the captain ; “ but I will try in future.”

In the meantime the other three men were collecting fragments of sails and spars, pieces of rope, and several things which formed part of the cargo, a bale of cloth and another of clothing—the latter was especially acceptable to all the party, who, with the exception of Hixon and Peter, had little on when they left the ship ; but of still greater value was a cask of biscuits, another of herrings, and a few pieces of pork. What the rest of the crew might have discovered they could not tell.

As the captain could not move, a hut was built of the pieces of sail and spars, and a bed having been made up beneath it with some dry grass and a piece of canvas for the captain to lie on, he and his companions prepared to pass the first night of their sojourn on the desolate rock.





CHAPTER VII.



LIFE ON THE ROCK.

WHEN morning broke the gale had entirely ceased, but no part of the ship hung together, and all hope of obtaining any provisions from her, except such as might be washed up on the shore, was lost. The captain's condition also caused his companions

much anxiety; he was suffering greatly, and appeared to be weaker than on the previous day. They had breakfasted on a small portion of biscuit and tongue, but their scanty supply of water was almost exhausted at their first meal. Peter gave the captain the larger part of his share, and having drunk a little himself, entreated that the remainder might be

reserved for him, as he complained greatly of thirst.

None of the rest of the crew had returned. Peter offered to stay by the captain if the three other men would go in search of them, and ascertain whether any water was to be found.

“If we are to live we must do so,” said Hixon; “come along, mates; I know Peter will look after the captain,” and they set off.

After Peter had moistened the captain’s lips, and made his bed as comfortable as he could, he said, “Shall I read to you, sir?”

“What have you got to read? How can you have any books here?” asked the captain.

Peter drew his Bible out of the canvas slung round his neck, and showed it to the captain. The cover, of course, was drenched with sea-water, but the inside was quite dry.

“Yes, you may,” was the answer; “when a man is sick as I am it is a good book to listen to, and I am fit for nothing else.”

Peter made no reply, but began to read. He came to the account of Lazarus and the rich man.

“What does Abraham’s bosom mean?” asked the captain.

“Heaven, sir,” answered Peter; “it must be a glorious place, for Christ has gone before to prepare it for those who love Him.”

“ I hope when I die I shall go there,” murmured the captain, more to himself than Peter ; “ I have not been a bad man, or done much harm to any one, and have tried to do my duty, and have never got drunk at sea ; and I hope I have done some good in my time, so I should think God would let me into heaven.”

Peter prayed that he might give a right answer. “ God says, sir, in His book, that ‘ there is none that doeth good, no, not one,’ and that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.’ The rich man we have been reading about does not seem to have done much harm, and very likely he thought himself pretty good, and yet he went to hell.”

“ Then how is a man ever to get to heaven ? ” asked the captain, somewhat petulantly.

“ God says, ‘ Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.’ He wants us to take Him at His word. He tells us that our own good deeds are as filthy rags, and that we must trust to the sacrifice of Christ, to His blood shed for us ; and thus we shall be clothed with His righteousness, with His pure and spotless robe ; and so God will not look upon our iniquities, because He has ac-

cepted Christ's punishment instead of what we deserved, and we shall therefore not be punished."

Thus Peter continued to place the loving Gospel before his captain. The latter listened, often asking some more questions. At last he put his hands before his eyes, and murmured, "It's wonderful that a mere boy should know all this, and be able to explain it so clearly. It's true; yes, I am sure of that."

"Let us pray, sir, that God's Holy Spirit will bring it home to your heart," said Peter, as if the remark had been made to him. "God has said we shall not ask in vain."

The captain's eye brightened; a new hope, new thoughts and feelings, rose in his bosom.

Peter again turned to his book. He read many portions, the captain appearing in no way wearied.

He was so employed when a shout reached their ears, and Peter, going out of the tent, saw old Hixon making his way down the rocks. He brought his sou'-wester full of water.

"Praised be God, we have found a spring two miles off. There was nothing else to bring it in but this," he said, offering the water to the captain and Peter. "The rest of the men collected near it, but when I told them that they ought to come and help to

carry you up the hill, captain, they said they were free now, and didn't acknowledge any man's authority."

"I should have thought, Hixon, from what I know of you, that you would have been among them," observed the captain.

"So I should, sir, a few weeks ago, but Peter there, out of his Bible, showed me what a sinner I was, and how I must love Jesus Christ and obey Him, and I know He would not have left any man to perish, and so, sir, as long as you live—and I hope we shall escape from this rock—I will not leave you."

"Thank you, Hixon," said the captain; "I am sure you speak the truth. But what has become of Emery and Bill?"

"They said they would stop and have some food, and then come back and try and get you up to the spring, which is a warmer and pleasanter place than this."

In a short time the other men appeared, but the captain felt so much pain when they attempted to move him, that he begged them to let him remain where he was.

"I am afraid, sir, they will soon have eaten up all their provisions, and then they will be coming down to get what we have collected," observed Bill. "Perhaps, if you are among them, you might persuade them to put themselves on an allowance."

The captain sent a message by Hixon, but the men only laughed at him, and replied that a ship was sure soon to appear, and take them off, though they took no pains to make their situation known. The captain, however, told Hixon and the rest to form a flag-staff out of the spars which had been cast ashore, and to erect it on the highest point with a piece of the cloth which they had found, as a flag. They did so.

Day after day passed by, and though one or the other was constantly on the look-out, no distant sail met their anxious gaze.

Peter was thankful that the captain appeared to be slowly recovering his strength, though still unable to move. By husbanding their provisions, the little party on the shore hoped to support existence for some weeks to come.

When Hixon arrived one day with their usual supply of water, he brought word that the rest of the crew had deserted the spring and were nowhere to be seen. He thought probably that they had gone down to the shore to try and catch fish, or collect mussels, or anything that might have been thrown up. He and his companions were searching about for the same object, that they might eke out the diminishing store of their more nutritive food, and give the captain a larger supply.

Peter, when not thus employed, read to the captain, as also to the other men, and Bill and the black were well pleased to listen, as were the captain and Hixon. Indeed, the light of God's blessed truth shone on the small shipwrecked party, and shed on them its warmth and healing influence. It never occurred to young Peter to pride himself that the light shone from the lamp he carried within him.

The weather had again changed, and instead of a balmy breeze and sunshine, a fierce gale was blowing, and heavy showers came down upon their heads.

They were sitting beneath the shelter of their tent, while Peter was reading to them, when voices were heard, and several of the crew appeared. They looked wretched, and nearly starved.

"Hilloa!" cried one of them, seeing the cask of provisions near the entrance of the hut. "What, have you still got food? We thought that you must be as badly off as we are."

The rest came up, and though the captain, with his friends, expostulated, and promised to give the men a small portion, they took possession of more than half of the remaining provisions. With the supply of food they had thus obtained, they returned to their former camp near the spring. The captain was deeply grieved.

“It would have killed me with rage a short time ago, but I feel more sorry for them now; and I am afraid the food will only prolong their lives a day or two, while the want of it may shorten ours.”

As was to be expected, in a couple of days they returned for more. Bill proposed fighting as he saw them coming, rather than give it up.

“It would only make matters worse,” observed the captain, “as they would be sure to overpower us. We must trust that God will find some way for our escape.”

The captain told Bill to give to each of them the same rations which they allowed for themselves, though it was not more than just sufficient to support life. Each day they came for their allowance, but still did not offer to assist in removing the captain. Hixon and the rest were very indignant.

The captain, however, quieted them, and insisted upon the provisions being equally shared amongst all the survivors from the shipwrecked crew.

At length, although their allowance had been still further reduced, no biscuits nor meat remained. A few herrings and some cabbages which had been washed up, and were well-nigh rotten, were the only articles of food they still had. Bill, however, came back with

some birds' eggs, and he thought that soon more might be obtained should the weather clear, and the birds visit the island in greater numbers.

Peter had, with the rest, taken his turn in watching by the flag-staff. He was casting his eyes around when they fell on the sails of a vessel just rising above the horizon. He watched her eagerly—she was drawing near. He ran down the hill to give the joyful intelligence to his friends. They quickly returned with him, the captain telling them to leave him alone, as he felt quite well enough to remain by himself. Each man carried a bundle of drift-wood, some dry grass, or branches from the numerous low bushes they found in sheltered spots, to assist in lighting a beacon, should the vessel not draw near till nightfall. A tinder-box had enabled the other party to obtain a light. Bill went for it. When he told them of the ship being seen, they would not believe him.

“Get up and have a look at her,” he answered.

One of them did so. On being convinced, some showed their satisfaction by leaping about and shouting, others growled out that she would not come near the land, but none thought of praying that she might be

directed towards them, or showed any gratitude at the prospect of deliverance.

On came the ship, but as she neared the island the shades of evening concealed her from sight. The beacon was immediately lighted, but they had to remain all night in the uncertainty whether it had been seen.

How anxiously they waited for the return of morning, and how eagerly they cast their straining eyes in the direction she had last appeared as daylight broke on the world of waters. As the light increased, she was seen standing for the island. A shout rose from their throats, but they themselves were startled by the hollowness of the sound.

The wind had been increasing. As she drew near, it raged furiously, and a heavy surf beat everywhere on the shore. With sinking hearts, they saw the ship haul her wind, and again stand off the dangerous rock.

“We are deserted,” cried several voices, and loud complaints were made of the stranger’s indifference to their sufferings. They watched till she was lost to sight, and most of them declared she would not return.

“If he is a Christian man I am sure he will,” said Peter, who had been sent up by the captain to ascertain how things stood. He returned with his report.

“Don’t be down-hearted, sir; God, you

know, will take care of us. And even if that ship sails away, He can send another," said Peter.

The flag was kept flying all day, and the beacon fire lighted again at night.

A few herrings and some almost rotten cabbages now alone remained; starvation threatened to overtake the shipwrecked mariners. Most of the crew gave way to despair. One or two had become almost delirious from hunger and talked of rushing into the sea and drowning themselves.

"If you do, mates, you will go into the presence of God Almighty with another great sin unrepented of on your heads, besides those you have already committed," said old Hixon. "Let us pray to God to help and deliver us; we have no other hope."

His words had great effect among his late shipmates; for some time they were far more orderly and quiet than they had been hitherto.

Another day passed and the gale continued blowing furiously, and the stranger did not re-appear. Again they were on the look-out. At daybreak she was not to be seen; the wind, however, had abated. As the day drew on, Peter, who was on the look-out, caught sight of a small speck in the south-east; it grew larger and larger.

“The ship; the ship!” he shouted out. The cry was taken up by those scattered about on the rock, and passed on from one to the other. They hurried away along the island in the direction she was seen. Peter waited till he was sure there could be no mistake, and then hastened down to the captain, feeling that the good news would cheer him up. Bill and the black steward were on the opposite shore collecting mussels. Hixon stood gazing at the stranger for some minutes, and then said to himself, “I had better go too, or maybe they will not tell of the captain and the rest.”

As he neared the further end of the rock he found the ship hove-to and a boat approaching the shore. On reaching the little bay into which the boat had put, he found that the starving people had tumbled into her, and that she had already shoved off. He shouted loudly. The boat put back. The captain of the ship, who had himself come in the boat with provisions and water, having heard his account, expressed his indignation at the men who would have allowed their shipmates to be left behind. They replied that they were afraid it would come on to blow again, and that the ship might be driven off and they left behind.

“I would not desert them if I had to remain

a week or a month more," answered the captain, ordering two of his crew to accompany him, and to bring a boat-sail with two spars.

"It's some miles from here, sir," observed Hixon.

"Never mind; if it were ten miles we will bring your sick captain with us," was the reply.

The men told Hixon that their ship was the *Myrtle*, bound out to New South Wales, and their captain's name was Barrow.

It was nearly dark when Captain Barrow reached the hut, and was thankfully welcomed by poor Captain Hauslar.

"I am afraid that for my sake you will expose your ship to risk," observed the latter during their conversation.

"Do not trouble yourself about that, my friend; my first-mate is an excellent seaman, and my crew obedient and trustworthy. It's too dark to go aboard to-night; we will start to-morrow, if, as I trust, you can bear the journey after a night's rest and some food."

The fire was quickly lighted, and a meal prepared such as the shipwrecked party had not partaken of for many a day.

"I will join you and your people in offering thanksgiving to God for His many mercies," said Captain Barrow. "You, I trust, acknowledge Him in all your ways?"

“I did not till lately,” was the answer. And then Captain Hauslar told him that he was indebted to young Peter for being brought to the truth.

“I should like to have that boy with me, then,” observed Captain Barrow. “One youngster like that can exert a wonderful influence for good among a crew. I frequently get rough characters, and it takes long before they can be brought into order. Every assistance is of value.”

The journey to the boat was performed the next morning, Captain Barrow assisting in carrying his brother commander. Although the wind blew heavily, the ship was reached in safety, and she was once more put on her course.





CHAPTER VIII.

PETER RISES IN THE WORLD.



CAPTAIN HAUSLAR expressed his astonishment at the good order which prevailed on board the *Myrtle*.

“I have several old hands who have sailed with me for years,” observed her captain; “but many of the rest were rough enough when they joined.

However, by firmness and gentleness, and treating them as fellow-beings with immortal souls, they now cheerfully do their duty, and many have been brought to know Christ and serve Him.”

Every morning and evening, when the weather permitted it, prayers were read; the men were allowed certain hours in the week for mending their clothes, and no work was

permitted on Sundays except what was absolutely necessary ; Captain Barrow, however, took care it should not be spent in idleness. Those who could not read were taught, and books were provided for those who could make use of them.

“ Every ship that sails on the ocean might be like mine,” observed Captain Barrow.

“ Yes,” was Captain Hauslar’s answer, “ if every master was a Christian. Missionaries may benefit the men partially, but until the masters and officers set them a good example I fear that they will remain much as they are.”

Captain Barrow spoke frequently to Peter and old Hixon, and when the ship reached Sydney he invited them to remain on board and return with him. Both Bill and Emery also gladly entered among her crew, while Captain Hauslar took a passage back in her to England.

After this Peter made several voyages in the *Myrtle* ; Captain Barrow gave him instruction in navigation, for which he showed so much aptitude, that after one or two voyages he was appointed third-mate, and on the next he was raised a step higher.

He had not got over his idea that his father was still alive, but where to seek for him was the question. He earnestly prayed that he

might be led to find his father if he were yet alive, and he told Captain Barrow what he was so anxious about.

“There are few coasts from which a man cannot escape, except perhaps from some of the rocks in the Indian seas, or from the islands in the Pacific, which are rarely visited,” observed Captain Barrow. “I would help you if I could, though I should be sorry to part from you. I would advise you, if you still hold to your idea, to get a berth on board a ship making a roving voyage among the islands in those seas, and you might make inquiries at every place you touch at. You can but do your best, and if it is God’s will you should find him, He, depend on it, will lead you.”

However, Peter made another voyage with Captain Barrow. His first-mate having got the command of a ship, Peter obtained his berth. His Bible had ever been his constant companion, and he had not failed to make good use of it.

The *Myrtle* had just returned home. She required extensive repairs, and as many months would pass before she would be ready for sea, Captain Barrow told Peter that he could obtain for him the command of a vessel bound out to the Mediterranean. He was about to accept the offer when he

heard that a ship, the *Edgar*, was to sail to the Pacific, with the master of which Captain Barrow was acquainted. The master, Captain Sandford, having no first-mate, gladly agreed, when he heard Peter Gray's character, to give him the berth.

"I am thankful to have my first-officer a Christian," he said; "for I have too often been defeated in my attempts to bring my crew to the truth by the indifference or hostility of my mates. Three of my men have sailed with me for years, and I can trust them; but the rest are of the ordinary stamp, though I have hopes that by our example and exhortations they may be brought in the way they should go. Ah, Mr. Gray, Christians enjoy a happiness and freedom from anxiety which no others possess. I leave my family, knowing that, as His dear children, they are under God's protection, and they, while I am tossing about on the ocean, are supported by the same faith, being sure that if I am called hence we shall meet again in heaven. When I part from my beloved wife and daughter I can always remind them of that, and the truth cheers all our hearts."

The *Edgar* had a fine run down Channel, and there was so much to do in getting things in order, that there was little time for conversation.

The second-mate, Tom Berge, had never sailed with Captain Sandford before. He was a bold, hardy seaman of the rough-and-ready school, and seemed much astonished at the customs of his new captain.

“Our skipper is a good sort of man,” he observed to Peter one day, “but I don’t like so much praying and preaching. I cannot help fancying something is going to happen.”

“We want a great many things, and it seems reasonable to me that we should pray for them to God, who gives us everything.”

“But you don’t mean to say that He hears such prayers as rough chaps like me and others aboard here could say?”

“I am sure He hears the prayers of the youngest as well as the oldest of sailors as well as of landsmen,” said Peter. “Jesus Christ says He came ‘not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance;’ and also God says, ‘The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin;’ so of course He will listen to the roughest sinner who turns to Him.”

“Would He hear my prayers now?” asked the second-mate.

“If you turn from your sins and seek Him, certainly,” answered Peter; “for He has said, ‘Seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you,’ and that was said to all.”

At length Berge not only consented to let

Peter read the Bible to him, but gladly accepted a copy of which the captain made him a present, and, becoming a diligent reader himself, before the *Edgar* rounded Cape Horn, could say, "I rejoice in the blood of my risen Saviour."

There is no part of the ocean in which storms are more frequent or more terrible than off Cape Horn. Just as the *Edgar* sighted the Cape, she encountered a heavy gale, the seas rising in mountain billows around her.

There was on board a young lad in whom Berge had from the first taken great interest, and who had lately been brought to know Christ. As the gale was seen approaching, the order was given to close reef the topsails, and the lad, with others, flew aloft. He was on the lee yard-arm. The wind struck the ship with unexpected fury. As she heeled over, he lost his hold and fell into the foaming waters. He was a good swimmer, and struck out boldly.

"He must be saved!" cried Berge. "Who will go with me?" and, running to the falls, prepared to lower a boat.

Captain Sandford, though seeing the danger, was unwilling to stop him. While the rest hung back, the four Christian men who have been spoken of sprang to the assistance

of the mate, and the ship being brought to the wind, the boat was lowered. Now she rose to the top of a foaming billow, and now she was lost to sight. Boldly she made her way towards where the youth was struggling in the waves. Just then a dark squall with tremendous force struck the ship, and a heavy sea washed over her. She escaped damage; but when the squall cleared away, the boat was nowhere to be seen! In vain those on board waited her return.

“They have been summoned hence,” said the captain; “God’s will be done, they were all prepared to meet Him. For that let us be thankful.”

For several days the ship heeled to and fro, till the wind, coming fair, she once more stood on her course, and entered the bright waters of the Pacific.

Peter observed that the captain felt greatly the loss of the brave mate and his companions. His health had been for some time failing.

One morning, when the lofty Andes had just appeared in sight, he summoned his first-mate to his bedside.

“Gray,” he said, “I feel that I shall not live out the day. I should first wish to see all the crew, and then I would have a word with you.”

The men came, one after the other, and the captain spoke affectionately and earnestly to each, urging them to seek the Saviour while He might be found, and recommending them to listen to the first-mate, who would explain the truth to them.

“Gray,” he said, when they had left him, “I must ask you to visit my wife and daughter when you get home, and bear my last message of love to them. Take this letter and deliver it, if you can, with your own hands. Send them the property I leave on board; I know that I can trust you; with things of this world I have nothing more to do. And now read some of God’s word and pray with me.”

Peter remained with the captain till the last, and with sincere sorrow closed his eyes.

Next day the ship entered the harbour of Valparaiso, where the captain was attended to his grave by most of his own crew and those of several other English merchantmen in harbour.

Peter had much felt the want of Christian sympathy in his sorrow. Among those who had attended the funeral of his late captain, he observed a tall fine-looking man with grey hair. A second glance convinced him that he was his old captain, Mr. Hauslar.

“What, Gray?” exclaimed the latter, when Peter spoke to him. “I remember you

now. Come on board with me ; my ship lies close to yours."

Peter had the satisfaction of finding that his former friend continued a faithful believer. Delightful to both was the conversation they had together.

The next day Captain Hauslar accompanied Peter to the agents, and from his recommendation they directed him to take command of the *Edgar*. A young Christian man, whose ship had been lost, but the crew rescued by Captain Hauslar, was appointed to serve as second-mate, and came accompanied by four South Sea Islanders, who were considered good seamen.

While the *Edgar* was getting in her stores Peter enjoyed the company of his friend, and with renewed spirits and hopes he sailed on his voyage.

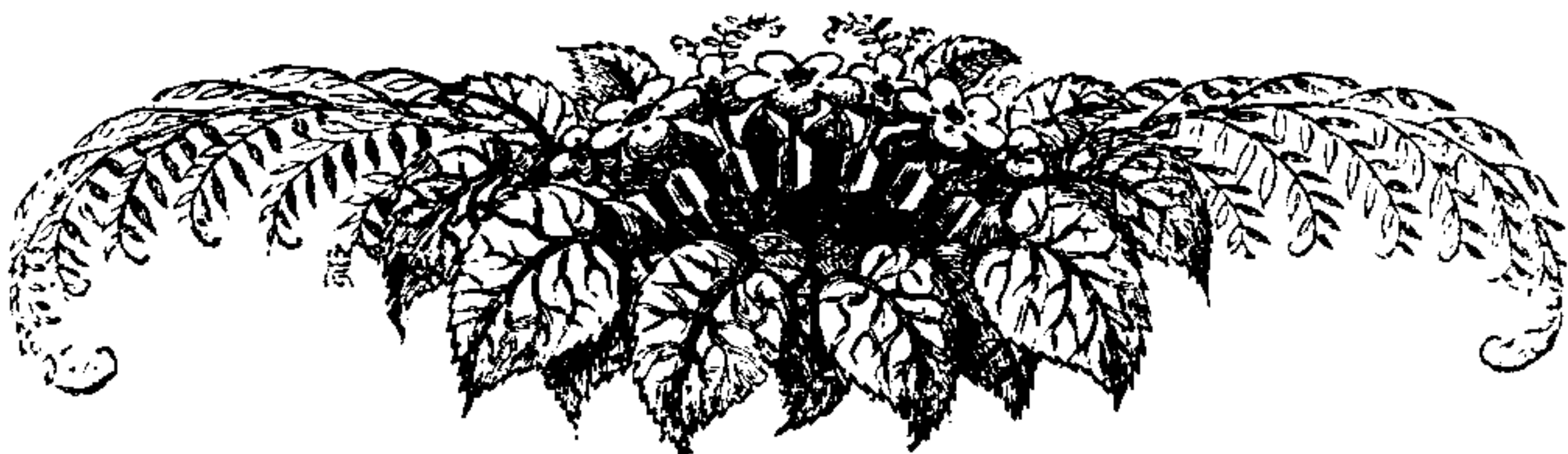
The beautiful island of Otaheite and several others were visited. He then, according to his order, sailed northward, to call at the Sandwich Islands, thence to proceed to Japan and through the Indian Seas round the Cape of Good Hope homewards.

Calm as the Pacific is at times, fearful gales sweep across it. To one of these the *Edgar* was exposed for several days, and Peter had to exert all his skill and seamanship to preserve his ship. He did his best, and putting

his trust in God, sought His protection. The gale had driven the ship considerably out of her course. For some days no observation could be taken; an anxious look-out was kept, for coral reefs and islands were near at hand, and with little warning the ship might be driven on one of them.

The night was unusually dark. Peter and his mates had never left the deck. Just as morning was about to break a cry was heard of "Land! on the lee bow!" The ship was put about, and scarcely had she come round when breakers were seen rising in a foaming wall astern.





CHAPTER IX.

A STRANGE DISCOVERY.



As the day dawned an island, covered with the richest vegetation, appeared rising to a considerable height, with a calm lagoon between it and the circling reef. A tempting passage was also seen leading from the stormy ocean into the lagoon.

One of the natives coming aft said that he knew it well. It was his native island, and he offered to pilot in the ship. Should the gale increase, the danger of attempting to beat off that lee shore would be great. Peter therefore at once accepted the offer. The *Edgar* was headed in for the lagoon. The foaming breakers roared upon either side as she shot

between them, and in another minute she was gliding calmly over the smooth water of the lagoon. Piloted by the native in a short time she brought up in a beautiful bay, where she might ride securely.

Scarcely had she dropped her anchor when several canoes paddled alongside. The native hailed one of them, and the people in her came on board. They were soon affectionately greeting him, while the rest of the crew were engaged in buying fruits and vegetables and various articles which the others had brought.

In a short time he came aft to Captain Gray. The information he gave was satisfactory. When he had left the island the people had been heathens, and he had expected to find them in the same condition. Two native catechists had, however, been for some time among them, and an English missionary had a few months before arrived, whose house was situated on the shores of another bay at a little distance; he had been sent for, and would probably, ere long, be on board. Peter, knowing the treacherous character borne by many of the South Sea Islanders, had resolved not to allow his crew to go on shore, or permit more than a few natives at a time on board; he had now, however, no fears for the safety of his ship.

Peter was in his cabin, when a message was brought him that a canoe was coming off, with a white man in her.

“He must be the missionary,” he said, and hurried on deck to welcome him. The canoe came alongside, and an old man in a seaman’s dress, with white hair streaming from under his hat, stepped on board. Peter, shaking him by the hand, inquired whether he was the missionary he was led to expect would pay him a visit.

“Oh, no, sir! he is a very different sort of man to me; I only wish I was him,” was the answer. “He will be here soon, I doubt not. I came aboard to ask whether the ship was homeward bound, and you would let me work my passage in her; I have got some strength left in my old arms yet.”

“I’ll gladly give you a passage, my man,” said Peter, “if you desire to return to England. Have you been long out in these parts?”

“Ay, sir, many a year—I forget how many, for I lost all count of time when I lived among the savages, but I reckon it carefully now since I have been brought to my right mind by Mr. Wilson, the missionary you have heard tell of.”

“I should have thought that at your age you would have been content to remain with

him and lend him a helping hand," answered Peter, trying to restrain hopes and feelings rising in his breast which he feared might be disappointed. "The assistance of a Christian white man would be of great value to him."

"That may be, sir," answered the old man, "but there are those at home I long to see again. I left them years ago, and was shipwrecked upon these islands. For some time I had no chance of escaping. Living among the savages here, I grew to live as they lived, and forgot my home and friends. Since I have learned to love God I have been longing to see my family again, but I have not been able to get back, for I have been away on the other side of the island each time a ship has touched here. If you had left a wife and a little boy at home as I have, you would wish to get back to set your eyes again on them, and hold them in your arms."

"A wife and a little boy!" exclaimed Peter, unable longer to restrain his eagerness to learn who the old man was. "Tell me their names, and where they lived."

"It was at a place, maybe, you have not been to nor heard of either, seeing it's of no great size," answered the old man; "it's called Springvale, and is not far from the little town of Oldport; and my name is Gray, sir, at your service."

“Gray!” exclaimed Peter, taking the old man’s hand, and scarcely able to speak. “Come into my cabin, I wish to tell you more about your wife and son.”

Peter had no longer any doubt that his long-lost father stood before him, but he was unwilling to make himself known in sight of his crew, fearing also the effect the announcement would have on the old man.

Conducting the old sailor, whose countenance wore an expression of astonishment, down into the cabin, he closed the door, and placing him respectfully on a sofa, still holding his hand, sat himself down by his side.

“You were telling me,” he said, “that you have learned the truth, and you know, therefore, God’s love and mercy, and that He orders all things for the best. You have been very many years from home, and must be aware that though your son when you saw him last was a little boy, he must now be a grown man; your wife, too, would be an old woman. Have you ever thought of the hardships and trials to which she would probably have been exposed, left all alone to struggle with the hard world, and still having to go through them? But suppose God in His mercy had taken her to Himself, and you knew that she had been spending all these years in happi-

ness unspeakable, would you not have cause to rejoice?"

The old sailor gazed at the young captain, scarcely able to comprehend him clearly.

"God is very merciful; He loves me, though I am a sinner, and orders all for the best. I know that is what Mr. Wilson says, and he speaks the truth, for he turned me from little better than a savage into a Christian man," answered the old sailor.

As he spoke his eyes fell on Peter's Bible, which lay on the table with the leathern case beside it.

"What are you driving at, sir?" he exclaimed in an agitated tone. "I remember that book, as if I had seen it but yesterday; it was my wife's. Do you know her? tell me, tell me."

Peter placed his arm so that the old man's head might rest on it. "My name is Gray, sir," he said. "That book was indeed your wife's, my mother's, and I am very sure that I am your son."

"You Peter, my little boy?" exclaimed the old man, gazing in his countenance. "You captain of this ship, and I have found you after these long years! God be praised! And your mother, tell me about her."

"I tried to prepare you, sir, for what I have to say," said Peter. "She has been among

the blessed for many years, and her last prayer on earth was that I might find you that you might be brought to know the Saviour in whom she trusted."

"God's will be done! God's will be done!" murmured the old man, letting his head fall on his son's shoulder. "He knows what is best. In His mercy He took her; and I all the time living like a savage, but He found me—He found me; and He has sent you, and all through His love, to tell me about her. I began to fear that she might be poor and suffering, and you living a hard life, or sent maybe to the workhouse, but He orders all things for the best. Praise His name!"

The old man could say no more. His feelings overcoming him, he bent his head and wept like a child.

No one would have recognised the once "roaring Jack Gray," and for some time the wild, half-clad savage, in the now venerable-looking old Christian man, who sat at supper with the young captain and the missionary who had now arrived.

"I fear that I shall lose your assistance, friend Gray," said Mr. Wilson, "though I rejoice that you have found your son."

"I have been casting the matter in my mind, sir," answered the old sailor, "and

asking God to direct me, and, now she has gone whom I longed to see, and my son in His mercy has been sent to me, I am very sure that He does not want me to go away from this place. I should be a stranger in England, of no use to any one, and a burden to my son, and here you tell me that I am of help to you among the natives, and I think I am, as I can speak their language, and tell them about the love and mercy of God, who found them out as He found me out, and has sent His blessed Gospel of peace to them."

"I am very sure Captain Gray will agree with me that, although he may wish to have you with him to look after you in your old age, you are more certain to enjoy happiness here, knowing that you are of use to your fellow-creatures, than you would be in returning to the land you have so long left."

"I do not wish to bias my father," said Peter, "and I am very sure that, seeking direction from God, he will be directed aright."

"It is settled then, my son," said the old sailor, looking up, "I'll remain with Mr. Wilson, and help him. I can say with old Israel, about whom he was reading to me the other day, when he saw Joseph, 'Now let me die since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive.'"

Peter agreed that his father was right in the resolution he had come to.

The first-mate, and several of the crew who had visited old Mr. Gray in his hut, begged that they might be allowed to put up a more comfortable dwelling for him. Peter thankfully accepted their offer, and several of the natives, finding what they proposed doing, gave their assistance. In a short time a neat cottage was erected in the shelter of a cocoa-nut grove, with a verandah in front and a garden fenced in on one side. Peter had also the satisfaction of taking on shore some clothing and a number of articles which he thought might be of use to his father, as well as a store of provisions such as were likely to keep in that climate.

“Peter, you are over-generous to me,” said the old man, when the gifts arrived, “I never did anything for you.”

“You must consider them as God’s gifts; if He had not bestowed them on me I could not have offered them to you,” answered Peter.

“I see, I see,” said the old man; “He orders all for the best, praise His name.”

Peter paid several visits to Mr. Wilson, who, with his wife, had now been nearly a year on the island. He disclaimed any part in the conversion of the old sailor, that having been

brought about by the instrumentality of the two native catechists who had preceded him. By that time a large number of the inhabitants of that part of the island had burned their idols, and become nominal Christians, while a very considerable portion were communicants, and evidently endeavouring to walk in the footsteps of the Master they professed to serve.

“There is still, however, a wide field for our labours,” observed Mr. Wilson, “for which I trust your father will be spared many years with me.”

Stormy weather, and the necessity of re-fitting and making certain repairs which the *Edgar* required, and for which the sheltered harbour afforded peculiar facilities, kept her there for upwards of a fortnight; when parting from his father, Peter proceeded on his voyage to England.

The *Edgar* arrived in safety in England. Peter had made a successful voyage, and found himself the possessor of more money than he had ever expected to receive.

As soon as the ship was safe in dock, and he had performed all the duties required of him, he left her in charge of the first-mate and proceeded to pay the promised visit to his late captain's widow and daughter. He found them living in a neat little cottage near

London. Mrs. Sandford had heard of her husband's death, and cordially welcomed Captain Gray. She was anxious to receive an account of the last days of his life, which he alone could afford.

"He died as he lived, trusting to the all-sufficient merits of Jesus Christ his Saviour," said Peter; "it is a blessed thing, Mrs. Sandford, that God's promises are sure, and that those who thus die are taken to be with Him."

"Indeed it is, Captain Gray; I know that I shall meet my dear husband in His glorious presence, and my daughter enjoys the same certain hope. That confidence has taken away the sting of grief which we should otherwise have felt. It was he who led us to the truth, and constantly charged us to be prepared for what has occurred: he, indeed, seemed to be aware that he should be taken during one of his voyages, yet none the less did he trust in God that all would be well."

Mrs. Sandford, after some further conversation, asked whether he intended going home or taking up his residence in London while he remained on shore, "because," she added, "as our means are limited, I purpose taking lodgers, if such offer as I should be willing to receive."

"I have no home," said Peter, and he gave

her an outline of his history; "if, therefore, you can accommodate me I shall be very glad to remain here."

Soon after this, Mrs. Sandford's daughter Susan entered the room. She was a pleasing, quiet, gentle girl, and appeared fully to share her mother's faith; and when Peter had talked with her for some time, he felt sure from the remarks she made that she was a true and earnest Christian. Peter had thought and read a good deal. Captain Sandford had left a well-selected library on board. His knowledge had become greatly enlarged, without in any way having his simple faith weakened. The little shepherd-boy was now the thoughtful, intelligent, and gentlemanly man, not possessed, perhaps, of the polish which mixing in the great world gives, but that far more enduring refinement which constant communion with Christ affords. Worldly people, though acknowledging the benefit of Christianity, know not its true source, and are surprised to find Christ's humble disciples so free from coarseness, and so gentle and courteous in their manners.

Susan had been taught in the same school.

Several weeks passed away. Peter came to the conclusion that he should wish to marry no other woman than Susan Sandford. Per-

haps Susan had discovered this, for he was not a person who could well hide his feelings ; at all events he ventured to tell her so, and she promised to become his wife. He would gladly have married before going to sea, but Mrs. Sandford, who was a prudent woman, insisted on his waiting till he had returned from his next voyage.

That voyage was a long one, for the owners again sent the *Edgar* into the Pacific. Peter was able to pay a visit to his father, whom he found labouring with devoted zeal as a catechist among the natives, and submitting humbly to the directions he received from Mr. Wilson, the missionary. The old man was delighted to hear of his son's intended marriage, and begged him if he could to bring out his wife to see him.

“The utmost desire of my heart will then be fulfilled,” he exclaimed ; “and, oh ! how loving has God been to me by bringing me in His great mercy out of darkness into His glorious light ! Every day I live I wonder more and more ; and, Peter, it is my belief I shall go on wondering through all eternity, because I am sure we shall never understand the love and mercy of Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, in all its fulness.”

Peter willingly promised to do as the old man wished. Had he still been the rough

ignorant sailor Jack Gray once was, he might have felt an unwillingness to introduce his wife to him, even though he was his father; but now how different was the case when he was to bring her to the venerable Christian, patriarchal in appearance, and mild in manners, so gentle and loving to all around! It was a pleasure to see the natives come up and speak to him, they all evidently holding him in great respect.

Again the *Edgar* had a prosperous voyage, and Peter having yet further increased his means of supporting a wife, Mrs. Sandford no longer hesitated to allow her daughter to marry. She had a further reason; her own health was failing, and before the *Edgar* was ready for sea Susan lost her mother.

When Peter proposed that his wife should accompany him, she gladly consented, and as the natives among whom his father lived had promised to collect a large quantity of coconut oil to ship on board the *Edgar*, Peter was once more able to visit the island.

He was told on his arrival that his father was ill.

The old man's eyes brightened up at the sight of his sweet-looking daughter-in-law and son. He blessed them both, and entreated that they would spend the evening at his house. He spoke cheerfully, and with great

thankfulness, of the progress of the Gospel in the island. Peter hoped that he might yet be spared to spend many more years in his useful labours among the dark-skinned natives.

The following day, however, a relapse occurred, and holding his daughter with one hand, his head resting on his son's arm, and his faithful friend Mr. Wilson and the two catechists standing by, the old sailor breathed his last—a heavenly smile resting on the face of the once “roaring Jack Gray.”

Peter made many voyages accompanied by his loving wife, and by foresight and prudence having realized a little independence, added to what her father had left Susan, he was able to purchase the plot of ground on which his mother's cottage stood with several acres around. Here having built a neat house, he settled down, and making his Bible a light to his path and a lamp to his feet, his abode was truly as a light set on a hill, he and his family proving a blessing to all around.





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