

AS WE SWEEP
THROUGH THE
DEEP
BY
WILLIAM GORDON
STABLES

As We Sweep Through the Deep by William Gordon Stables

CHAPTER I POOR JACK

“As ye sweep through the deep
While the stormy winds do blow,
While the battle rages loud and long,
And the stormy winds do blow.”
Campbell.

UST two years this very day since poor Jack Mackenzie sailed away from England in the Ocean Pride.”

Mr. Richards, of the tough old firm of Griffin, Keane, and Co., Solicitors, London, talked more to himself than to any one within hearing.

As he spoke he straightened himself up from his desk in a weary kind of way, and began to mend his pen: they used quills in those good old times.

“Just two years! How the time flies! And we’re not getting any younger. Are we, partner?”

Whether Mr. Keane heard what he said or not, he certainly did not reply immediately. He was standing by the window, gazing out into the half-dark, fog-shaded street.

“Fog, fog, fog!” he grunted peevishly; “nothing but fog and gloom. Been nothing else all winter; and now that spring has all but come, why it’s fog, fog, fog, just the same! Tired of it—sick of it!”

Then he turned sharply round, exclaiming, “What did you say about Jack and about growing younger?”

Mr. Richards smiled a conciliatory smile. He was the junior partner though the older man—if that is not a paradox—for his share in the firm was not a quarter as large as Keane’s, who was really Keane by name and keen by nature, of small stature, with dark hair turning gray, active, business-like, and a trifle suspicious.

Mr. Richards was delightfully different in every way—a round rosy face that might have belonged to some old sea-captain, a bald and rosy forehead, hair as white as drifted snow, and a pair of blue eyes that always seemed brimming over with kindness and good-humour.

“I was talking more to my pen than to you,” he said quietly.

“But what’s given you Jack on the brain, eh?”

“Oh, nothing—nothing in particular, that is. I happened to turn to his account, that is all.”

“Bother him. Yes, and but for you, Richards, never an account should he have had with us.”

“Well, Jack gets round me somehow. He is not half a bad lad, with his dash and his fun and his jollity. Ay, and his ways are very winning sometimes. He does get round one, partner.”

“I don’t doubt it, Richards. Winning enough when he wants to get round you and wheedle cash out of you. I tell you what, partner: Jack’s got all his father’s aristocratic notions, all his father’s pride and improvidence. Ay, and he’d ruin his dad too, if—if—”

“If what, partner?”

“Why, if his dad weren’t ruined already.”

“Come, come, Keane, it isn’t quite so bad as that.”

“Pretty nigh it, I can assure you. And I can’t get the proud old Scot to retrench. Why doesn’t he let that baronial hall of his, instead of sticking to it and mortgaging it in order to keep up appearances and entertain half the gentry in the county? Why doesn’t he take a five-roomed cottage, and let his daughter teach the harp that she plays so well?”

“O partner! Come, you know!”

“Well, ‘O partner’ as much as you like; if old Mackenzie’s pride were proper pride, his daughter would take in washing sooner than the family should go deeper in debt every day. But the crisis will come; somebody will foreclose.”

“You won’t surely, partner?”

“Bother your sentiment, Richards. He owes me over forty thousand pounds. Think of that. I declare I believe I’d be a better landlord than Mack himself. Forty thousand pounds, Richards, and I don’t see any way of getting a penny, except by—”

“Except by foreclosing?”

Richards sighed as he bent once more over his desk. He had been family lawyer to Mackenzie before he joined the firm of Griffin, Keane, and Co., and dearly loved the family, or what was left of it.

He tried to work but couldn’t now. Presently he closed the ledger with a bang and got down off his stool.

“I say, Keane.” he said, “I see a way out of this. Look here. You have nobody to leave your wealth to except dear little Gerty—”

“Well?”

“Well, Jack is precious fond of her; why not—”

“He, he, he! ho, ho, ho!” laughed Keane. “Why, Richards, you’re in your dotage, man! I’ve a baronet in view for Gerty. And Jack is a beggar, although he does swing a sword at his side and fight the French.”

Richards went back to his stool quiet and subdued. “Poor Jack!” he muttered.

“Just two years this very day, Gerty dear, since poor Jack sailed away from England in the Ocean Pride.”

Flora Mackenzie bent listlessly over the harp she had been playing as she spoke, her fingers touching a chord or two that seemed in unison with her thoughts. The two girls, Gerty Keane and she, who were seldom separate now, by day or night, sat in Flora’s boudoir, which had two great windows opening on to a balcony and overlooking the grand old gardens of Grantley Hall, Suffolk. Grant Mackenzie, a sturdy old one-armed soldier, was the proud owner of the Hall and all the wide, wooded landscape for miles around. Jack, now far away at sea, was his heir, and with his sister Flora, the only children the general had. The fine old soldier had been in possession of the property only about a dozen years, yet I fear he had inherited something else—namely, the lordly fashions of his Highland ancestry. That branch of the Clan Mackenzie to which he

belonged was nothing unless proud. So long as it could hold its head a little higher than its neighbours it was happy, and when poverty came then death might follow as soon as it pleased. There was every appearance of unbounded wealth in and around Grantley Hall. The house was a massive old Elizabethan mansion, half buried in lofty lime and elm and oak trees, approached by a winding drive, and a long way back from the main road that leads through this beautiful shire from north to south.

Everything was large connected with the Hall and estate. There were no finer trees anywhere in England than those sturdy oaks and elms, no more stately waving pine trees, and no more shady drooping limes than those that bordered the broad grass ride which stretched for many a mile across the estate. On the park-like lawn in front of the house—if this ancient quaint old pile could be said to have a front—the flower-beds were as big as suburban gardens, the statuary, the fountains, and even the gray and moss-grown dial-stone were gigantic; and nowhere else in all this vast and wealthy county were such stately herons seen as those that sailed around Grantley and built in its trees. The entrance-hall was spacious and noble, though the porch was comparatively small; but if divested of its banners and curtains and emptied of its antique furniture, its wealth-laden tables, on which jewelled arms and curios from every land under the sun seemed to have been laid out for show, its oaken chests, its sideboards, its organ and many another musical instrument ancient and modern, the drawing-room was large enough to have driven a coach-and-four around.

The bedrooms above were many of them so lofty that in the dead, dull winter two great fires in each could hardly keep them warm.

The room in which the girls sat was the tartan boudoir. The walls were draped with clan tartans, and eke the lounges and chairs; while the heads of many a royal stag adorned the walls, amidst tastefully displayed claymores, spears, shields, and dirks, and pistols.

“Just two years, Gerty. How quickly the time has fled!”

“Just two years, Flora. Strange that I should have been thinking about Jack this very moment. But then you were playing one of Jack’s favourite airs, you know.”

Flora got up from her seat at the harp. A tall and graceful girl she was, with a wealth of auburn hair, and blue dreamy eyes, and eyelashes that swept her sun-tinted cheeks when she looked downwards.

She got up from her seat, and went and knelt beside the couch on which Gerty was lounging with a book.

“Why strange, sister?” she asked, taking Gerty’s hand.

Gerty was petite, blonde, bewitching—so many a young man said, and many a rough old squire as well. She was no baby in face, however. Although of the purest type of Saxon beauty—without the square chin that so disfigures many an otherwise lovely English face—there was fire and character in every lineament of Gerty Keane’s countenance.

She answered Flora calmly, candidly, quietly—I am almost inclined to say, in a business way that reminded one of her father.

“Dear Flo,” she said—and her eyes as she spoke had a sad and far-away look in them—“it would be unmaidenly in me to say how much I should like to be your sister in reality. It may not be strange for me to think of Jack; we have liked each other, almost loved each other, since childhood.”

“Almost?” said Flora.

“Listen, Flo. I may love Jack, but there is one other I love even more.”

“Sir Digby, Gerty?”

“No, dear Flo, but my father. I love him more because he has few friends, and because others do not love him. I would do anything for father.”

“You would even marry Sir Digby?”

“Perhaps.”

“O Gerty! poor Jack will break his heart.”

She buried her face in the pillow for a few moments. She was struggling with the grief that bid fair to choke her. When she looked up again there was nothing but softness in Gerty’s face, and tears were coursing down her cheeks—tears she made no effort to wipe away.

Poor Jack!

“Just two years to-day, Tom, since you and I sailed away from dear old England in the Ocean Pride.”

“And hasn’t the time flown too?” said Tom.

“Ah! but then we’ve been so busy. Just think of the many actions we’ve fought.”

“True, Jack, true! What a lucky, ay, and what a glorious thing for young fellows like us to be in a ship commanded by so daring a sailor as Sir Sidney Salt!”

“Yes, Tom, yes. And think of the haul of prize-money we shall have when we once more touch British ground.”

“O Jack, I am surprised. Money! A Mackenzie of the Mackenzies to be mercenary! Jack, Jack!”

Jack and Tom were keeping their watch—that is, it was Tom’s watch, and Jack had come on deck to bear him company and talk of home.

Under every stitch of canvas, with a bracing beam wind that filled every sail, jib, and square, and stay, the bold frigate Ocean Pride was skimming across the Atlantic like a veritable sea-bird. She was bound for the lone Bermudas, and the night was a heavenly one. So no wonder that, as the two young sailors leaned over the bulwarks and gazed at the moonlit water that seemed all a-shimmer with gold, their thoughts went back to their homes in merry England.

“Listen, Tom; don’t call me mercenary, bo’. Did you ever hear those lines of Burns, our great national bard?—

‘O poortith cauld and restless love,
Ye wreck my peace between ye;
But poortith cauld I well could bear,
If it werena for my Jeannie.’

Yes, Tom; I love the sweetest lass ever wooed by sailor lad. Does she love me? Was that what you asked, Tom? She never said so, bo’; but ah! I know she does, and as sure as yonder moon is shining she is thinking of me even now. But sit here on the skylight till I tell you, Tom, where the ‘poortith’ comes in.”

And sitting there, with the moonlight streaming clear on both their earnest young faces, and on their snow-white powdered hair, Jack poured into the ear of his friend a story that was at once both sorrowful and romantic.

Tom listened quietly till the very end, then he stretched out his soft right hand and clasped his friend's.

“Poor Jack!” he said.

“Ay, poor Jack indeed! And now I'll go below. I want to think and maybe dream of home and Gerty.”

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CHAPTER II.

“HE NEVER SAID HE LOVED ME.”

“The feast was over in Branksome Tower,
And the ladye had gone to her secret bower.

* * * * *

The tables were drawn, it was idlesse all;
Knight and page and household squire
Loitered through the lofty hall,
Or crowded around the ample fire.”—Scott.

“DO your best, and act your best.” That was all the letter said, and it was signed “Your affectionate father, Henry Keane.”

It was the eve of a great party, to be held next day at Grantley Hall, in honour of the coming of age of the only son of General Grant Mackenzie, about a month after the incident described in last chapter.

Gerty sat alone in her room, just as the shadows of this beautiful evening in spring were beginning to deepen into night. She held the letter crumpled in her hand.

“Poor Jack!” she mentally observed. “His coming of age, and he not here! What a mockery! And dear Flora too. Oh, if she were but aware that hardly anything in this great house belongs to her father—all mortgaged, or nearly all. It is well, perhaps, she is kept in the dark. Her proud heart would be crushed in the dust if she but knew even a part. But poor Jack—is it possible, I wonder? he might come. Oh, what joy just to see his dear old face again once in a way! But ah, dear me! it may be better not. Besides, Jack never said he loved me. Oh, but he does. It is mean of me to compound with my feelings. No; I shall face the whole position. Father never asked me to marry Sir Digby Auld. Nay, he knows his daughter’s spirit too well. For the love I bear father I would do anything, so long as no command were issued. Poor Jack! Poor father!—well, and I may add, poor Sir Digby! He is so good and gentle. Ah me! my life’s bark seems drifting into unknown seas, and all is darkness and mist. What can I do but drift? Oh yes, I can hope. I am so young, and Jack is not old. We shall both forget; I am sure we shall. Moore says—

‘There’s nothing half so sweet in life
As love’s young dream.’

The poet is right. But then it does not last. In the unknown seas into which my bark is drifting all will be brightness and sunshine. Digby will be always kind, and father will be happy and gay. The people will love him, dear lonesome father! Away from the bustle and din and fogs of London, his life will enter a new lease. And Jack will visit us often, and together he and I will laugh over our childhood’s amours. Digby is too good to be jealous. I wonder if Jack will marry; I had never thought of that. Oh dear, oh dear! my victory over self will not be such an easy one as I had imagined. I hope Jack won’t marry that hateful Gordon girl, nor any of those simpering Symonses. But, after all, what does it matter to me whom Jack marries? I begin to think I am very mean after all; I hate myself. Positively I—”

“Come in.”

“Sir Digby has called, Miss Keane, and desires to see you for a moment. He is in the tartan boudoir.”

“Tell him, Smith, that I am sorry I cannot leave my room—that I have a headache—that—stay, Smith, stay. Say that I shall be down in a few minutes.”

“Yes, Miss Gertrude.”

“It is best over,” she murmured to herself as Smith left.

She touched the bell, and next minute she was seated before a tall mirror, at each side of which burned a star of candles, and her maid was dressing her hair.

“Mary,” she said, as she rose and smoothed out the folds of her blue silk dress, “do I look my best?”

“Oh, Miss Keane, you look ’most like a fairy—the low-bodied blue, and the pink camellia in your hair. You are so beautiful that if I were a knight I should come for you with a chariot and six, and carry you away to my castle, and have a real live dragon o’ purpose to guard you—I would really, miss.”

“Do you think, Mary, I could act well?”

“Oh, Miss Keane, how you do talk! Actors is low. Miss Gerty, always look your best; but acting—no, no, miss, I won’t have she.”

And Mary tossed her head regardless of grammar.

Mary was a little Essex maid that Miss Keane had had for years, and had succeeded in spoiling, as children are spoiled.

“Ah dear,” said the girl, “and to think that to-morrow is Jack’s coming o’ age, and he won’t be here! You don’t mind me a-callin’ of him Jack, does ye, Miss Gerty? Heigh-ho! didn’t he used to chuck me under the chin just, the dear, bright boy? ‘Mary,’ he says once, ‘when I comes of age I means to marry you right off the reel.’ And I took him in my arms and kissed him on what Tim would call the spur o’ the moment. Then Jack ups with a glass o’ ale—it were in the kitching, miss—and he jumps on to a chair and draws his navy dirk. ‘Here’s the way,’ he cries, ‘that they tosses cans in the service. And I’ll give you a toast,’ he says. ‘I drinks

‘To the wind that blows,
And the ship that goes,
And the girl as loves a sailor,
Hip, hip, hooray!’

But run away, Miss Gerty. Only no acting, mind. Oh dear, oh dear! I wish poor Jack would come.”

“Ah, Jack, my bo’,” cried Tom, meeting his friend on the quarter-deck just after divisions, “let me congratulate you. You’ve come of age this very morning. Tip us your flipper, Jack. Why, you don’t look very gay over it after all. Feeling old, I daresay—farewell to youth and that sort of game. Never mind; I’m going to see the surgeon presently. Old M’Hearty is a splendid fellow, and he’ll find an excuse for splicing the main-brace, you may be sure. Why, Jack, on such an eventful occasion all hands should rejoice. Ah, here comes the doctor!—Doctor, this is Jack’s birthday, and he’s come of age, and—”

“Sail in sight, sir!”

“Tom, I shall not survive this battle.”

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It was a hail from the mast-head—a bold and sturdy shout that was heard from bowsprit to binnacle by all hands on deck, and that even penetrated to the ward-room, causing every officer there to spring from his seat and hurry on deck.

The captain, Sir Sidney Salt, came slowly forth from his cabin. A daring sailor was Sir Sidney as ever braved gale or faced a foe. Hardly over the middle height, with clean shaven face and faultless cue, his age might have been anything from thirty to forty; but in those mild blue eyes of his no one, it was said, had ever seen a wrathful look, not even when engaged hand-to-hand in a combat to the death on the blood-slippery battle-deck of a French man-o'-war.

“Run aloft, Mr. Mackenzie,” he said now, “and see what you make of her.”

In five minutes' time, or even less, young Grant Mackenzie stood once more on the quarter-deck, and the drum was beating to arms.

No one would break with a loud word the hushed and solemn silence that fell upon the ship after the men, stripped to the waist, had stood to their guns; and as barefooted boys passed from group to group, scattering the sawdust that each one knew might soon be wet with his own or a comrade's life-blood, many an eye was turned skywards, and many a lip was seen to move in prayer.

Jack and Tom stood together. The former was pale as death. “Tom,” he whispered, “I had a terrible dream last night. I shall not survive this battle; I do not wish to. Tell her, Tom, tell Gerty I died sword in hand, and that, false as she is, my last thoughts were—”

“Stand by the larboard guns!”

Jack and Tom flew to their quarters, and in the terrible fight that followed neither love itself nor thoughts of home, except in the minds of the wounded and dying that were borne below, could find a place.

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CHAPTER III.

AN INTERRUPTED PROPOSAL.

“None without hope e’er loved the brightest fair,
But love can hope when reason would despair.”

ERHAPS never was youthful maiden less prepared to listen to the addresses of a would-be wooer than was Gerty Keane when she entered the tartan boudoir that evening at Grantley Hall. She was little more than a child even now, only lately turned seventeen; and before Jack went away to sea—now two years and a month ago—I believe that most of the love-making between them had been conducted through the media of bon-bons and an occasional wild flower, though it ended with farewell tears, a lock of bonnie hair, and a miniature, both of which Jack had taken away with him, and, like a true lover, worn next his heart ever since the parting.

Gerty’s cheeks were flushed to-night, her eyes shone, her very lips were rosier than usual.

Sir Digby Auld sprang up as nimbly as his figure would permit, and advanced to meet the girl with outstretched hands. The baronet was verging on forty, but dressed in the height of youthful fashion; he was a trifle pompous, and he was likewise a trifle podgy.

As a shopkeeper or clerk there would have been nothing very attractive about Digby, but as a baronet he was somewhat of a success. There was nothing, however, in his fair, soft, round face or washed-out blue eyes calculated to influence the tender passion in one of the opposite sex; only he was excessively good-natured, and it is very nice of a baronet to be excessively good-natured and condescending, especially when everybody knows he may become a lord as soon as another noble lord chooses to die. Everybody knew also of Sir Digby’s passion for Gerty Keane, and for this very reason used to say sneering and ill-natured things behind the baronet’s back; for people were not a whit better in those “good old times” than they are now.

Whenever Sir Digby sailed into a drawing-room that happened to possess a sprinkling of marriageable girls of various ages, from sixteen to—say sixty, he sailed into an ocean of smiles; but if Gerty were there, he appeared to notice no one else in the room. Whenever

Sir Digby sailed out again, their tongues began to wag, both male and female tongues, but particularly the latter.

But on the particular evening when Sir Digby Auld solicited an interview with Gerty, he had dressed with more than his usual care, and wore his softest, oiliest smile.

“O Gerty,” he cried, “I’m delighted beyond measure! How beautiful you look to-night! No star in all the firmament half so radiant as your eyes; no rose that ever bloomed could rival the blush on your cheek!”

Sir Digby had practised this little speech for half-an-hour in front of the glass while waiting for Gerty.

The girl didn’t seem to hear him; or if she did, she did not heed. He led her passive to a seat, and drew his own chair nearer to hers than ever he had sat before.

There was a sad kind of expression in Gerty’s face, and a far-away look in her bonnie blue eyes.

If Mary, her maid, had only held her silly tongue, Gerty might have been almost happy now. But Mary hadn’t held her tongue, but conjured up Jack, and he was before her mental eyes at this very moment just as she had seen him last, the young and handsome lieutenant, going away to fight for king and country with a heart burning with courage and valour, yet filled with love for her—and with hope. Ah yes! that was the worst of it. They were not betrothed, and yet—and yet when he returned and found her engaged to another, it would break his heart. Yes, that was simply what it would do. What was Sir Digby saying? Oh, he had been talking for ten minutes and more, yet not one word had she heard. Nor had she even turned towards him. She did so at last, blushing and embarrassed at what she deemed the rudeness of her inattention.

Digby misinterpreted her.

“Yes, yes,” he cried rapturously; “I read my happy fate in those dear downcast eyes and in that tell-tale blush. You love me, Gerty; you love me, all unworthy as I am. Then behold I throw myself at your feet.”

Sir Digby was preparing to suit the action to his words; but this was not so easy to do as might be imagined, for this gay Lothario had lately suffered from a slight rheumatic stiffness of the joints. He had already bent one knee painfully, and it had emitted a disagreeable crack which certainly tended to dispel a portion of the romance from the

situation, when sturdy footsteps were heard outside, and next moment the round, rosy face of Richards, of the firm of Griffin, Keane, and Co., appeared smiling in the doorway.

Gerty sprang up, leaving her lover to recover the perpendicular as best he might. She rushed towards the old man and fairly hugged him.

“Confound it all!” muttered Sir Digby.

“I’m afraid,” said Richards, “I’ve interrupted—”

“Oh, don’t mention it, dear, dear Mr. Richards. What Sir Digby was about to tell me wasn’t of the slightest consequence. That is, you know, I mean—it will keep.”

Sir Digby Auld bit his lip.

Richards nodded to him.

“I’ve such news for you, Gerty dear. A long, long letter from Bermuda. Jack’s ship—”

“Oh, do sit down and tell me all.—Sir Digby, you will forgive us, won’t you? You’re so good! Sit near us and hear it all.—Yes, Mr. Richards; I’m listening.”

That she was. What a glad look in her face! what a happy smile! With lips half parted and eyes which shone with an interest intense, she never took her gaze from Mr. Richards’ beaming countenance till he had finished speaking.

The letter was from a friend of his, and told of the arrival at Bermuda of Jack’s ship, and all Jack’s doings on shore; and how the Ocean Pride was ordered home; and how, if things turned out well, and she wasn’t captured by a Frenchman five times her size, she might be expected back in a fortnight.

“O dear, dear Mr. Richards, I’m so happy; I mean, you know, that Flora will—”

“Yes, yes; Flora, of course, you sly little puss. There! never blush; I guess I know your secret—Jack, eh?—Ah, Sir Digby, you and I are too old to understand the tender passion, aren’t we?”

“Yes—that is, no. You better speak for yourself, sir. I—I—I believe I have an appointment—I—Good evening, Miss Keane.”

Sir Digby Auld’s exit was not an impressive one.

With an amused look on his face, Richards watched him till the closed door shut out the view; then he stretched out his sturdy legs, threw himself back in his chair, and laughed until the rafters rang.

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CHAPTER IV.

THE BATTLE AND THE BREEZE.

“The deck it was their field of fame,
And ocean was their grave.”

“Prayer is the soul’s sincere desire,
Uttered or unexpressed;
The motion of a hidden fire
That trembles in the breast.”

good ship Ocean Pride was a twenty-gun frigate, with a crew of nearly three hundred as brave fellows as ever waved cutlass or pulled lanyard for the honour and defence of their native land. In January 1793, when the great war broke out between Britain and France, she was homeward bound from the West Indies and South America, where she had been cruising, and had hardly reached Portsmouth ere she received orders to take in additional stores and proceed forthwith to sea again. No leave was granted to men or officers. The sick were simply bundled on shore, additional men shipped, and she was off again within eight-and-forty hours of her arrival in port.

For the Ocean Pride was a crack cruiser for those brave days, in which seamen were sailors and seamanship a fine art.

Sir Sidney Salt was not only brave, but daring almost to a fault. He believed most thoroughly and completely in the supremacy of British seamen to French; but discipline and drill he looked upon as his mainstays, fore and aft. His success had proved that he was correct in system, not once but often during the past twelve months; for more than one of the enemy’s ships, larger even than his own, had been destroyed or taken by the Ocean Pride and her gallant crew. Boat actions had been fought also: she had been engaged with batteries; her men had cut out prizes from under the very guns of these; and they had fought on shore too, side by side with marines and soldiers.

“It would be but the fortune of war,” said Sir Sidney to his commander as they stood together on the quarter-deck, “were this frigate, that is now bearing down so boldly on us, to destroy us.”

The commander grasped his sword with his left hand, and his features were grimly set as he made reply,—

“True, sir, true. It would be but the fortune of war. Well, she may destroy us; she shall never take us.”

“Boldly spoken, Miller. It would indeed be a disgrace to lower our flag to a ship of about our own size, and that ship a Frenchman. But see how boldly she carries herself. Top-gallant sails down; all trim fore and aft; guns run out; and hark! was that a cheer?”

“Yes, sir; a French one.”

“Ha, ha, ha! Well, they shall hear a British one anon. Depend upon it, Miller, that frigate has a consort, and she is not far off at this moment, and—”

A puff of white smoke, with a point of fire in its centre, was now seen curling round the enemy’s bows, and the roar of the cannon interrupted the captain’s speech, and next moment a shot came ricocheting across from wave-top to wave-top, and passed harmlessly by on the starboard side.

“The fellow is beginning to be afraid already,” said Miller, laughing.

“Yes; and depend upon it that shot was meant to keep his courage up. But if he thinks we are to have a long-range duel he is miserably mistaken. Set the fore-soldier, Miller. We’ll walk to windward of him if we can.”

The *Ocean Pride* was now more closely hauled, and seemed for a time to bear away from the foe. The movement evidently puzzled the Frenchman. Was *John Bull* sheering off? Would he presently put round on the other tack and show them a clean pair of heels?

Shot after shot came tearing over the water, and when one went clean through the *Pride*’s rigging and was not even responded to, the excitement on board the Frenchman grew frantic.

The two vessels were now barely a quarter of a mile from each other, when suddenly round came the *Pride* till she was almost dead before the wind, and began bearing down upon the *Désespéré*—for that proved to be her name—like a whirlwind, and almost right before the wind. The battle was about to begin in deadly earnest.

And none too soon; for at that moment a cry of sail in sight was heard from the maintop-mast cross-trees.

“That’s her consort,” cried Sidney Salt. “Now, men,” he shouted, “be steady and cool; I need not say be brave. We may soon be engaged against two, unless we gain the day before that frigate’s consort puts in an appearance.”

A brave British cheer was the only reply to the captain’s short but pithy speech. The cheer was feebly answered by the enemy, who from her uncertain movements was evidently puzzled at the apparent change in Sir Sidney Salt’s tactics. It seemed to those on board the *Pride* that contrary orders had been issued; for she first luffed, as if to beat to windward and fight the British frigate beam to beam. Perhaps the courage of her commander suddenly failed him, and he came to the conclusion that he ought to ward off the real tug of war till his consort came up. Anyhow, just as a shot carried away a piece of her jib-boom she attempted to wear and fill, and in doing so missed stays.

Now came Sir Sidney’s chance, and quick as arrow from bow he took advantage of it. In less time almost than it takes me to describe it, he had cut across the enemy’s stern, and the well-aimed broadside that raked the *Désespéré* from aft to fore, almost completely placed her at the mercy of the British frigate. The wheel was shot away, the rudder a wreck, the mainmast went by the board, and both dead and wounded lay upon the decks.

There were still men on board her, however, and brave ones too, to man and fight her guns; and as the *Désespéré* paid off, seemingly of her own accord, the *Pride* received her starboard broadside just as she put about to close with her assailant. This broadside was fairly effective: it silenced a gun, killed three men, and wounded five.

The *Désespéré* had got round far enough to save herself from being raked a second time. Broadside were given and received; but as soon as the *Pride* had tacked again, it was evident she meant forcing the fighting in the good old English fashion first introduced by bold Hubert de Burgh.

Down came the *Pride*. She would not be denied. One wild cheer, one more terrible broadside as her guns almost touched those of the enemy, then grappling irons were thrown, and the vessels literally lashed together.

“Away, boarders!”

“Hurrah, lads!”

The last shout came from bold young Grant Mackenzie, as sword in hand, and followed by the men who had so bravely fought his guns, he sprang nimbly across the bulwarks and leaped down amongst the foe. To describe the *mêlée* that followed would be impossible—the shouts of victory and shrieks of pain, the cracking of pistols, the clashing of sword and cutlass, the shivering of pikes, the rattle of musketry from the tops. It was all like a terrible dream to every one concerned in it; for each British sailor or marine seemed to fight but for himself. Then there were the final stampede, the hauling down of the flag, and the surrender of the wounded captain to Sir Sidney Salt. All must have passed in seven minutes or less.

The loss on both sides was terrible to contemplate. Twenty of our brave lads would never fight again, thirty more were wounded, while in killed and wounded the enemy's loss was well-nigh one hundred.

There was no time to lose now, however. The enemy's consort was but five or six miles off, and coming down hand over hand. So the Frenchmen were speedily disarmed. The dead were left where they lay, the wounded and prisoners hurried on board the *Pride*. Then a train was laid to the *Désespéré's* magazine, and just as all sail was hoisted on board the British frigate, the time fuse was lighted. The *Pride* must fly now; to fight another ship, lumbered as she was with wounded and prisoners, would have been insanity.

On comes the enemy's consort. Away flies the *Ocean Pride*. The men on the British ship still stand to their guns; for if they are overhauled, they mean to fight and fall.

But see, the two French frigates are now abreast, and the consort hauls her main-yard aback, and an armed boat leaves her side.

Nearer and nearer she rows. Those that behold her on board the *Pride* hold their breath. They know she is rowing to destruction.

It is awful, and even brave Sir Sidney turns a little as the boat reaches the doomed ship, and the men are seen clambering up her sides. At that dreadful moment a huge cloud of smoke, balloon shaped, rises high above the *Désespéré*, a sheet of flame shoots into the air, and yards, and masts, and spars, and men are seen high above all. A sound far louder than thunder shakes the *Pride* from stern to stern. Sir Sidney presses his hand to his eyes and holds it there for a time. When he takes it away at last the *Désespéré* has gone. A few blackened spars bob here and there on the waves, and the cloud rolls far to leeward, but the silence of death is over all the scene.

Tom Fairlie sat late that night beside poor Jack's couch. Jack's brow was bound in blood-wet bandages, his eyes were closed.

"O doctor," said Tom anxiously, as his eyes sought those of Surgeon M'Hearty, "is there no hope? Surely Jack will live?"

"Jack's in God's good hands, lad," was the solemn reply, "and I am but his servant."

The surgeon went slowly away, nor turned to look again.

"Poor Jack! poor Jack!" cried Tom; "and on his birthday too!"

He bent over the hardly breathing form, and tears welled through his fingers. He had never known till now how much he loved his shipmate.

Would Jack die? His wounds were very grievous. "He is in God's good hands," the doctor had said.

Tom Fairlie was a thorough English sailor—no better and no worse than the average. He attended church on Sunday, and was always on the quarter-deck when the bell rang for prayers; but the actual praying, I fear, he usually left to the parson himself. If asked, Tom would have told you that it was the parson's duty to make it all right with the Great Commander above in behalf of himself and shipmates; but now it occurred to Tom that he might himself personally address the Being in whose hands poor Jack lay. God was good. Dr. M'Hearty had said so, and the doctor knew almost everything. He hesitated for a few moments, though. It seemed like taking the parson's duty out of his hands. Was it impertinence? He looked at Jack's poor, white, still face—looked just once, then knelt and prayed—prayed a simple sailor's prayer that isn't to be found anywhere in a book, but may be none the less effectual on that account.

When Tom rose from his knees Jack's eyes were open.

"I've been sort of praying for you, Jack. I feel relieved. Seems to me the Great Commander is going to throw you a rope and pull you through the surf."
Jack's lips were moving as if in feeble reply. But his mind was wandering.

"The blue flower, Gerty—cull that. Oh, not the other! How dark it is! Gerty, I cannot find you. Dark, dark, dark!"
And poor Jack relapsed once more into insensibility.

"I've been sort of praying for you, Jack."

As We Sweep Through the Deep by William Gordon Stables

CHAPTER V.

“NOW THIS GOOD BLADE SHALL BE MY BRIDE.”

“The bosom in anguish will often be wrung
That trusts to the words of a fair lady’s tongue;
But true are the tones of my own gallant steel—
They never betray, and they never conceal.
I’ll trust thee, my loved sword, wherever we be,
For the clang of my sabre is music to me.”
Quarter-master Anderson.

was not until Sir Digby Auld had quite gone that Gerty came to her senses, and realized the position she had placed herself in. The comical side of the situation struck her at the same time, and for a few moments right merrily did she join the laugh with her old friend, Mr. Richards. But she grew suddenly serious next minute.

“What have I done?” she cried; “and how can I tell father?”

“You droll, provoking little puss!” said Richards. “Come and sit on my knee here, as you always have done since you were a weary wee hop-of-my-thumb.”

“And will you tell me a story?” Gerty was smiling once more. “Then it will just seem like old, old times, you know.”

“Yes, of course. Once upon a time, then—oh, ever so long ago, because no such things as I am going to tell you about could happen in our day—once upon a time there lived, in a lonely house by the side of a deep, dark forest, a lonely man, to whom the fairies had once given a magic feather, plucked from the wing of a fairy goose; and whenever he touched paper with this quill, lo, the paper was turned into gold! So he amassed great wealth; but no one loved him when he went abroad, because, though he had gold, he had no titles and he was sharp of speech. Only he had one beautiful daughter, more fair than a houri of paradise; and she loved her father very much—more even than she loved the roses in June, or the wild birds that sang in the forest, or the stars that shone so brightly on still, clear nights in winter.

“And this daughter was beloved by a youth who was surpassingly fair and brave and comely; but, ah me! he was poor, and so the father despised him.

“But one day there came from out of the dark depths of the forest a prince in a splendid chariot, with six milk-white steeds, and the sound of many trumpets blowing. This prince was stiff and somewhat old, yet he said to the father: ‘Give unto me your daughter, that I may wed her, and she shall be my queen; then shall you be loved and honoured too, for you shall have titles as well as wealth.’

“But the daughter loathed the elderly suitor. Nevertheless, that she might see her father happy and titled, she gave the prince her hand, and her father dowered her munificently, and—”

“Go on, Mr. Richards.”

“Well, of course they lived happy ever afterwards.”

“No, no, no, Mr. Richards; that isn’t quite the end.”

“Well, if I must tell you, I must. For a time, then, there was no one more loved and honoured than Sylvina (for that was her pretty name), and her father, too, was invited to the court of the prince. But the fame of Sylvina’s beauty and charms spread far and near, and hundreds visited the prince who had never before been seen at his castle. Especially did there come gay young sparks, with downy moustachelets to twirl, and swords that tinkled at their heels; and so attentive were these crowds of gallants that Sylvina never had time even to think, else her thoughts might have gone back to her true lover, whom she had forsaken in his poverty and sorrow, and whose white, distracted face often even yet haunted her dreams at night, just as she had seen it for a moment that day as she walked to the altar with the prince.

“But to the prince the young sparks were beyond measure attentive. They seemed delighted of an evening to see him snug in his high-backed chair by the fire; and one would run and bring his slippers and warm them, another pulled off his shoes, while a third brought his wine, and a fourth his hubble-bubble. Then they sang lullabies to him and patted his shoulder till he fell asleep; then—

“But the prince awoke at last in every sense of the word. ‘No longer,’ he cried, ‘will I keep an open house that young sparks may pay attentions to my wife. I will issue no more invitations, give no more parties; Sylvina’s father must return to his lonely house by the forest. I and my bride will live but for each other.’

“He spoke thus because the green demon Jealousy had aroused him.

“So the prince dismissed nearly all his servants; and in his house by the forest Sylvina’s father was more lonesome now than ever. Sylvina had been a dutiful daughter, and she tried hard to be a dutiful wife; but nothing that she did was properly construed by her old husband. If she laughed and was gay, he called her giddy; if she seemed sad, he told her she was pining for her ‘pauper lover;’ if she showed him marked affection, he thought she was but cajoling to deceive him. Ah dear, ah dear, how miserable she was! for her ways were not his ways, because his age was not hers.”

Richards paused again.

“And the poor lover whom Sylvina deserted?” said Gerty. “Tell me about him. Did he pine and die?”

“Oh no. But here comes Flora. I’ll finish the story another day, Gerty.”

“Why, this is a pleasure!” cried Flora. “Who could have thought of finding you here? I say, Gerty, let us keep Mr. Richards to ourselves alone for the rest of the evening. My work is all complete, and father is busy in his room. Supper in the boudoir here!—Not a word, Mr. Richards; you have no say in the matter at all.” Then Flora rang the bell.

And a long delightful three hours the girls and their friend spent too. It is almost needless to say that the chief subject of conversation was Jack, or that Sir Digby Auld was not spoken of or thought of even once.

“Heigh-ho!” said Richards, as he stood in his room that night, “heigh-ho! and I have come down to break bad tidings to Flora and her father. How ever can I do it! A lawyer ought to have no heart, but I have one. Worse luck! worse luck!”

The party next day at the Hall was a very gay affair, and never did General Grant Mackenzie seem in better spirits, nor Gerty and Flora look more bewitching or feel more happy. Mr. Keane, too, unbent himself, and was far less crisp and frigid than any one had ever seen him. Keane did not perhaps look a bit more happy than he felt, though he would not have told his thoughts to any one, as he wandered to and fro in the grand old beautifully-lighted rooms or out into the spacious gardens and flower-laden conservatories. Everything had of late years conspired to play into his hands. He had amassed money; he had spent but little. Gerty was good, so good, for she had promised to marry Sir Digby—promised her father, that is; the other promise would come. Then this splendid hall was his—Keane’s—unless in a short time the easy-minded, happy-go-lucky general managed to clear his feet. “Clear his feet, indeed!” thought Keane; “how

could he? No; the place would be his. Then he could hold up his head in the county. And as for Sir Digby, why, he could be easily managed after marriage. He was a trifle wild, he had been told, but he believed he was wealthy, and he would—some day—be a lord.”

Every one loved the general and his beautiful but unassuming daughter. There was no word of her being engaged to any one as yet, though such an engagement might take place at any time. She was indeed a queenly girl. Now suitors are usually a little afraid of queenly girls—not that there are very many about, but though they may dispense their favours in kind words and smiles, they do not flirt, and though warm-hearted deep down in their soul-depths, there is no surface love to squander or to be ruffled with every breath that blows. Such girls as Flora Grant Mackenzie love but once, and that love is real and true. Flora’s prince would doubtless come. She was in no hurry.

But the girl was very happy on this her brother’s birthday, and after all the guests had gone she spent the usual quiet half-hour with her father in his room in loving chat and converse, just as she had done every night since, long, long ago, her mother had died.

“Good-night, dear,” he said as he kissed her. “Affairs are not quite so flourishing with me as I would like; but we’ll trust in Providence, won’t we? Things are sure to take a turn.”

“Yes, dear father. Good-night: God bless you!”

Many of the wounded, both among our own people and the French prisoners on board the *Ocean Pride*, died and were buried as the ship sailed on; but the strength of Jack’s Highland constitution asserted itself, and he was at last pronounced by M’Hearty to be out of danger, very much to Tom Fairlie’s delight.

His wounds had been very grievous—a sabre-cut on the skull and a spent bullet that had injured his left arm.

When the ship reached Portsmouth and the country rang with the news of Sir Sidney’s bright little action, when the papers gave a list of the dead and wounded and extolled Jack’s bravery, and when private information from headquarters informed the general that his son would be gazetted post-captain, then the old Highlander’s cup of bliss seemed full.

“Look at that,” he cried, with the joy-tears in his eyes; “read that letter, Flora dear. My boy, my brave boy! I shall go right away to Portsmouth and meet him, and you shall come and nurse him. My brave, good lad! What care we for money, Flo? The Mackenzies have their swords!”

On the arrival of the Ocean Pride in port, Jack had been sent to shore quarters for a time, and Tom determined to share his rooms.

Jack was very cheerful, for he had almost forgotten his dream.

Now Mr. Keane had determined to play his cards as well as he knew how to. The baronet had become indisposed, but the astute lawyer had invited him down to his little place in the country, and he had taken Gerty home too.

At the time of the Pride's arrival in Portsmouth there was no engagement between Gerty and Sir Digby. All that she had really promised her father since Richards had told her that fairy story was that she would try to learn to love Sir Digby all she could, and when a little older would marry him; so Keane was content.

This, however, did not prevent him sending a confidential clerk down to interview Jack. And the following is the bomb-shell Saunders the clerk, obeying orders, fired:—

“Mr. Keane just sent me down to ask about you and convey all sorts of kind messages. Especially did he bid me assure you that he had not spoken to your father about the little account, and that he is in no hurry for the money. Indeed, the approaching marriage of his daughter is at present absorbing all his attention.

“Why, what is the matter, Captain Mackenzie?” continued the clerk, noticing the staggering effect his words had on poor Jack.

“Nothing, nothing much. A little faint, that is all. Leave me now, Mr. Saunders. Tell Mr. Fairlie I would speak with him.”

Tom ran in. He found Jack lying helpless on the sofa, white and trembling. But he soon recovered sufficiently to speak.

“My dream, my dream, Tom; it has all come true.”

Tom Fairlie sat long beside his friend, giving him all the comfort he could think of, and that really was not a great deal. Things might not be quite as the clerk had represented them. Gerty could not be so cruel. From all he—Jack—had told him, he seemed to know her thoroughly. Jack must see her and learn his fate from her own lips. This and much more said Tom Fairlie.

“This good blade shall be my bride.”

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But for a time never a word said Jack.

He rose from the couch at last, and going quietly to the corner, took up his sword and drew it.

“Tom,” he said boldly, “pardon me if I seem to act stagy, I am not acting. We Mackenzies are a wild and headstrong lot, and too proud, I own, by far. We cannot help our nature. But here in your presence I vow that now this good blade shall be my bride; that I’ll be true to her, and she as true as steel to me.”

“Bravo, Jack!” cried M‘Hearty, bursting into the room; “I’ve heard it all. And now, my lad, I bring you good tidings. I’ve run all the way from the port-admiral’s office to be the very first to shake hands with Post-Captain Jack Mackenzie.”

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CHAPTER VI.

A BOLT FROM THE BLUE.

“O Life! how pleasant in thy morning,
Young Fancy’s rays the hills adorning.”
Burns.

GENERAL GRANT MACKENZIE was a somewhat impulsive man. It is the nature of the Celt to be impulsive. His nervous system is far more finely strung than that of the plethoric or adipose Saxon, and it vibrates to the slightest breath of emotion. Mind, I talk of the ideal Celt—be he Irish or Scotch—and General Grant Mackenzie was an ideal Celt. And sitting here with my good guitar on my knee, I cannot help comparing a nature like his to just such a beautiful stringed instrument as this. What a world of fine feeling lies herein; what a wealth of poetry, what sadness, what tenderness—ay, and what passion as well! Behold, on this music-stand lies a big old book—a book with a story to it, for it belonged to my unfortunate ancestor Symon Fraser of Lovat, who was beheaded on Tower Hill. It is Highland music all, and sweet to me are its mournful laments as breathed by my sad guitar; but—I turn a leaf—and here is a battle-piece. Ha! the instrument hath lost its sadness, or only here and there come wailing notes like moans of the wounded amidst the hurry, the scurry, the dashing, and the clashing of this terrible tulzie. Can’t you see the claymores glitter? Can’t you see the tartans wave, and nodding plumes among the rolling smoke? Oh, I can. Seems as if the guitar would burst its very strings; but, the battle is over—cry of vanquished, shout of victor, all are hushed. And now comes the ghostly music of the coronach: they are burying the dead. And the instrument appears to sob, to weep, till the sweet low song of grief in cadence dies.

A nature like that of Grant Mackenzie, then, or of his son—for both seemed cast in the same mould—needs a well-trained, well-balanced mind to guide and restrain it; for there are few occasions indeed in this world when one dares lay bare his soul and feelings even to his best friends.

The day after M’Hearty’s visit to Jack, the young post-captain, with his friend Tom Fairlie, was just finishing breakfast, when in dashed the general. Next minute his son was pressed against his breast just as if he had been a child.

Jack had spilt his tea and knocked over a chair in his hurry to get to his father; but what did that matter? So there they stood looking at each other for a moment, the tears in both their eyes.

Maybe the old general was a trifle ashamed of such weakness, for next moment he burst into a merry laugh.

“Why, Jack, my brave boy,” he cried, “there are only two arms between the pair of us. But yours will get well; mine, alas, is in the grave!”

Flora came up now, and Jack seemed delighted to see her.

“And here,” he said, “here, Flora, is the best friend I have in the world—Tom Fairlie.—Nay, never blush, Tom, my brother.—He it was, Flora, who helped to take me below after I got hit; and when even the surgeon—grand old fellow M‘Hearty! father, you shall know him—gave me up, Tom stuck to me, and he has been nursing me ever since as if I were a child. Ah, Flora, there is no friendship on earth so true, and no love either, as that man bears for man.”

Jack looked at his sister as he spoke, and that glance told her he knew all.

“Father, I had almost forgotten to tell you of my espousal.”

“Espousal, Jack! You astonish me; it can’t be true!”

“Oh, but it is.”

He picked his sword off the couch as he spoke and held it out to his father.

“Let me present my bride,” he said, laughing.

The general himself could laugh now.

“So pleased, so pleased! But, ’pon honour, you young rascal, you pretty nearly took your old father’s breath away. Married! bless my soul, talk about that thirty years hence; and blame me, Jack, but that itself might be too soon.

“So you knocked the French about a bit? Well done, Jack; and well done, Lieutenant Fairlie.”

“Oh,” said the young sailor, laughing, “they always call me Tom.”

“Well, Tom,” said the general, holding out his hand, “you and my brave lad fought nobly; but bless my heart, he wouldn’t be a true Mackenzie if he couldn’t fight. So you gave it to the Froggies hot, eh? I knew you would. Second only to the British army is the British navy, lads.”

“And second only to the British navy, father, is the British army.”

“Bravo! esprit de corps. Well, I like it. But I’ve news for you, Jack. Why, your old father, you young dog you, is going to take command again. Ha, ha! sword arm all right, and head-piece in glorious form.”

“O father, I’m so delighted!”

“Yes, boy, and there is one thing I look forward to—ay, and pray for—and that is for you and me, Jack, to be in the same field of battle, and drubbing the French as only British sailors and soldiers can.”

“Father, you’ve made me happy.—Why, Tom, this all but reconciles me to the loss of the love—”

Jack stopped, looking a little confused.

“Love—love? Why, Jack, my lad, what is this? Love of whom, boy?”

“Oh, only a pet spaniel, father. No, not dead. Lost though; enticed away—with a bone, I suppose.”

“Just the way with spaniels, Jack. Glad it’s no worse. But ’pon honour, Jack, though you’re not old enough to know it, womankind are precious little better. I know ’em well, Jack; I know ’em. A bone will entice them too, particularly a bone with a bit of meat on it.”

Jack Mackenzie was not a young man who cared for much nursing. Had Gerty been his nurse it would doubtless have been all so different. However, it was very pleasant for Jack to while away the next month or two down at Grantley Hall, and to be treated like an interesting invalid and made a hero of by old maids and young ones too. The curate of the parish had not a chance now.

Then the country was so lovely all around the Hall. Though lacking the grandeur and romance of our Scottish Highlands, the land of the broads, with its wealth of wild

flowers, its dreamy, quiet lakes, its waving reeds, its moors, and its birds, throws a glamour over one in spring-time that no true lover of nature can resist.

Jack's arm was well in a month, and he was waiting for service. He did not mind waiting even a little longer, and most assuredly Tom Fairlie did not, nor M'Hearty either, who was also a guest at the Hall. Richards also had come down to spend a week or two. He and M'Hearty became inseparables.

A great old tub of a boat belonged to Mackenzie, and this lay on an adjoining broad or lake. Tom and Jack fitted it out as a kind of gondola, and many a pleasant hour did the young folks spend together on the water, sometimes not returning till stars were reflected from the dark bosom of the lake or the moonbeams seemed to change it into molten gold.

A pleasant time indeed—a time that flew all too quickly for poor Tom Fairlie.

One evening, when hanging up his hat in the hall, Jack's father took him by the hand and led him silently into the library.

“Father, father,” cried Jack, “what has happened?”

“A bolt from the blue, my boy; a bolt from the blue.”

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CHAPTER VII.

“WENT GLIDING AWAY LIKE A BEAUTIFUL GHOST.”

“They bid me forget her—oh, how can it be?
In kindness or scorn she’s ever wi’ me;
I feel her fell frown in the lift’s frosty blue,
An’ I weel ken her smile in the lily’s saft hue.
I try to forget her, but canna forget,
I’ve liket her lang, an’ I aye like her yet.”
Thom, the Inverury Poet.

ICHARDS, the kindly old solicitor, with Jack and his sister Flora and the general—these formed the group in the solemn, dark-panelled library of Grantley Hall on that beautiful summer’s evening. The light of the westering sun stole in through the high stained windows, and cast patches of light and colour on the furniture and on the floor. Mackenzie had already told his son all the story of his troubles, and while he had yet been talking, the curtains in the doorway were drawn back, and Flora appeared, leaning on the arm of her good friend Richards.

The general had lifted up a deprecating hand.

“No need, no need.” This from the family lawyer. “Flora already knows all. And bravely has she borne the tidings. Ah, my good sir, Flora is a true Mackenzie.”

“But you might have told me long ago,” was all she had said as she seated herself on a low stool by her father’s knee. “O father, I could have borne it, and could have comforted you, now that poor mother has gone!”

There was silence for a time, broken by Flora’s low sobbing; broken, too, by the sweet, mellow fluting of a blackbird in the garden shrubbery.

General Mackenzie was the first to speak.

“Children,” he said, “I have been for many a day like one living in a dream, call it if you will a fool’s paradise. But I have awakened at last to the stern realities of life. It is better,

perhaps, as it is, for we now know the very worst. You will believe me when I say that if I have hidden the truth from you, it was because I feared to vex you, or render you unhappy, while yet there was hope. But now," he added, "all is over, all is lost, or seems to be."

"Nay, nay, my good old friend," cried Richards; "you must not really take so gloomy a view as that of the matter."

"This grand old house," continued the general as if he had heard him not, "this estate, with all its beauty of domains, that was presented to my ancestors by Charles the First himself, with its lands and its lakes, its gardens and its trees, and which was prized by my father almost as much as our ancient home in the Highlands of Scotland, has been wasted, has been frittered away, through my intrinsic folly."

"Sir, sir," said Richards, "you are too hard on yourself now."

"Nay, my good friend, nay; that I cannot be. You have ever been faithful to our family; but I repeat it before you, and before my only son and daughter here: the estates are lost through my own folly, and through the imbecility, the madness, Richards, of my pride. Now in a month's time, if I do not pay off the mortgage, Keane, your partner, will foreclose."

It was at this moment that Jack sprang up from his seat as though a serpent had stung him. He took a few rapid strides up and down the floor, then, his calmness in some degree restored, he confronted the general.

"Did you say Keane would foreclose, father—Keane?"

"I said Keane, boy—Griffin, Keane, and Co. The old man Keane is my only creditor. But why should the knowledge of this affect you so?"

"Because, father—and oh, forgive me, for I ought to have told you before—because the heartless old man has been playing for your estates; he has won, and he has in a manner ruined you. But his daughter Gerty has been playing a crueller game than even his: she has won my heart, and having won it, having torn it from me, she has trampled it bleeding under foot. I can never love again."

"My boy, my poor boy, is this indeed so? How great is your sorrow and suffering compared with mine! Bah! let the estate go. I could feel happy now without it could I but believe that you would forget the heartless minx who has dared to gain your love then spurn it. You will forget her?"

“Never, father, never; that is impossible. Sword in hand on the battle-deck I shall seek surcease of sorrow, but forget little Gerty Keane, never, never, never!”

The young man covered his face with his hands, and his form heaved with suppressed emotion, and even the kindly-hearted Richards could but look on in silence. Not a word of consolation could he adduce that had the power to assuage grief so deep as this.

No one spoke for many minutes—sorrow is oftentimes too deep for words—but higher and higher in the calm, still gloaming rose the blackbird’s notes of love, sounding half hysterical in the very fulness of their happiness and joy.

General Mackenzie rose slowly from his chair, and approaching his son placed a kindly hand on his shoulder.

“Dear Jack,” he said slowly, “we each have something left us, a name that has never yet been tarnished; our clansmen have ever been found in the battle’s van, or

‘In death laid low,
Their backs to the field, their feet to the foe.’

We have that name, Jack boy; we have that fame. We have our unsullied swords. Jack lad, we shall forget.”

“Father, we shall try.”

And hand met hand as eye met eye. The two had signed a compact, and well they knew what that compact was.

Jack Mackenzie sat alone in his bedroom that night long after his father and every guest had retired. The casement window was wide open, so that the sweet breath of the June roses could steal in, and with it the weird tremolo of a nightingale singing its love-lay in an adjoining copse. The moonlight was everywhere, bathing the flower-beds, spiritualizing the trees, lying on the grass like snow, and casting deep shadows from the quaint figures of many a statue, and a deeper shadow still from the mossy dial-stone.

So intent was Jack in his admiration of the solemn beauty of the scene, that he saw not his chamber door slowly opening, nor noted the figure robed from head to feet in white that entered and glided towards him.

Was it a spirit?

If so, it was a very beautiful one. The face was very white in the moonbeams, the eyes very sad and dark, and darker still the wealth of waving hair that floated over the shoulders.

“Jack!”

Jack started now, and looked quickly round. Then a happy smile spread over his face as he arose and led his sister to a seat by his side.

“So like old, old times, Flora,” he said.

“So like old, old times, Jack,” said she.

He wrapped her knees in a great old Grant-tartan plaid.

“I knew you were still up, and that you were not happy, so I came to you. But, Jack—”

“Yes, dear.”

“Smoke.”

“May I?”

“You must.”

“Still more like olden times, Flora.”

Jack lit up his pipe, and then he took his sister’s hand.

“I’m glad,” he said, “that I never had a brother.”

“And I,” she said, “am happy I never had a sister.”

“We are all in all to each other, are we not, Flo?”

“All in all, Jack; especially now.”

“Ah yes; now that I have lost Gerty. Ah, siss! you nor any one else in the wide world can ever tell how dearly I loved, and still love, that faithless girl.”

“And she, Jack, will break her heart that she cannot marry you. That is what I came to tell you, Hush, Jack, hush! I know all you would say; but you do not understand women, and least of all do you understand Gerty. I do, Jack; yes, I do.”

“Sissy,” said the young man earnestly, “the cruellest thing mortals can be guilty of is to arouse the dying to feeling again, when the bitterness of death is almost past. You would not be so unkind. You did not come here to raise hopes in my heart that would be as certainly doomed to disappointment as that blooming flowers shall fade.”

“No, Jack, no. I only came because I wanted to pour balm, not hope, into your bleeding heart. I came to tell you all Gerty Keane’s story, that you may not think the very, very worst of her. Listen, Jack.”

The young man sat in silence for quite a long time after his sister had finished the story of Gerty Keane, and of her fondness for her lonesome, friendless, and unlovable father; sat gazing out upon the moonlit landscape, but seeing nothing; sat while the nightingale’s lilt, plaintive and low or mournfully sweet, bubbled tremulously from the grove, but hearing nothing. And in the shadow of the old-fashioned arm-chair snuggled Flora, her eyes resting lovingly, wistfully on her brother’s sad but handsome face.

At last he sighed and turned towards her. “Flora,” he said, “I’m going to try to forgive Gerty. I’m going to live in hope I one day may be able to forgive. Just tell her from me I wish her that happiness with another which fate has decreed it shall never be my joy to impart. Tell her—but there! no more, Flora, no more.”

“Spoken like my own brother; spoken like a true and brave Mackenzie. Kiss me, Jack. I’m glad I came.”

He held her hand a moment there, the moonbeams shining on both. “But, Flora,” he said, “you too have a little story.”

“Ye—es, Jack.”

Her head drooped like a lily.

“And, siss, it—is connected with—don’t tremble so, Flora—with Tom?”

The moonbeams shone on Jack alone now; his sister had stolen into the shadow to hide her blushes.

“Good-night again,” she whispered, and so went gliding away like a beautiful ghost.

As We Sweep Through the Deep by William Gordon Stables

CHAPTER VIII.

ON BOARD THE SAUCY "TONNERAIRE."

"O'er the wide wave-swelling ocean,
Tossed aloft or humbled low—
As to fear 'tis all a notion—
When duty calls we're bound to go."—Dibdin.

Tonneraire lay at anchor just off the Hoe in Plymouth Sound, as pretty a craft as any sailor need care to look at. Plymouth was an amphibious sort of a place even in those days; and there was not a landsman who had ever been in blue water that, having once caught sight of the saucy Tonneraire, did not stop to stare at and admire her as he crossed the Hoe. Some, indeed, even sat quietly down and lighted up their pipes, the better to consider the bonnie ship. Long and low and dark was she, and though a frigate, the poop was not high enough to interfere with her taking lines of beauty. She carried splendid spars, and from their tapering height it was evident she was built either to fight or to chase a flying Frenchman. But her maintop-gallant masts were at present below, for the ship was not quite ready for sea. She seemed impatient enough, however, to get away. The wind blew pretty high, right in off the Channel, and the frigate jerked and tugged at her anchors like a hound on leash that longs to be loose and away scouring the plains in search of game. Everything on board was taut and trim and neat: not a yard out of the square, not a rope out of place, the decks as white as old ivory, the polished woodwork glittering like glass, the brass all gold apparently, the guns like ebony, and the very lanyards pipeclayed till they looked like coils of driven snow.

Post-Captain Mackenzie was walking to and fro on the poop-deck all alone, but casting many an anxious glance shorewards, or upwards at the evening sun that soon would sink over the beautiful wooded Cornish hills.

"There's a boat coming out yonder now, sir," said the signalman.

"Ah! is there, Wilson? Well, pray Heaven it may be the first lieutenant, and that he may have had luck."

Twenty minutes afterwards, Tom Fairlie, lieutenant in his Majesty's navy, but acting-commander under Captain Mackenzie, was alongside in the first cutter. He was not alone, for several other officers were with him, and among them our old friend M'Hearty. Jack welcomed the latter, figuratively speaking, with open arms, then went to his private cabin, accompanied by Tom, who had been on shore on duty since early morning.

"Sit down, Tom. Now we're off the quarter-deck there is no need for ceremony. You look tired and starved. Help yourself to wine and biscuits there before you say a single word."

Tom poured out a glass, smiling as he did so.

"Ah!" cried Jack, "I know you have good news."

"Ay, Jack, lots of it. I've been everywhere and I've done everything, and I've had good luck in the whole."

"Wait a moment, Tom.—Steward!"

"Ay, ay, sir."

"I'm engaged for the next half-hour unless any one desires to see me on duty.—Now, Tom, I shall light my pipe. Follow my example. It wants an hour to dinner, and you are my guest to-night. No one else save our two selves and M'Hearty, I believe."

"Well, Jack," said Tom Fairlie, after he had smoked in silence for a few moments, "first I went to the port-admiral's office and saw Secretary Byng. He knows everything. Told me your father was gazetted, and would sail with his command in a few months' time."

"Glorious news, Tom. How pleased father will be!"

"Byng told me further that we must get men to fill up our complement, and fifty over, by hook or by crook."

"Fifty over! that means fighting, Tom. Go on."

"The hook and crook means pressment, Jack."

"Well, well, I don't like it; but it is all for the good of the service. Heave round, Tom."

“Then I went to the post-office. Sly dog, am I? Well, perhaps. A letter from Flora, and one for you.”

Jack tore his open.

“Why, she has gone to live with dear old Father Spence at Torquay, Tom.”

“Yes, Jack, till the war is over. Then, if God but spares us all, I shall be your brother.”

“Dear girl,” said Jack. “Ah, Tom, what a noble courage she possesses! You and I can meet the foe face to face and fight well; but that is under excitement. But dear Flora needed more courage than ours to leave Grantley Hall so bravely as she did. Never a tear, Tom, never a tear; and I even saw my father’s eyes wet. Ah well. It is the fortune of war. Heigh-ho!”

“Cheer up, Jack. Somehow, my friend, I think that Grantley Hall will come back to the Mackenzies yet.”

“Ah, never, Tom, never! The dear old place where Flora and I spent our childhood, only to think it should come at last into the clutches of the plausible skinflint Keane; the father, though, of—but go on, Tom, go on.”

“I next saw two gentlemen of the ‘sailors’ friend’ persuasion.”

“Crimps? Scoundrels!”

“Well, anyhow, they are good for forty between them.”

“Bravo! Things are looking up. What a capital fellow you are, Tom! But, stay; let me reckon. We still want twenty more.”

“And these, Jack, shall be no mere top hampers, I can assure you. I have arranged to lay hands on fifteen at least of thorough dare-any-things—fellows who look upon fighting as mere fun, and can face the billows as well as tackle a foe.”

“You interest me. Proceed.”

“What say you to pirates, then?”

“Come, come, Tom.”

“Well, they are the next thing to it. They are sea-smugglers. I met One-legged Butler to-day, the king of coastguardsmen; and if we lend him nets, he will land the fish.”

“You mean seamen and cutlasses. Well, he’ll have them; and I’ll trust the matter all to you.”

“Nay, Jack, nay; the second lieutenant must be left in charge, and you must come. Flora must see you.”

“Flora?” cried Jack.

“Yes; we are to cut out the smuggler in Tor Bay.”

“I’m with you, Tom. Well, we shall meet at dinner. Au revoir.”

One-legged Butler was quite a character in his way. He had been in the service in his very young days, and had lost a limb while fighting bravely for king and country. But for this stroke of bad luck he might have been an admiral, and there is little doubt he would have been a brave one too. Appointed to the revenue service, he soon proved that, in addition to cunning, tact, and bravery, he possessed detective qualities of no mean order. His timber toe, as the sailors called his wooden leg, was no drawback to him. Timber toes in those stirring times were as common as sea-gulls in every British sea-port; and Butler’s powers of disguising himself, or making up to act a part in order to gain information, were simply marvellous.

On the day Tom Fairlie made his acquaintance, he had been singing “Tom Bowling” on the street in front of a public-house, and our Tom had gone up to give him a penny. Like the Ancient Mariner, he had held Tom with his glittering eye; and a very few moments’ conversation was sufficient to arrange for one of the cleverest and most daring little adventures that ever supplied a man-o’-war with gallant “volunteers,” as pressed men were often ironically termed in those days.

They were a very merry party at dinner that day around the captain’s table. Not a large one, however; only Jack Mackenzie himself, his friend Tom Fairlie, M’Hearty, one “middie,” and bold Captain Butler, all good men and true; and the servant who waited at table was one to be trusted. Despite the fact that he was a Spaniard, he was most faithful, so that the conversation could take any turn without danger of a word being repeated either forward or to the servants below in the ward-room.

In talking and yarning right quickly passed the evening in the captain’s cabin; but everywhere fore and aft to-night both officers and crew were hearty. They had already

bidden farewell to friends and home, soon their country too would fade far away from sight, and then—the glories of war. Ah! never mind about its horrors; what brave young British sailor ever thought of these?

As We Sweep Through the Deep by William Gordon Stables

CHAPTER IX.

“A SPLENDID NIGHT’S WORK, TOM!”

“Ah! cruel, hard-hearted, to press him,
And force the dear youth from my arms;
Restore him, that I may caress him,
And shield him from future alarms.”
Dibdin’s Pressgang.

was near to the hour of sunset, on an autumn evening about a week after the cozy dinner-party in the cabin of Captain Jack Mackenzie of the Tonneraire. The tree-clad hills and terra-cotta cliffs around Tor Bay were all ablur with driving mist and rain, borne viciously along on the wings of a north-east gale. Far out beyond the harbour mouth, betwixt Berry Head and Hope’s Nose, the steel-blue waters were flecked and streaked with foam; while high against the rocks of Corbyn’s Head the waves broke in clouds of spray.

As night fell, the wind seemed to increase; the sky was filled with storm-riven clouds; and the “white horses” that rode on the bay grew taller and taller.

Surely on such a night as this every fishing-boat would seek shelter, and vessels near to the land would make good their offing for safety’s sake.

There were those who, gazing out upon the storm from the green plateau above Daddy’s Hole, where the coastguard station now is, thought otherwise.

Daddy’s Hole is a sort of inlet or indentation in the rock-wall, which rises so steeply up to the plain above that, though covered with grass, it seems hardly to afford foothold for goats. No man in his senses would venture to descend from above in a straight line, nor even by zigzag, were it not for the fact that here and there through the smooth green surface rocks protrude which would break his fall.

Shading their eyes with their hands in the gathering gloom, with faces seaward, stood two rough-looking men, of the class we might call amphibious—men at home either on the water or on shore.

“It can’t be done,” said one. “No, capting, it can’t.”

“Can’t?” thundered the other; “and I tells yew, Dan, the skipper o’ the Brixham knows no such a word as ‘can’t.’ He’s comin’. Yew’ll see. Hawkins never hauled ’is wind yet where a bit o’ the yellow was tow be made. Us’ll drink wine in France to-morrow, sure’s my name is Scrivings.”

Dan shook his head.

“W’y, yew soft-hearted chap, for tew pins I’d pitch yew ower the cliff.”

But as “Capting” Scrivings laughed while he spoke, and shook his friend roughly by the shoulder, there was little chance of the terrible threat being fulfilled.

“And min’ yew, Dan,” he added, “if us lands this un all right, us’ll be rich, lad—ha! ha! Besides, wot’s Hawkins got tow be afear’d of? The Brixham can cut the winkers from the wind’s eye, that she can. Tack and ’alf tack though buried in green seas, Dan. Never saw a craft tow sail closer tow a wind. Here’s tow bold Hawkins and the brave Brixham!”

The toast was drunk from a black bottle which the “capting” handed to Dan.

“Ave a pull, chap; yew needs it to brace yewr courage tow the sticking-point.”

Captain Butler prided himself on the seaworthiness and fleetness of his cutter, the saucy little Moonbeam. Not that she had been much to look at, or much to sail either, when he took her over; for in those good old times the Admiralty was not a whit more generous with paint and copper nails than it is now. But One-legged Butler was a man of some means, who might have driven his coach on shore had he not been so fond of the brine and the breeze. So he had the Moonbeam seen to at his own expense—not without asking and receiving permission, of course, for he was a strict-service man. Her bows were lengthened and her rig altered and improved; she was made, in fact, quite a model of.

And Captain Butler was justly proud of the Moonbeam. So highly did he regard her that he would not have marked her smooth and spotless deck with his timber toe to obtain his promotion, and therefore his servant had orders to always keep the end of that useful limb shod with softest leather.

Nothing that ever sailed got the weather-gauge on the Moonbeam.

Except the Brixham.

That smuggling sloop landed many a fine bale of silk, hogshead of wine, and tobacco galore, all along the south coast; but never had been caught. She was a fly-by-night and a veritable phantom. Thrice Butler had chased her. He might as well have attempted to overhaul a gull on the wing.

But to-night One-legged Butler meant to do or die. He knew she was going to venture into Tor Bay, and lie off at anchor under the lee of the cliffs. He could have boarded her in boats perhaps; but that would not have suited Butler's idea of seamanship. It must be neck or nothing—a fair race and a fair fight.

The Brixham carried a dare-devil crew, however, and Hawkins feared nothing. The Moonbeam would have her work cut out; but then all the more glory to the bold fellows on board of her; for these were the days when adventure was beloved for its own sake alone.

When, on the night previous, twenty brave blue-jackets from the Tonneraire were told off for special service and sent aboard the little Moonbeam, which sailed a few hours after just as the moon was rising over the Hoe, they had no idea what was in the wind. From their armature of cutlasses and pistols, they "daresayed" there was a little bit of fighting to be done, and rejoiced accordingly, for Jack dearly loves a scrimmage. The wind blew high, even then tossing the cutter about like a cork, although she carried but little sail. By next forenoon, however, she had passed Tor Bay, and lay in semi-hiding near Hope's Nose. There was the risk of the vessel's presence being discovered and reported to Scrivings and his gang; but there always are risks in warfare.

As soon as it was dusk a portion of the men were landed. Then the Moonbeam, although it blew big guns, set herself to watch for the foe.

Hour after hour flew by, and the moon, glinting now and then through a rift in the clouds, whitened the curling waves, but showed no signs of the Brixham, or of anything else.

It was an anxious time.

At twelve o'clock grog and biscuits were served out. The men never had time to swallow a mouthful—of biscuit, I mean. No doubt they drank the grog, for those were the days of can-tossing, a custom now happily but seldom honoured.

Yes, there she was! It could be none other save daring Hawkins in the Brixham.

Small look-out was being kept to-night, however, on the smuggler.

The Moonbeam swept down on her as hawk swoops down on his prey, and although Tor Bay is wondrous wide, and the Brixham was nearly in the centre of it, the cutter was on her in a surprisingly short time.

Fine seamanship, fine steering, to sheer alongside and grapple, despite the fact that the sea had gone down, and the waves were partially under the lee of the hills.

If ever man was surprised, that man was Smuggler Hawkins. But he answered the call to surrender with a shout of defiance.

After this it was all a wild medley of pistols cracking, cutlasses clashing, cries—yes, and, I am sorry to say, a few groans; for blood was shed, and one man at least would never sail the salt seas more. But if blood was shed, the seas washed it off; for the fight took place with the spray driving over both vessels, white in the moonlight.

A prize crew was left on the Brixham, and in less than twenty minutes both craft were safe at anchor in Torquay harbour.

Meanwhile, the party who had been landed near to Hope's Nose had made their way inland, bearing somewhat to the east to make a detour, both for the purpose of getting well in the rear of the smugglers' cottage—where Tom Fairlie, who was in command, knew the smugglers were to be found—and because the night was still young.

When Scrivings left the outlook with Dan on watch, he betook himself to this cottage, in order to complete arrangements for landing the cargo, every bale and tub of which they had meant to haul up from Daddy's Hole to the plains above, then to cart them away inland.

But he found his ten men ready, and even the horses and carts in waiting. They were hired conveyances. The smugglers found no difficulty in getting help to secure their booty in those days, when many even of the resident gentry of England sympathized with contraband trade. So there was nothing to be done but to wait.

It was a lonely enough spot where the little cottage stood among rocks and woodland. Lovely as well as lonely and wild; though I fear its beauties alone did nothing to recommend the place to the favour of “Capting” Scrivings and his merry men.

The night waned. The moon rose higher and higher. The men in the bothy, having eaten and drunk, had got tired at last of card-playing, and nearly all were curled up and asleep.

The sentry had seated himself on a stone outside, and he too was nodding, lulled into dreamland by the sough of the wind among the solemn pines.

The wind favoured Fairlie’s party, who, as stealthily as Indians, crept towards the cottage from the rear.

The sentry was neatly seized and quickly gagged, and next moment the lieutenant, sword in hand, his men behind him, had rushed into the dimly-lit bothy.

“Surrender in the king’s name! The first who stirs is a dead man!”

It was beautifully done. Not a show of resistance was or could be made, and in less than an hour Tom Fairlie, with his crestfallen prisoners, had reached the harbour, where they were welcomed by a hearty cheer, which awakened the echoes of the rocks and a good many of the inhabitants of the village of Torquay.[A]

And now Captain Jack Mackenzie shook hands right heartily with his friend Tom Fairlie.

“Splendid night’s work, Tom,” he said. “A thousand thanks! Now the saucy Tonneraire may be called ready for sea.”

Splendid night’s work was it? Well, we now-a-days would think this impressment cruel—cruel to take men away from their homes and avocations, perhaps never to see their country more. Yet it must be admitted that smugglers like these, who had so long defied the law, richly deserved their fate.

As We Sweep Through the Deep by William Gordon Stables

CHAPTER X.

IN THE MOON'S BRIGHT WAKE.

“Now welcome every sea delight—
The cruise with eager watchful days,
The skilful chase by glimmering night,
The well-worked ship, the gallant fight,
The loved commander's praise!”—Old Song.

was not without a tinge of sorrow at his heart that Jack Mackenzie stood on his own quarter-deck and saw the chalky cliffs of England fading far astern, as the gloom of eventide fast deepened into night. He was not the one to give way to useless grief, but he could not help contrasting the hope and joyfulness with which he had last left home with his present state of mind. He was not a post-captain then certainly, but he had that—or thought he had—for which he would gladly now take the epaulettes from off his shoulders and fling them in the sea—namely, the love of the only girl he ever thought worth living for. But she— Well, no matter; that was past and gone. His love had been all a dream, a happy dream enough while it lasted, while his heart had been to her a toy. But then his father, his good old careless-hearted father. Wrecked and ruined! That he was in difficulties Jack had known for years, but he never knew how deep these were, nor that they had so entwined themselves around the roots of the old homestead, that to get rid of the former was to tear up the latter and cast all its old associations to the four winds of heaven. Dear old homestead! Somehow Jack had dreamt he would always have it to go home to on every return voyage, always have his father there to welcome him back, always—

“Hallo!” said a voice at his side, “what is all this reverie about, Jack?”

Tom laid his hand gently, half timidly on his arm as he spoke. Half timidly, I say, because it would not do for even the men to note a shadow of familiarity on poop or quarter-deck betwixt a commander and his captain.

Jack smiled somewhat sadly.

"I daresay, Tom," he replied, "it was very wrong, but I was just breathing one last sigh for lost love and home. Oh, I don't care for Grantley Hall so much; but then there is sister, and poor father, and it seems rather hard he should take service again. There is just enough saved out of the wreck for them to live on."

"Yes; and you'll win a fortune yet, mayhap an earldom, Jack—"

"Stay, Tom, stay. I care nothing for earldoms, and if I win enough to live on I'll be content. One thing I do mean to win for Flora's sake—honour and glory."

"Keep your mind easy about Flora," laughed Tom. "I'm going to win all the honour and glory she is likely to want."

"I'd quite forgotten, Tom—brother."

"That's better. And, Jack, I know you'll get more ambitious as we go on. Now mind you, you're not so badly off. That wound was a lucky hit. Just look around and beneath you. Ever see a finer frigate? Look at her build, her spars, her rigging, everything taut and trim and ship-shape—the very ship seems proud of herself, considering the independent way she goes swinging over the waves on the wings of this delightful breeze; swinging over the waves, bobbing and bowing to them as if they were mere passing acquaintances, and she proud mistress of the seas. Then, Jack, let me recall your attention to the fact that we have five-and-forty bonnie black guns and three hundred and twenty bold blue-jackets to man and to fight them; and that you—you lucky dog—are monarch of all you survey. Ah, brother mine, there is many a sailor mo'sieur afloat on the seas at this moment 'twixt here and America who well might tremble did he but know the fate that is in store for him when the Tonneraire crosses his hawse."

"You bloodthirsty man!"

"No, no, no. I've got one of the softest hearts ever turned out of dock, but it is all for king and country, you know. Behold how our good ship goes sweeping through the deep! Look, my captain bold, we are coming up to the convoy hand-over-hand. It was a good idea giving them half a day's start, for some of them, I daresay, we'll find are lazy lubbers."

"Well," said Jack, as we shall still call him, "we must do our best to keep them together. I would not like, however, for my own part, to go out in protection of many convoys."

"Nor will we; this is only a kind of trial trip. But if you are afraid you won't have any fighting to do, you may be agreeably disappointed, as the Irishman said."

Jack Mackenzie laughed.

“What a fire-eater you are, Tom! I wasn’t thinking of fighting. But if I have to fight, I’d rather these merchantmen were a hundred miles away. Fighting in convoy must make one feel as does the father of a family, whom he has to defend against an aggressor while the children cling tightly to his legs.”

From the above conversation it will be gathered that the Tonneraire had sailed at last, and was in charge of a merchant fleet bound for America. This was considered a very responsible task in these warlike days, when the cruisers of the enemy were here, there, and everywhere in our ocean highways, watching a chance to seize our unprotected ships. The Tonneraire had been chosen for her strength and her fleetness, and there was no doubt that under so able a young and dashing commander she would fulfil her mission, and make it warm for any Frenchman who sought to attack the ships.

There they were now sailing as closely together as possible, because night would soon fall, and they could only be distinguished by their lights. A cruise of this sort was seldom, if ever, free from adventure, and it entailed much anxious care and forethought on the part of the captain of the war-vessel convoying them. A good thing this for Jack Mackenzie. No cure for sorrow in this world except honest work. He was really, too, in a manner of speaking, a probationer. To do his duty strictly, wisely, and well on this voyage would certainly entitle him to no step, not even perhaps to praise; but to neglect it, or even to be unfortunate, would cause him to incur the displeasure of the Admiralty and hinder his advancement.

But a whole week went on, and though no Frenchman appeared on the scene, Jack and his fleet had encountered a gale of wind that had driven them considerably out of their course; and when one morning, about eight bells, a cry of “Land” was raised, he knew he must be in the neighbourhood of the Azores or Western Islands.

He was not altogether sorry for this; it would give him a chance of taking in fresh water and of adding to the store of fresh provisions now almost exhausted. For ships in those days were vilely found, and the men called contractors were held in general detestation by every ship in the service.

“Sailing across the moon’s bright wake was a French man-o’-war.”

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The merchantmen under Jack numbered fourteen in all, and were of different classes—brigs, barques, and full-rigged ships; but long before sundown they were all securely anchored in front of San Miguel, and Captain Mackenzie, in full uniform, accompanied

by Commander Fairlie, had gone on shore to pay his respects to the Portuguese governor.

San Miguel was not so densely populated as it is now, but very quaint as to its town, and very romantic and beautiful as to its scenery all around. The governor dwelt in a villa on a garden-terraced hill in the outskirts. He was very pleased to see the officers, but deferred business till next day.

It was, however, while smoking in the veranda after dinner, and gazing dreamily away across the moonlit ocean, that Jack suddenly sprang up, and, clutching Tom's arm, pointed seawards.

Slowly sailing across the moon's bright wake was a French man-o'-war.

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CHAPTER XI.

THE PHANTOM FRENCHMAN.

“If to engage we get the word,
To quarters we’ll repair,
While splintered masts go by the board,
And shots sing through the air.”
Dibdin.

EAUTIFUL island of San Miguel! on whose shores, wherever they slope in sheets of sand towards the sea, the white waves play and sing; whose gigantic rocks, frowning black and beetling above the water, are fondly licked by mother ocean’s tongue as dog salutes a master’s hand.

Island, surrounded by seas that towards the far horizon seem unfathomably blue, yet near around are patched in the sunshine with opal, with green, and with azure, and tremble like mercury under the moon and the starlight.

Island of fountain-springs, that shoot their white and boiling spray farther skywards than ever spouted Nor’land whale.

Island of mountains, high and wild, whose summits seek to withdraw from earth away, and hide their proud heads above the clouds, when storms rage far beneath.

Island of green and lonesome glens, where bright-winged birds chant low their love-songs to their listening mates, and where many a strange, fantastic fern nods weeping o’er the hurrying streams.

Island of scented orange-groves, of waving palms, of dark dwarf pines—black shapes in many a cloud of green—of the rose, the camellia, the oleander, the passion-flower. Island of wild flowers, that grow and wanton everywhere, that have their home in the woods, that carpet the earth with colour, that clothe the rocks, that hang head downwards in masses over many a foaming cataract, that climb the trees and repose like living, sentient beings among the branches, wooing the bees, attracting the butterflies,

and tempting the gay, metallic-tinted moths to expand their cloaks in the sunshine, and fly clumsily to their embrace.

Island of seeming contentment, where even human beings live but to idle and to lounge and to love.

Beautiful, beautiful island!

Yes; but an island on which our heroes must not linger, for twice during the night a dark shape glided across the moon's bright wake, and those on watch on board the Tonneraire knew it was the waiting, watching foe. But when day broke no foe was to be seen. Captain Mackenzie stayed therefore only long enough to take in extra stores, water, and fruit, and to permit his fleet to do likewise; then the signal was made, "Up anchor, and to sea!"

In silence the anchors were weighed on board the man-o'-war; but accompanied on the merchant-vessels by the never-failing song, with its frequent abrupt conclusion, without which merchantman Jack finds it impossible to carry on a bit of duty.

"Hee—hoy—ee! Hee hoy! Pull, and she comes! Hoy—ee—ee! Hoip!"

All that day the young captain of the Tonneraire kept his fleet well together. Not an easy task, for although the wind was by no means high, and was moreover favourable, being north-east by east—the course steered about north-west, the convoy bearing up for Halifax and the Gulf of St. Lawrence—still the sailing powers of the vessels varied considerably. The strength of an iron chain equals the strength of its weakest link, and the speed of a fleet of merchantmen is measured by that of its slowest sailer. While at San Miguel, Jack had tried to impress this upon the minds of his various skippers. He held a meeting of these on board a large full-rigged ship, and told them their motto must be, "Keep together," as the danger of an attack was imminent. Slow sailers must carry stun'-sails when they found themselves getting behind, while the fast must take in sail.

They admitted this.

"It is as plain as the nose on my face," said one intelligent skipper, who had a huge red bulbous proboscis you could have almost seen in the dark. "We've got to play up to you, Captain Mackenzie, just as the small fry plays up to a great hactor on the stage."

This was all very well, but then they did not do it, so that the rate of speed was slow; ships and barques having to haul their fore or main yards aback at times to wait for the lazy brigs who either couldn't or wouldn't set stun'-sails. And at eventide, while the sun

was going in a lacework of golden cloud, and looking so red that he appeared to be ashamed of the fleet, the vessels were scattered all over three square miles, and Jack Mackenzie, not now in the best of tempers, had to collect them as a collie pens his sheep.

It was dark enough after the somewhat brief twilight had given place to light—to light and to lights, for signal-lanterns hung aloft on every ship; so all appeared safe and snug enough.

But what had become of the Frenchman? He had not been seen all day. Was it indeed but a phantom that had been seen in the moon's bright wake?

A good watch was kept both 'low and aloft; and Jack went down to dinner at the sound of the bugle.

As he passed near the midshipmen's berth, quite a buzz of happy voices issued therefrom. Jack paused for a few seconds to listen. It was not so very long since he himself had been a middy. No responsibility had he then, any more than rested on any of these bright young hearts at that moment. How they laughed and chaffed and talked, to be sure! Interspersed in the hubbub were now and then snatches of merry song, and now and then the notes of a somewhat squeaky and asthmatical violin, invariably followed by some one shouting, "Stop that awful fiddle!" "Hit 'im in the eye with a bit o' biscuit!" or "Grease his bow!" Then a deeper bass voice, evidently Scotch, and just as evidently a junior surgeon's, saying, "Let the laddie practise.—Fiddle away, my boy; I'll thrash all hands if they meddle with ye."

Jack went away laughing to himself. Little those boys—who not long since left home and Merrie England—know or care that ere another hour, perhaps, the decks of the *Tonneraire* may be slippery with blood.

Ah! all the care was his—was the post-captain's. Uneasy lies the head that—hallo! He had just entered the ward-room, and found all the fellows there quite as happy as the middies. They were at dessert, for they dined earlier than their captain. M'Hearty was seated at the head of the table, and was spinning a short but funny yarn, to which his messmates' laugh was ready chorus. Tom was vice-president; the lieutenants, the purser, and officers of the marines were ranged along the tables, red jackets and blue, forming a pretty contrast; the table was laden with fruit and flowers from the island they had that morning left, while glasses and cruets sparkled on a tablecloth white as snow.

Jack took all this in at a glance as he entered with a preliminary tap, which was not heard in the delicious hubbub. He almost sighed to think that he had to go away and dine all by himself alone.

On seeing the captain, every one rose, nor would they be seated until he consented to sit down.

“Just sit down, Captain Mackenzie,” said M‘Hearty, with a merry twinkle in his eye, “and have a glass of wine while your soup is getting cold.”

“If the president bids me, I must obey,” said Jack, seating himself beside Tom. “It must be but for a moment. There are older men than myself here—our worthy Master Simmons, for example. I came to take your views about that Frenchman. He is evidently a battle-ship, probably a seventy-four. I say fight him; but considering this is my first captaincy—” But he was interrupted. Every man rose to his feet. It was a strange council of war, because every man held aloft a glass of wine.

The words, “Fight him!” ran round the table like platoon firing. There was determination in every eye and in every voice, from the deep bass of the gray-bearded master down to the shrill treble of the rosy-cheeked fledgeling marine-officer Murray, a mere boy, who would certainly have seemed more in place in the cricket-field than on the battle-deck.

“I’m going now,” said Jack. “Thank you all.—Excuse me, won’t you, Dr. M‘Hearty? I think the soup is cold enough by this time. But we’ll make it hot for the enemy.”

“Hurrah!”

The moon was later in rising that night, being on the wane.

It was the first lieutenant’s watch from eight till twelve. Nothing transpired until about seven bells, when Jack and Tom Fairlie were walking slowly up and down the poop. The moon was now well up, but hidden by a mass of cumulus cloud. Presently she would burst into view, for the clouds were sailing slowly along the horizon, and near hand was a rift of blue.

Instinctively as it were, both officers stopped to gaze in that direction. In a few seconds the moon shot into the field of blue, and her light flashed over the sea.

It flashed upon the phantom Frenchman, as Tom Fairlie called her; but so quickly had she come into view that the sight was startling in the extreme. She was not crossing the moon’s wake this time, however, but bearing down upon the Tonneraire, as if about to attack her.

The man at the mast-head had seen her at the same time, and his stentorian shout of, "Enemy on the starboard quarter!" awoke the sleeping ship to instant life as effectually as if a fifty-pounder had fired.

All hands to quarters.

R—r—r—r—r—r rattled the drum. It rattled once; the heaviest sleeper started and rubbed his eyes. It rattled twice; every man was on his legs and dressing. Thrice; and three minutes thereafter every man stood by his gun, and the cockpit hatches were put down. The ship was ready for action.

Would she come on? would the Frenchman fight? Alas! no. Already she began to assume larger proportions as she showed broadside on. Above the wind, that now blew more gently from the north, the very flapping of her sails and loosening of her sheets could be heard as she came round, and in less than an hour she had almost disappeared in the uncertain light.

As We Sweep Through the Deep by William Gordon Stables

CHAPTER XII.

A BATTLE BY NIGHT.

“What art thou, fascinating War,
Thou trophied, painted pest,
That thus men seek and yet abhor,
Pursue and yet detest?”—Dibdin.

AY after day Jack’s fleet held on its course, and the weather continued unbroken and fine. Day after day the phantom Frenchman hovered somewhere about, afraid perhaps to try conclusions with that rakish, spiteful-looking British frigate, or perhaps but biding her chance.

Twice or thrice Jack put about, sailed back and challenged her, with a shot, to fight if she dared. There never came the slightest response from Johnny Crapaud—she seemed indeed a phantom.

And at night those on board the *Tonneraire* could not help thinking the phantom was ever near them, even when it was too dark to see her. I do not think, however, that it kept many of the officers awake at night, although it must be confessed Jack was ill at ease. If it were possible for the enemy to steal near enough in the pitchy dark portion of the night, the first intimation of her presence might be a raking broadside that would sweep the decks fore and aft; then farewell the *Tonneraire*.

There are few things more difficult to bear than what Scotch people so expressively term “tig-tire,” or excessive tantalization. There came a day when Jack called his chief officers together in his own cabin.

“Gentlemen,” he said, “I’ve had enough of that French fellow. Why should he follow us night and day, like the shadow of the evil one, and yet refuse to fight? I mean to carry war into the enemy’s camp, or rather on to his quarter-deck, if you think my plan feasible. Remember, I am hot-headed and young.”

Jack then unfolded his plans, and they were generally approved, though the old master was somewhat doubtful of their success.

“However,” he growled, “I’ll take the wheel. Better, perhaps, after all, that we should take the initiative; for, blow me to smithereens, if that tantalizing Froggie ain’t spoiling my appetite!”

There was a general laugh at this, and the council broke up.

Next day it blew little more than a seven-knot breeze, and the sun sparkled on the waters like showers of diamonds. The Frenchman marvelled much to see not only the British frigate, but all the merchant fleet close together, and with main or fore yards aback. The truth is, Captain Mackenzie was issuing his orders by boat.

About an hour afterwards Johnny Crapaud smiled grimly to himself to see the Tonneraire fill her sails and tack out to offer him battle.

“The fool!” said Johnny. “When the gale of wind shall come, then I shall fight. Till then, non, non!”

So he filled and bore southwards next; and as Jack had no desire for a race, he returned to his fleet. He had done all he wanted to: he had put Johnny on the wrong scent.

That night, at sunset, clouds gathered up and quite obscured the sky.

Johnny rubbed his hands and chuckled.

“Soon,” he said, “it will blow what perfidious England calls big guns. Then—ah—then!”

It blew big guns far sooner than he had expected.

The night was intensely dark, but the half-moon would rise about four bells in the middle watch.

When Johnny Crapaud looked towards the fleet, lo! the vessels had extra lights all, and lights were streaming from every port.

“Ha! ha!” he grinned. “They rejoice; they dance. They think they have made me fly. When the gale blows, then they will dance—to different music.”

The watch kept on board the French seventy-four was not extra vigilant. Especially did no one think of looking astern. Had any one on the outlook done so, then just about a quarter of an hour before moonrise he might have seen a dark shape coming hand-over-

hand across the water from the direction in which “fair France” lay—fair France that many a poor fellow on Johnny’s ship would never see again.

It was the *Tonneraire*. She had made a detour with every stitch of canvas set, and was now almost close aboard of the enemy.

Ah! at last they perceive her; and the noise on board the enemy is indescribable—the shrieking of orders, the rattle of arms and cordage, the trampling of feet, the stamping and unlimbering of guns. But against her stern windows, which are all ablaze with light, the *Tonneraire* concentrates her whole starboard broadside. The effect is startling and terrible. Confusion prevails on board the enemy—almost panic, indeed; and this lasts long enough for the frigate to sail back on the other tack. Jack’s object is to cripple her, and with this object in view he concentrates his larboard broadside again in the stern of the seventy-four, and her rudder is a thing of the past.

Away glides the *Tonneraire*. She is the phantom now. She loads her guns, and is coming down with the wind again—like the wind, too—when the seventy-four gets in her first broadside. It does but little harm. It does not stop the onward rush of the swift bold frigate even for a moment; and Jack’s next broadside is a telling one, for the Frenchman’s sails are not only ashiver, but aflap, awry, anyhow and everyhow; and just as the moon throws her first faint light athwart the waves, once more the helpless merchantmen tremble to hear the thunder of twenty cannon. For the *Tonneraire* has crossed the enemy’s hawse, and raked him fore and aft.

Now down comes the Frenchman’s foremast; and shortly after, a wild triumphant shout echoes from stem to stern and stern to stem of brave young Jack’s ship, for the enemy has surrendered.

A French seventy-four striking her flag to a British frigate of forty guns! Yes; but far more daring deeds than that which I now record happened in the dashing days of old.

Captain Jack Mackenzie would have gone right straight on board the enemy, but the master cautioned him.

“Nay, nay, sir,” he said. “There is such a thing as French treachery; I have known it before. Wait till the moon gets higher, and we will board in force. Remember, they may have about five hundred men still alive on that ship.”

Jack took the advice thus vouchsafed; but in half-an-hour’s time the *Tonneraire* rasped alongside the seventy-four, and a rush was made up the sides of the battle-ship.

But all was safe.

And stark and stiff on his own poop lay the French captain, and alongside him more than one of his officers. The decks were a sad sight in the glimmering moonlight, for splintered timbers and arms lay everywhere, and everywhere were dead and wounded.

More by token, from the uncertain, heavy-swaying motion of the vessel, it was evident she had been badly hit 'twixt wind and water, and was already sinking. All haste was therefore made to save the men. Those of the ship's boats that were not smashed were lowered, and further assistance was sent for from the merchant fleet, and none too soon either.

A few minutes after the last man—and that was Jack Mackenzie, who personally superintended everything—had left the ill-fated Frenchman, her decks blew up with a dull report, the water rushed in from all sides, and just as the sun threw his first yellow beams upwards through the morning clouds, the great ship shuddered like a dying thing, and shuddering sank.

Such is war; why should we desire it?

But side by side with tragedy do we ever find something akin to the ridiculous or comic.

It was Tom Fairlie himself who was despatched to the merchant fleet to beg them to send all the boats they could to rescue the wounded and prisoners from the sinking war-ship. Almost the first vessel he boarded was that commanded by the skipper who owned the bulbous nose. And here a strange and a wonderful sight met his gaze. Arranged in double rank on the quarter-deck were about twenty or more sailors, each armed with a gun and bayonet, the skipper himself at their head drilling them.

“Shoulder-houp!” he was shouting as Tom leaped down from the bulwark.

The most comical part of the business was this: every one of the honest skipper's sailor-soldiers had a white linen shirt on over his dress, and as the men's legs were bare to the knees, they all looked as near to naked as decency would permit. While Tom stopped to laugh aloud, Captain Bulbous hastened to explain.

“Were comin' to your assistance, I was, in half-a-minute. Stuck on them shirts so's they should know each other from the French. See? Do look curious, though, I must admit. What! the fight all over? Well, I am sorry.”

Before eight bells in the morning watch the prisoners were distributed all over the fleet, with the exception of the wounded, who were under the charge of Dr. M'Hearty on board the saucy Tonneraire.

As We Sweep Through the Deep by William Gordon Stables

CHAPTER XIII.

A HAPPY SHIP.

“On Friendship so many perfections attend
That the rational comfort of life is a friend.”
Dibdin.

the early part of the present century the poet Dibdin wrote with great feeling and spirit concerning the “generous Britons and the barbarous French.” There is no doubt about it, the French in those days were far more cruel to their prisoners than ever we were to ours.

And so the wounded on board the *Tonneraire* were absolutely astounded at the kind treatment they experienced under good M‘Hearty and his assistants. The surgeon himself looked in face—or figure-head—as rough and weather-beaten a sailor as ever trod a plank, but in heart he was as tender as any woman.

More than one of his poor patients wrung the doctor’s red hands, and, with tears rolling over their sallow cheeks, prayed Heaven to bless him for his goodness and sympathy.

But this was not all, for even the men were good to the prisoners. Many a morsel of tobacco did they give them on the sly; and if a Jack-tar observed that one was asleep in his hammock, he would sign to his fellows to make as little noise as possible. It is no wonder, therefore, that the “Froggies,” as they were called, nearly all recovered from their wounds. Two or three, however, succumbed, and these were buried with as much ceremony as if they had been British sailors. The same impressive and beautiful service was repeated by the grating where the body lay; the same solemn silence prevailed while it was being read; and I am not sure that some of our Jacks did not even shed a tear—on the sly, that is, for your true sailor ever tries to hide two things, his grief and his tender-heartedness—as with dull plash the body dropped into the sea.

Contrary winds and storms delayed the voyage. Nearly a whole month flew by, and still the little fleet had not yet reached the longitude of Newfoundland. But to his credit be it told, Jack and his officers had managed to keep them all well together, and had not lost one.

The Tonneraire was a very happy ship, the primary reason being that Jack Mackenzie, though a thorough upholder of the sacredness of duty, was really kind and thoughtful at heart. He knew the value in the service of strict obedience to command. I have heard it said that a man-o'-war sailor or a soldier is a mere machine. He is not even that, he is only part of a machine; but he has the honour to be part and portion of one of the grandest machines that ever were perfected—the upholder of our national honour, the defender of British hearths and homes, and the protector of tender women and helpless babies.

We man-o'-war sailors, and ye soldiers, carry on war, it is true, and we hit just as hard as we know how to—and war is a fearful game at the best; but, dear civilians, do not forget that we constitute the only institutions that can render peace possible, and your homes happy and safe, machines though we be.

But how would it be if strict, unthinking, unhesitating obedience were not exacted from every man and officer in the service to the commands of his superior officers? Why, on the day of battle the army or navy would be a mere squabbling mob, worse even than the British Parliament.

I may mention here that it was his cheerful obedience to orders, his good-natured smiling alacrity—minus officiousness, mind you—his unselfishness and his bravery, that gained for Jack Mackenzie the proud position he now held.

Young men who mean to enter the service should read that last sentence of mine over again, ay, even get it by heart.

I digress, you say? So I do.

Well, I was saying that the Tonneraire was a happy ship. All the officers, both junior and senior, agreed. The chief lights of the senior mess were Tom Fairlie, always good-humoured and cheerful; honest M'Hearty, rough and genial; young Murray, the boy marine officer, merry and innocent; and Simmons the master, who would have his growl, who was all thunder without the lightning, but a very excellent old fellow, when young Murray didn't tease him too much. Between M'Hearty, Fairlie, Murray, and Jack himself a strange sort of a compact was made. It was Murray who proposed it one lovely moonlight night, when the four were together on the poop. Young Murray had cheek enough for anything. He was the second son of a noble lord, and would himself be a lord one day—probably. Not that his rank in life made him any the cheekier, but I suppose it was born in the boy. He cared little or nothing for the etiquette or punctilios of the service when it suited him not to. For example, he one day actually linked his arm

through that of an admiral on the quarter-deck. Everybody was aghast; but the good old admiral merely smiled. He knew boys and liked them.

But that night on the quarter-deck Murray said openly and innocently to Jack: "I like you, sir—fact, I wish you were my brother; and you too, Fairlie, though you're a fool sometimes; and you, M'Hearty, though you're often absurdly rough. I wish we could be together for years and years and years, in the same ship, you know, and all that sort of thing."

"Well, why not?" said M'Hearty. "Let us try; eh, captain?"

"I'm agreeable," said Jack.

"And I," said Fairlie.

"Hurrah!" cried Murray. So the compact was made.

The men forward, taking the cue from their officers, were just as jolly.

Those were terrible days of flogging. For a look or a glance, a man might be tied up and receive four dozen lashes with the terrible "cat." It was a brutal punishment. But M'Hearty was dead against it; Jack too; and so the grating was never rigged on board the Tonneraire.

Well, despite dirty weather and head winds, the fleet finally sailed into the mouth of the St. Lawrence river without ever losing a stick. At the Canadian capital, Jack and his officers, ay, and the men as well, had what the Yankees call "a real good time of it." Jack became quite a hero among the ladies, young and old. Yet he did not let that elate him. His heart was not his own—as yet, though he might get over his grief for his lost love Gerty.

But having refitted, there was nothing left but to put to sea again.

The Tonneraire cruised all down by the American coast and to the West Indies. Before reaching Jamaica she was attacked by two French line-of-battle ships. What they were doing here they themselves best knew. They were badly wanted just then on the other side of the sea. Now this was a chance to test the sailing powers of the Tonneraire. Discretion is sometimes better than valour. Valour is sometimes folly. Jack ran. Nelson himself did so once or twice. You and I, my bold young reader, are not going to stand a blow from a big fellow without hitting back; but if the big fellow brings his big brother,

then we may as well take the opportunity of going shopping, or somewhere. Jack Mackenzie went shopping, so to speak, and the Tonneraire won the race.

I wish I had space in my story to tell you something about Jamaica, and the lovely West India Islands, first discovered by Columbus. I am strangely tempted to. I will. I won't. I shall. I shan't. Belay! I've won.

At the time of which I am writing—the latter end of 1796—there was a very pretty naval combination formed, with a view to crush the might of Britain. The French, who had a navy nearly as powerful as our own, got the Dutch and Spaniards to join them, and felt certain that we should go down to Davy Jones by the run, and never more—

“Sweep through the deep
While stormy winds do blow.”

Instead of saying “got the Dutch and Spaniards to join them,” I should have written, “formed an alliance with these nations against us,” because we determined that, with Heaven on our side, we should prevent a junction of the fleets. So brave Scotch Duncan shut the Dutch up in the Texel like a lot of rats. They had not the pluck to come out and fight him. Well, Duncan would have blown them sky-high, as he eventually did. There was a French fleet at Brest, and the Spaniards farther south, and had they all got together—but then they didn't. You know the position of a game of draughts when you have one of your enemy's crowned heads in each corner, and he cannot move without danger. That is blockade, and that is how we held and meant to hold the French, Spaniards, and Dutch till we should smash them time about, and then sing, “Britannia, the pride of the ocean,” or some bold equivalent thereto.

The Spaniards had their lesson first.

It was well for Jack Mackenzie that he arrived off Cadiz in his swift Tonneraire[B] about a week before the great battle of St. Vincent. I do not mean to describe this fight at any length; every school-boy knows all about it. I merely wish to remind the reader of some of its chief events, because to me it has always seemed such a blood-stirring battle. The haughty Don had a fleet of twenty-seven sail of the line and two frigates. Some of his ships, like the Santissima-Trinidad, were perfect montes belli—thunder-bergs. Fancy a four-decker carrying one hundred and thirty guns! and the Spaniards had six that carried one hundred and twenty; while we had only two of one hundred guns, the Victory and Britannia.

On the 1st of February Lord St. Vincent, then Sir John Jervis, was in the Tagus with only ten ships; but as the great fleet of the Don sailed from Carthagená to effect a junction

with the French fleet at Toulon, Jervis set sail after them. He meant to spoil some of the paint-work about that fine Spanish fleet. It was very brave of him, and quite British. Luckily on the 6th he was joined by Admiral Parker with five ships, and on the 13th—hurrah!—by Commodore Nelson himself. Strangely enough, Nelson on the previous night seems to have sailed right through the Spanish fleet.

St. Valentine's Day 1797 will ever be memorable in the naval annals of this country, for, in a driving mist and fog, our fleet that morning forgathered with the might of Spain off Cape St. Vincent. The majestic appearance of the ships of the Don could not but have impressed our officers and men, but it did not awe them. The bigger the ship the larger the target, our Nelson used to say.

Our fleet advanced in two beautiful lines. The Spaniards somehow had got divided into two groups—one of nineteen ships, the other group some distance to leeward—and these two made haste to unite. But Jervis spoiled that move by getting between them and attacking the main body. After the battle had fairly commenced, and each ship of ours had her orders, Nelson noted an attempt on the part of Don Josef de Cordova to pass round Jervis's rear and join the other portion of the fleet; and despite the fact that he was disobeying orders—"They can but hang me," he said to Captain Miller—he slipped back and threw his ship, the Captain, right athwart the mighty Santissima-Trinidad, thus driving the Don's fleet back. It was, as the reader knows, this daring action on the part of Nelson that decided the battle. But how terribly the fight raged after that; how pluckily Nelson, with his vessel a wreck, boarded and captured ship after ship; how the hell of battle raged for three long hours, let history tell, as well as speak of cases of individual heroism. Suffice it for me to say that the battle was won and the Don was thrashed, among the captured ships being the mighty Trinidad herself, the Spanish admiral's castle.

The Tonneraire suffered severely. Sixty poor fellows would never again see their native land, and many more were wounded.

Young Murray was among the severely wounded, but Jack himself, and Tom as well, escaped without a scratch.

"Oh dear me, dear me!" said M'Hearty, running up for a few moments from the heat and smoke of the stifling cockpit, "I am thirsty."

Poor M'Hearty! he wasn't a pretty sight to look at, begrimed with smoke and blood. But he just had a drink, and a big one, and went back once more to his terrible work.

But the good doctor was washed and dressed and smiling again when he came to the captain's cabin that evening while the stars were shining, to report, "Everything tidy, and all going on well."

"And poor Murray?" said Jack.

"He'll be all right—a bullet clean through the chest. That's nothing to a young fellow like him."

"Well, stay and dine," said Jack.

"Willing, sir. What a glorious day we've had! But I can assure you, Captain Mackenzie, I'd rather have had my head above the hatches, now and then, anyhow."

"Be content," said Jack, laughing; "it might have been blown off, you know."

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CHAPTER XIV.

MUTINY.

“To be a hero, stand or fall,
Depends upon the man;
Let all then in their duty stand,
Each point of duty weigh,
Remembering those can best command
Who best know to obey.”—Dibdin.

is terrible to think and to remember that about this time our country was in the greatest danger of being conquered and lost through mutiny. Of all evils that can befall a navy this is surely the worst.

There was a mutinous spirit in the fleet of Sir John Jervis after the battle of St. Vincent, which the gallant knight used all his endeavours to quell. He was a brave and most energetic officer, and not only did he have the good of his country at heart, but he spared no effort to render those who served under him happy and comfortable. I do not refer to the officers only, but to the men as well. One would not be far wrong in saying that he knew almost every man in the fleet. He loved his people, and liked to have them happy, going among them, and even suggesting games and amusements. Those were the days of tossing cans, and of Saturday nights at sea, and the drinking of the healths of wives and sweethearts. So long as the men kept sober, Jervis rather liked this, and was never better pleased than when, on the last evening of the week, he heard the voices of the men raised in song, or the squeaking of the merry fiddle and gleesome flute.

But Sir John would have discipline, etiquette, and dress.

Jack Mackenzie was never more honoured nor pleased than when he and M'Hearty were asked to dine with the admiral on board the flagship, the Victory. Sir John was jovial, nay, even jolly. Jack was shy, but he had to talk, and much to his own surprise soon found himself as much at home in the admiral's society as he would have been in that of his own father.

As for M'Hearty, nothing put that good fellow out, and at the admiral's request he gave a very graphic account indeed of his doings in the cockpit on the day of the battle. Sir

John laughed heartily when the doctor wound up seriously with the words, "But, dear Sir John, I was thirsty."

To have seen this admiral to-night, no one would have believed that he had that day signed the death-warrant of the ringleader of the mutineers on board the Marlborough. But so it was, and to-morrow he should die.

It was on board the Marlborough that the mutiny had found a hot-bed. It was on board the Marlborough that Sir John determined this man should be hanged, hoisted up by the hands of his own messmates, whom his seditious eloquence had seduced from duty's path.

It was a stern resolve. The captain of the Marlborough had come on board to beg that the man might be executed in some other ship. His messmates, he averred, would never hang him, but would break at once out into open mutiny. This officer was dismissed to his ship with one of the severest reprimands ever administered to any captain in his majesty's service.

Down below, in a darksome cabin of the cockpit of the Victory, Jack went to see an old shipmate of his, a boatswain who had been with him in the Ocean Pride. He was wounded, but recovering, and was delighted to have a visit from one he had known as a mere boy.

And not far from this gloomy cabin was the cell in which the unhappy man was confined who next morning early should pay the penalty for his insubordination. Jack just caught one glimpse of his gray unhappy face, in which his dark eyes gleamed like living coals. That face haunted him in his dreams throughout the livelong night.

He saw that face again next morning, as the man was being taken to the ship to be hanged by his messmates. The same gray, cadaverous hue, the same dark and stony stare. "Had he a wife," Jack wondered, "or a sister that loved and cared for him, or prattling children who would never see their sailor 'daddy' more?" Oh, the sadness of it!

The whole fleet witnessed that punishment from rigging and decks. Every precaution was taken to insure its being carried out. Captain Campbell of the Blenheim superintended. Launches armed with carronades were ranged near the Marlborough, and the orders they had were to open fire at once upon the rebellious ship if the men refused obedience, or dared to open a port, and, if need be, to sink her with all hands, in presence of the fleet.

But see! the trembling wretch stands out upon the cat-head, the awful rope around his neck. The end is rove through a block in the fore-yard arm, and taken down and round the deck, so that every man may help to pull.

Bang! A great gun is fired from the flagship. The sound thrills through every heart, and every eye is turned towards the Marlborough's cat-head. The rope trembles, is tightened, and finally—there is an end.

The mutiny is nipped in the bud, and the fleet is saved.

But thus it must ever be. Mutiny is a monster that must be crushed by the iron heel of force, ere yet it is fully hatched.

Jack was not sorry when all was over and the boats returned to their respective ships. To relieve his mind he went to see Murray. The poor boy smiled feebly, and held out his white worn hand to clasp that of Jack.

“I’ve been thinking of home, and my little sweetheart, sir.”

“Have you a little sweetheart?”

“Yes; look!”

He took out a miniature from his breast—one of the sweetest young faces Jack had ever seen.

“That is why I don’t want to die, sir.”

Jack heaved a sigh. But after this all the spare time he had he passed by the side of young Murray’s cot. And now came the terrible bombardment of Cadiz.

As We Sweep Through the Deep by William Gordon Stables

CHAPTER XV.

BEFORE CADIZ.

“For honour, glory, and the laws,
Is native courage given;
And he who fights his country’s cause,
Fights in the cause of Heaven.”—Dibdin.

may be doubted whether the awful bombardment of Cadiz was a necessity of war. A bombardment is always a cruel undertaking, and often seems positively cowardly. But Sir John had one particular reason of his own, independent of exigency, for this cannonade. There was still a smouldering fire of disaffection among the seamen of the fleet, and he therefore determined to keep the sailors busy. Busy with a terrible busyness surely, for day and night, night and day, the firing went on, while many a daring cutting-out expedition was organized; and in some of these, deeds of heroism were accomplished that the British nation may well be proud of, even till this day. In one of these, during a boat action, Nelson himself was overpowered, and narrowly escaped being slain. But for his coxswain, who twice or thrice interposed his own body betwixt the swords of the assailants and the commodore, the battle of the Nile would never have been fought.[C]

In the cutting-out expeditions and boat actions, in or near to the harbour, and in repelling attempts to run the blockade from the town, our officers, even our captains, fought side by side with their men.

The marines were particularly gallant and courageous. Sir John Jervis delighted to honour this gallant body of men. They certainly deserved to be petted and made much of; but the admiral had another reason for his treatment of them. He thought he might possibly have eventually to play them off against the seamen in case of revolt.

Surely, upon the whole, this year 1797 was one of the most eventful in the whole history of this long and bloody war. A dark cloud seemed hanging over our native land, which at any moment might burst into a storm that would end in our utter collapse, if not destruction. And the shadow of this cloud was in every heart. Nor is this to be wondered at. The people were positively an-hungered, the children were crying for bread. Far away

in the north, the crops had all but failed, and famine and death stared the people in the face. Britain's best blood was being drained off to the wars; her sturdiest sons—those who ought to have stayed at home to work for the women and children—were “weeded away.” Money seemed to have taken unto itself wings and flown off; and in February the Bank of England itself came down with a crash, and closed its doors. Even those who in wild disorderly mobs did not preach anarchy or cry for bread, called aloud for “Peace.” Peace, indeed! what would peace have meant at such a time but dishonour and ruin. No, no! peace could not again hover on her white wings over our distracted country for many a day. To make matters worse, Ireland was ripe for rebellion, and our British forces by land had been unsuccessful; for we had been beaten and thrashed by the French in Holland. Is it not a pretty picture?

But the darkest hour had yet to come. I have already told you about the combination formed against us. Well, had the Dutch fleet been able to join forces with the French, this brave Britain of ours would no longer have ruled the ocean, and all the horrors of invasion, massacre, and rapine would have been added to our other troubles. We were depending upon our Channel fleet to avert the last and overwhelming calamity, when all at once, to the horror of every one, this fleet mutinied and refused to go to sea. They even seized their officers, and though they lifted no hand against them, they disarmed them, and either made them prisoners or allowed a few, among whom were medical officers, to go on shore.

The men demanded increase in pay and other allowances; and it must be confessed that, upon the whole, they had their grievances. It was not before several anxious weeks had gone by that the differences were settled.

It was the good old admiral Lord Howe who himself brought the king's free pardon to the men, and the Act of Parliament granting them their just demands. He was a very great favourite, and looked upon as quite a father to the fleet.

Then on the 17th of May the ships put to sea.

“Up and down the streets, carrying red flags, his fellows marched.”

Page 133.

We must remember that seamen in the royal navy in those old days had a good deal to complain of. The pay was inadequate, the food was often unfit for human consumption, leave was seldom given in port, and discipline was often maintained by the cat-o'-nine-tails, the services of which might in nine cases out of ten have been dispensed with.

Just a word or two about the mutiny at the Nore, and I have done, for ever I trust, with so shocking a subject. The men here were far more insolent and overbearing in their

demands. The president of the mutineers—fancy calling a mutineer a president!—was, worse luck, a Scotsman from Perth, of the name of Parker. He indeed ruled it for a time with a high hand, and was virtually admiral of the fleet at Sheerness, up and down the streets of which, carrying red flags, his fellows marched, in order to secure the sympathy of civilians.

At this time, it will be remembered, Admiral Duncan was blockading the Texel, hemming in the Dutch fleet so that they might not join the French. Was it not a terrible thing that with the exception of two ships—the Venerable (the flagship) and the Adamant—his fleet should desert him, sail across the water and join the scoundrel Parker at the Nore?

Poor Scotch Duncan! When even the men of the flagship showed signs of revolting, he drew them around him, and in a voice which seemed almost choked with rising tears addressed them in words that were at once simple and touching. His concluding sentences were somewhat as follows:—

“Often and often, men, it has been my pride with you to look into the Texel on a foe which dreaded to come out to meet us. But my pride is humbled now indeed; and no words of mine can express to you the anguish and sorrow in my heart. To be deserted by my fleet in the presence of the enemy is a disgrace that is hard, hard to bear, for never could I have deemed it possible.”

That speech settled Jack as far as the flagship was concerned; for British sailors really have soft, kind hearts. It is as true even to this hour what Dibdin wrote about Jack as it was in the dashing days of old:—

“Longside of an enemy, boldly and brave,
He'll with broadside on broadside regale her;
Yet he'll sigh to the soul o'er that enemy's grave,
So noble's the mind of a sailor.

“Let cannons roar loud, burst their sides let the bombs,
Let the winds a dread hurricane rattle,
The rough and the pleasant he takes as it comes,
And laughs at the storm and battle.

“To rancour unknown, to no passion a slave,
Nor unmanly, nor mean, nor a railer,
He's gentle as mercy, as fortitude brave,
And this is a true British sailor.”

President Parker of the “Republic Afloat” formed a cordon across the mouth of the Thames, and intercepted all traffic. But he did not burn a long peat stack, to use a Scotticism; for the nation was enraged at him, and one by one his ships went back to their allegiance. He was seized, and after a three days’ trial was condemned and executed, cool and intrepid to the very last.

The battle of St. Vincent—by no means a crowning victory—did much to cheer the drooping hearts of the people of England. It was an earnest of what was to follow, and probably did more to restrain the crawling demon Revolution than anything else could have done; for Britain ever loved her ships and her sailors.

But none knew the state of our country at this time better than Sir John Jervis, nor how much depended upon the success of our arms at sea. It was for this reason that he threw himself so thoroughly heart and soul into the great game of naval warfare, and became the pivot around which the whole fleet lived and moved.

There were many petty officers, and men too, among the ships who were fully aware that we were fighting against fearful odds. But a sailor is so constituted that he never lets care trouble him. Jack Mackenzie was a very great favourite with his men. He knew the way to their hearts. It was not his young friend Murray’s bedside only that he visited. There was not a wounded or a sick man in the whole ship who did not see him at least once a day, and he freely distributed wine, jellies, and many another dainty from his own mess to comfort and sustain the sick.

Jack spliced the main-brace sometimes too. One Saturday evening he returned from a very daring and extra-well-carried-out brush with the enemy’s river craft, in which his gallant fellows had cut out a barque from the very harbour’s mouth, without the loss of a man. As soon as he had refreshed himself somewhat with a bath and change of clothes, he visited young Murray, whom he found doing well, and hopeful now that he would live to see his little sweetheart once again. Then he saw the sick men, after which he gave orders to splice the main-brace.

Walking forward some hours after this, you might have heard such songs as “Tom Bowling” rolled up from near the fore-castle, or Dibdin’s “Saturday Night at Sea.”

“’Twas Saturday night: the twinkling stars
Shone on the rippling sea;
No duty called the jovial tars,
The helm was lashed a-lee.

The ample can adorned the board:
Prepared to see it out,
Each gave the lass that he adored,
And pushed the can about.”

Jack on this particular evening had M‘Hearty and Tom Fairlie to dine with him, and they were still lingering over dessert, when the steward informed the captain that Jones the boatswain desired to speak to him.

It was an odd request at such a time, but Jones was immediately admitted. His face was very serious indeed. He glanced uneasily at the servants, and interpreting the look to mean that he wished privacy, Captain Mackenzie ordered them to retire.

If Jones was serious, Jack was much more so when he made his statement, which he did in straightforward British sailor’s English.

As We Sweep Through the Deep by William Gordon Stables

CHAPTER XVI.

JACK AND THE MUTINEERS.

“Obedience every work combines,
Diffuses to each part
That ardour which the mind refines,
Expands and mends the heart.”
Dibdin.

been a-going on for some little len’th o’ time, your honour,” said Jones. “Me and my messmates took little heed o’t for a time, thinkin’ it were only Scrivings’ bombast, ’cause ye see, sir, he’s only a blessed mouth of a fellow arter all.”

“Ha!” interrupted M’Hearty, “that fellow is one of your pressed men, isn’t he?”

“Yes,” said Jack; “the ringleader of the smugglers, and a bold, bad man.”

“That’s he to a T,” said Jones. “Well, they’re all in it, the twenty o’ them. I’m no sneak, and I’m no spy, but I thought it was my duty to tell your honour. They’re preaching mutiny, and they’re spreading sedition, and—and”—here Jones lost his temper, and forgot himself so far as to bring his fist down on the table with a force that made all the glasses rattle—“I’d hang the blessed lot.”

Jones was thanked, told to keep dark, and, after a stiff glass of the captain’s rum, retired. This man had done his duty.

Early next morning, Admiral Sir John was surprised to receive a visit from Captain Mackenzie.

The latter soon opened fire in true sailor fashion.

“Admiral,” he said, “I’ve come to make an exchange. I want two of your best men for two of my very bad hats.”

The admiral laughingly requested an explanation. "For," he added, "you certainly seem to me to wish the better half of the bargain."

Jack explained in a very few words. He desired, instead of bringing the would-be mutineers to trial, to send one or two of them to every ship in the fleet.

"Pon honour," said Jervis, "the plan does you credit. I'd have hanged one or two of them. But this is better—indeed it is. Well, I'll take your two blackest hats; and I shan't forget to mention your cleverness when I send home a despatch. Come down to breakfast."

That very day the smugglers were scattered all over the fleet, and peace once more reigned in the Tonneraire.

In a few weeks' time the wounded on board Jack's ship were nearly all well; and he was not sorry when one day he was sent for by the admiral, and told that he was to proceed to sea. There were many ships, both Spanish and French, sailing to and fro on the coast carrying despatches of great importance, because they were intended to enable the enemy to complete their plans. These he was to chase, and either capture or destroy as suited him best.

Before he left on this cruise, the men and officers of the Tonneraire were delighted to receive letters from home. Jack took his little packet with a beating heart, and, retiring to his cabin, gave orders that he was not to be disturbed until he should again appear.

Ah, no one save a sailor knows the real delight experienced in receiving letters from home! And here was one in his father's handwriting. Why, it was dated from Ireland; and that is where the general was stationed, waiting, as he said, to give a true Highland welcome to the French as soon as they should land. It said nothing about the lost estate and the bonnie house that once was their home; but it was bold and hopeful throughout. The general had heard of all Jack's doings, and was proud of such a son. He concluded with a fatherly blessing, bidding him never forget he was a Grant Mackenzie.

Then he opened Flora's letter. Sisterly throughout. She was as happy at Torquay as she could expect to be, but longed—oh so much—to see her dear brother once more. Then she went on to talk of old times, and how happy they would be when they were all together once again. So it concluded, without one word about Gerty.

He laid the letter down with a sigh. A strange sense of loneliness, of forsakenness, took possession of his heart. He thought he had forgotten his false love. At this moment she seemed dearer to him than ever.

He next took slowly up from the table a letter in a strange, ill-spelt, scrawly hand, and opened it mechanically. But his face brightened as he began to read. I append a portion of it with a few corrections:—

“My Dear Luv,—Which it is me as misses you. Yes, Master Jack, me and missus too, though you promised to marry me when you grew a man, and used to give me such sweet kisses. Oh, I wish I had some now! I know’d as that was only Jack’s little joke. Me a servant girl, and you a big, tall, beautiful officer. But, la! the larks as we used to ’ave when putting you to bed. It makes me larf now to think of ’em; and how you wouldn’t go to sleep till I lay down beside you and sung you off. Yes, missus misses you, and so do I. And poor old Sir Digby has been laid up with the gout; and poor dear missus says as how she won’t marry him for two years yet to come. And old master’s content because he says he knows she’ll be Lady Digby by-and-by. But missus she do look so sad and peaky sometimes; only when old Mr. Richards comes she just goes wild with joy, and sits on his knee just like old times, and sometimes, poor child, goes to sleep with her head on his shoulder. But here comes missus, only she mustn’t see this letter. No more at present, but remains yours till death, with luv and sweet kisses.—Mary.”

Love and sweet kisses, indeed! Jack laughed aloud. Then he read Mary’s letter all over again. Then, will it be believed? he kissed it. After this, can you credit it? he placed it in his bosom. What did Jack mean, I wonder?

The next letter was a right hearty one, from kind old Mr. Richards. There was a deal of business in it, and a deal that wasn’t; but the sentence that pleased Jack best was this: “I’m looking after Gerty. I’m saving her for you. Old Keane may sacrifice his daughter to Sir Digby, but there will be two moons in the sky that day, and another in the duck-pond. Keep up your heart, boy. I’m laying the prettiest little trap for Sir Digby ever you saw. Gee-ho! Cheerily does it.”

Cheerily did do it. All the gloom that poor Flora’s kind letter had left in Jack’s heart was banished now, and he had begun to sing.

He was leaving his room, when he ran foul of Tom Fairlie.

Tom was singing too, and smiling.

Jack pulled him right into his cabin and shut the door.

“What are you all smiles about?” said Jack.

“Why are you all smiles?” said Tom.

“Had a letter from Flora?”

“Heard about Gerty?”

Then something very funny or very joyous seemed to tickle the pair of them at precisely the same moment, and they laughed aloud till all the glasses on the swing-table rang out a jingling chorus.

“I say, Tom,” said Jack at last, “I feel I can fight the French now.”

“Precisely how I feel. Ha! ha! ha!”

“Well, come and dine with me to-night—all alone.” And Tom did.

As We Sweep Through the Deep by William Gordon Stables

CHAPTER XVII.

IN A FOOL'S PARADISE.

“The boatie rows, the boatie rows,
The boatie rows fu' weel;
And mickle lighter is the boat
When love bears up the creel.”—Old Song.

the interests of truth, I have now to record that my hero, Captain Jack Mackenzie, formed one of the most ridiculous resolutions any young man could have been guilty of making. It is all very well building castles in the air—indeed, it is rather a pretty pastime than otherwise, and may at times be productive of good; but when it comes to building for one's self, willingly and with wide-open eyes, a whole paradise—fool's, of course—and quietly taking up one's abode therein, the absurdity of the speculation must be apparent to every one.

But this is just what our Jack now set about doing. For many a long month back he had worked and slaved, and fought battles, and sailed his ship, and did all he could, it must be confessed, to make everybody around him happy, while a load of sorrow, which felt as big as a bag of shrapnel or a kedge anchor, lay at his own heart. He now determined to get rid of this incubus, to leave it, or creep out from under it somehow. During all these months he had tried, and tried hard, to forget his lost love Gerty, but all in vain. Trying to forget her made matters infinitely worse, so now he meant to indulge himself in the sweet belief that she still was his, still loved him; that there was no such individual in the world as silly old Sir Digby; and that he, Jack, had only to go home, if it pleased Heaven to spare him, and claim the dear girl as his wife.

He certainly did not mean to force himself to think about her, only he would do nothing to impede the flow of happy thoughts whenever they showed a tendency to come stealing over his soul. These are his own words, spoken to himself in the privacy of his state-room. And between you and me and the binnacle, reader, not to let it go any further, I believe it was poor Mary's letter, with its “dear luv” and its “sweet kisses,” that was at the bottom of Jack's resolve. For had she not written, as plain as quill can write, the magical sentence, “Yes, missus misses you; so do I”? It didn't matter a spoonful of tar about the “so do I,” but there was the “missus misses you.” Ah! it was around these

simple, euphonious words that hope hung like a garland of forget-me-not. Why did missus miss him? Mary wouldn't have said that missus missed him if missus didn't. So ran Jack's thoughts as he walked up and down the floor of his cabin. No, Mary wasn't a girl of that sort. Missus missed him, and there was an end of it. Missus missed him, ergo missus must sometimes think about him, and upon this belief he meant to hinge his happiness. Missus must—

“Rat—tat—tat—tat.”

“Come in. Ah, Tom, there you are! Glad you've come a little before dinner is served. Well, we're all ready for sea, I suppose?”

“Yes; as soon as you like to-morrow morning, sir.”

“Well, drowse the ‘sir,’ Tom, else I'll send you away without a morsel of dinner. We're not on the quarter-deck now, you know. You're Tom, and I'm just Jack.”

A few minutes afterwards, Tom, strolling carelessly towards Jack's writing-table, picked up a sheet of paper, and to his astonishment read as follows:—

“Missus missed thee, so do I,
Drop the tear and sigh the sigh;
Yet ne'er let sorrow cloud thy brow—
She loved thee once, she loves thee now.”

“Ha! ha! ha!” laughed Tom aloud.

Jack got as red as a tomato, and rushed to rescue the manuscript.

“Put it down at once, Tom! How dare you?”

But Tom only laughed the more. He read Jack's inspiration from end to end, in spite of all that Jack could do.

“Well,” he said when he had finished, “I knew you could fight a bit, but this is a revelation. ‘Missus missed thee’—ha! ha! ha!”

It was well for Jack and Tom both that the steward and servants entered at that moment with the dinner. Poetry soon gave place to soup, and sentiment fled on the appearance of the roast-beef.

But when dessert was placed upon the table, and the servants had gone, Jack, feeling bound to open his heart to somebody, told Tom about the fool's paradise to which he meant to flit from Castle Despair, in which he had dwelt so long.

Tom was a thoroughly practical kind of a young fellow, and now he shook his head considerably.

"M—m—m, well," he said, "the notion isn't half a bad one, you know, perhaps. But, Jack, doesn't it savour somewhat of the reckless? Scotsmen are all reckless, I know, especially, I believe, the Grant Mackenzies; and your idea may be good, but—a—"

"Well, well, Tom, out with it, man. What are you humming and hawing about?"

"Why, it's like this, you see—and, mind, I speak to you as a brother—it may be very pleasant, say, for a few friends met together to take an extra glass of wine, and spend a happy evening, but shouldn't they think of their heads in the morning?"

"I have thought of my head in the morning, Tom; I have thought of the awakening. I do know that some day I shall see an announcement in the Times of the marriage of Sir Digby Auld and—heigh-ho! Gerty; that then I shall have to leave my pretty paradise, and that the flaming sword of honour will forbid my ever entering there again. But till then, Tom, till then. Bother it all, man, you wouldn't have a fellow make himself miserable all his life, simply because he knows he has got to go to Davy Jones' locker at the finish?"

"Oh no," said Tom, gravely.

"Well, then, brother mine, I mean to live in my fool's paradise as long as ever I can, and when the end comes I'll flit."

"Tom," he continued, after a pause of about a minute, "on board the old Ocean Pride I once told you the story of my love for Gerty; and I told you also all I knew about dear father's difficulties. We both know now how complete daddy's financial ruin is, but I have never yet told you the true story of Gerty's engagement to Sir Digby Auld. I'll tell you now, and you won't think so hard of the poor girl when I have finished."

Jack Mackenzie spoke for fully a quarter of an hour without intermission, ending with these words: "So you see, brother, the dear girl is positively immolating herself on the altar of filial love, and what she considers duty. She loves the old man Keane surely more dearly than daughter has any right to love a father; and her main ambition and object in life is to see the lonely man happy and respected in his old age. So, dear Tom, don't bid me leave my fool's paradise yet a while. You have your happiness; I—"

He paused, and sighed a weary kind of sigh.

Tom was touched to the very bottom of his heart. He stretched his arm across the walnuts and grasped his friend's hand.

"Poor Jack!" he said. "Live in your paradise and be happy. Would that I could give you hopes that your lease will be a very long one."

"Besides," continued Jack, excusing himself a little more, "with a light heart I shall be able to drub the French more cheerfully."

Tom's eyes sparkled.

"Ah yes!" he said; "and for the very same reason I too feel in the finest of form for drubbing the French."

"And we've had no single-ship action with the Dons yet."

"Their time is coming."

"Yes, their time is coming. A man never swings a sword half so well, nor sails and fights a ship so well, as when he is in love and happy:

'For mickle lighter is the boat
When love bears up the creel.'"

As We Sweep Through the Deep by William Gordon Stables

CHAPTER XVIII.

“WOULD HE EVER COME AGAIN?”

“A sailor’s life’s the life for me,
He takes his duty merrily;
If bullets whistle, Jack can sing,
Still faithful to his friend and king.”
Dibdin.

ACK was right about love and “the creel,” or rather, I should say, the old song is right,—

“Mickle lighter is the boat
When love bears up the creel.”

For the next three months the swift Tonneraire was here, there, and everywhere—except in England. She cruised much farther south, and chiefly along the coast of France, and seldom put into harbour except to cut out some merchantman, snugly ensconced, perhaps, under the guns of a fort, and deeming herself in a very safe position. It was, unfortunately for her, the feeling of security that proved her ruin.

Three or four several times did the Tonneraire thus prove herself a crack ship. A crack ship with a crack crew and officers, remember; for the best of ships is but a drone unless well managed. Not even a drone, indeed; for a drone is a most duty-full bee, and a most respectable member of the apiarian republic. There is a vast deal of very indifferent music in the very best of fiddles, and I feel quite convinced that had some less active officer commanded even the Tonneraire, he would have had little to show at the end of his cruise.

In his daring cutting-out expeditions Jack had been invariably successful. First and foremost he chased the vessel, and failing to overhaul her, he bore away seawards again, as if he had given up all hope, she perhaps taking refuge under the guns of a fort. But although he might sail out of sight of land, soon as the shades of evening began to fall the Tonneraire came round. Then all depended on cleverness and pluck.

The Ferdinand was a gun-brig that, on the morning of the 12th of June '97, had saucily fired at the Tonneraire, then shown her a clean pair of heels. She was near to the port of T—, so could afford to be insolent. Jack sent a fifty-six pound shot tearing through her rigging, without doing much damage, on which the Ferdinand fired again from her stern. Only a puff of white smoke, only a ten-pound shot, with a sound withal like that of a boy's pop-gun. But it was enough. Jack's Highland blood was up; and he said to M'Hearty, who was near him on the poop, "I'll have her, if only for her insolence."

M'Hearty laughed. It was not polite; but he couldn't help it. For the doctor and captain of the Tonneraire were the dearest friends.

"You've been much livelier and happier within this last month or two," said M'Hearty. "Tell me, sir, are you in love?"

"What would you do if I were?"

"Nothing, Captain Jack. I've got pills to cure melancholy; but for love, well, I never had it myself, so I shouldn't know what to do. But—may you be happy."

It was very dark that night when the Tonneraire stole silently back. She hauled her main-yard aback, and five armed boats, under command of Tom, were despatched to cut the saucy Frenchman out. The oars were muffled, and there was not a glimmer of light permitted to shine anywhere about the ship.

The captain of marines and Murray both went in different boats, and on this occasion M'Hearty himself. The great fellow said he wanted to stretch his legs and swing his arms about a bit.

"Don't get shot, anyhow, doctor," said Jack.

"My clear Captain Mackenzie, I'm positively bulletproof."

Young Murray was in high glee. He put on white gloves for the occasion. M'Hearty left his sword on board, and his coat and hat, and positively entered the boat bareheaded, in his shirt sleeves, and armed with a cutlass.

"Nobody will see me," he said to Jack.

"I'll be bound they'll feel you," laughed the captain of marines.

This was as pretty a cutting-out action as ever I have heard of.

Feeling sure of their safety, the Frenchmen were careless in their watch. The officers were wining and playing cards down below, when suddenly there was a shout, and a rattle and bump and rush. Hardly had the bugle, that awakened echoes from the walls of the fort, sung out to summon the crew to repel boarders, ere our fine fellows were on board. Stern was the resistance made, however, to the British tars. Big M'Hearty had boarded on the port-bow, and came flailing away aft. He knew nothing of sword-exercise, but simply grasped the cutlass, a huge one, by both hands, and hammered away in old Highland fashion. But a Frenchman fell at every blow.

Murray fought like a little lion, but was knocked under a gun, and lay like a dead thing till all the fight was over, and long after.

Yes, they were victorious.

"Better go back to your cards and wine," shouted M'Hearty, as he drove the last officer down below.

Meanwhile, will it be believed, the fort opened fire on their own brig.

Tom caused every light at once to be extinguished. Then sail was set, and though the brig was struck over and over with round shot, again they managed to cut her out. As she got fairly under way, our fellows returned a cheer of defiance to the fort, and just one gun was fired by way of farewell.

The capture had not been without mishap. Two of our men were killed outright, and about ten, including Murray, were wounded.

At first it was thought the sprightly young officer was dead, but soon after being carried on board his own ship, he opened his eyes, stared wildly around him for a few moments, then sank again into insensibility. He had been merely stunned.

This made the third time Murray had come to grief in action.

"It was always the same," he said, "even when I was a little fellow; I never could fight without getting a bad black eye. Just my luck."

The brig was manned by a prize crew, half the Froggies, as our Jacks carelessly called them, being taken on board the man-o'-war. These were started for England a day or two afterwards, in a gun-brig of ours which was fallen in with homeward bound.

The Ferdinand was sent home, a midshipman being in charge as captain, and a happy lad was he. But long before he reached England this same gun-brig was recaptured by the French, and this same midshipman, prize crew and all, made prisoners. He was not so happy then! only this is the fortune of war.

Jack Mackenzie used to boast that the Tonneraire carried the smartest lot of midshipmen that the service could boast of. They were indeed a fine lot, not midshipmites but midshipmen; for some indeed had been, for acts of valour, promoted from gunners or boatswains.

It needed all their strength and courage to fight the battle I shall now briefly describe.

Everything, it is said, is fair in love and war. I do not know about the love, but I am certain about the war. It is the aim and object of any one nation carrying on war with another, not only to destroy the war-ships of the enemy, but to sink and burn her vessels of commerce wherever found. In this memorable cruise of Jack Mackenzie's, then, he was ever on the outlook for a sail or sails. The Tonneraire was as fleet as the wind. If, then, a man-o'-war, French or Spanish, was fallen in with, unless the odds seemed out of all proportion against him, Jack fought her. If she was too big he performed a strategic retreat; well, in plainer language, he ran away.

But he used to send boats in and around the numerous islands on the coast of France to reconnoitre, and frequently they found something lying at anchor worth attacking. When, one forenoon, Tom Fairlie returned and reported a whole convoy of merchantmen lying at anchor under the protection of a frigate and the forts between the island of N—— and the mainland, Jack at once held a council of war, and it was resolved to attack after nightfall. On this occasion all the boats save one were needed, and the little expedition consisted of seven officers, over one hundred Seamen, and fifty marines.

As usual, the boarding took place after dark. I need not describe the fight; it was fierce, brief, and terrible, but finally the frigate was captured.

At this time very little wind was blowing, and a half-moon in the sky shed a sad but uncertain light upon the blood-slippery decks.

And now a council of war was held to consider what had best be done. The destruction of the fleet of fifteen merchantmen, who as the tide was running out had grounded in shallow water, was imperative. It was determined, therefore, to leave a sufficient force of men on board the captured vessel, in case of an attempt on the part of the foe to regain their ship, and to proceed forthwith to burn the fleet. Tom Fairlie left four of his

sturdiest mids and eighty men on board the frigate, and then left her. In less than half-an-hour every one of the merchantmen was well a-lit, the crews having already escaped in their boats.

It was a strange and appalling sight. The flames were red and lurid, the green hills, the dark rocks, and the sands were lit up with a brilliancy as of noonday, while the rolling clouds of smoke, laden as thickly with sparks as the sky in a snowstorm, were carried far away southwards and seaward. But the light was dazzling, confusing; and before the bold sailors knew which way to steer, they ran aground. The tide, in ten minutes' time, left them high and dry.

Guns from the forts, too, began to roar out; and to add to the terror of the situation, a company of soldiers was drawn up on the beach, and Tom's men began to fall, uncertain though their fire was.

It was a trying situation; but Tom Fairlie was as cool as an old general. He descried that troops of marines, hundreds in fact, were being poured into the frigate, and that she seemed already recaptured. He resolved, therefore, to desert his boats and cross the bay, where lay a craft which could contain all his men.

This was done at extraordinary hazard, Tom's men, though bearing their wounded with them, keeping up a running fire till the craft was reached. Luckily the soldiers had retired, but it took his men half-an-hour to get the little schooner into deep water.

It was a sad though heroic story that Tom Fairlie had to tell when in the gray dawn of that summer's morning he rejoined his ship.

Jack now made all sail southwards, to report proceedings to his admiral.

He was welcomed most kindly; and although he half expected a reprimand for losing so many boats and so many men, he received nothing but praise for his gallantry, and a special despatch was sent home descriptive of the whole cruise of the Tonneraire.

"We cannot expect to fight without losses," said the good admiral warmly; "and I am always pleased when my officers do their duty, as you and your brave associates have done yours."

Jack's face glowed with shy pride. It was so delightful to be thus talked to that his eyes filled with tears.

The Tonneraire got more boats, and was soon again on the war-path; but somehow everybody in the mess, and even the sailors forward, sadly missed the merry, laughing face of young Murray, for the boy was among the captured.

Would he ever come again?

As We Sweep Through the Deep by William Gordon Stables

CHAPTER XIX.

THE BATTLE OF CAMPERDOWN.

“The flag of Britannia, the flag of the brave,
Triumphant it floateth on land and o’er wave,
And proudly it braveth the battle and blast,
For when tattered with shot it is nailed to the mast.”
Old Song.

was early on the morning of one of those bright and bracing days in the beginning of October, when summer seems to return as if to say good-bye before giving place to winter with its wild winds, its stormy seas, its driving mist and sleet. The *Tonneraire* had sailed in towards Havre on the previous evening. To put it in plain English, she was on the prowl. Jack had received word from a fisherman that lying at anchor was a very large store-ship belonging to the French, and he meant to cut her out or destroy her. But either the fisherman had deceived him or the vessel had sailed. He found no vessel that he could make a prize of, nor any foeman worthy of his steel.

Having been up half the night, Jack Mackenzie was tired, and had lain down to sleep. The ship was under easy sail, and going to the north and west, right before the wind. Jack was dreaming about his old home of Grantley Hall. He was walking in the garden on a bright moonlight night with his sister and Gerty; but the sister had gone on, up the broad green walk, while the other two stopped beside the old dial-stone, the figures on which were quite overgrown with green moss and gray pink-tipped lichens.

“See, see, Gerty,” he was saying, as he hurriedly cleared the stone, “the old time appears again, the dear old days have come once more. The figures were always there though we could not see them. Our old love, Gerty, like the figures in the dial, has been obscured, but never, never lost.” A bonnie blush had stolen over her face, and her long eyelashes swept her cheeks, as she glanced downwards at a bouquet of blue flowers Jack had given her. She was about to reply, when sharp as a pistol-shot on the quiet morning air rang out the voice of the outlook aloft,—

“Sail ahead, sir; right away on the starboard bow!”

Gerty with her flowers of blue, Gerty with the bonnie blush on her cheek and the love-light in her eye, Grantley Hall, green grassy walks, dial-stone, and all vanished in a hand-clap, and next moment Jack was hurriedly dressing to go on deck.

She was a French sloop of war. Disappointed at his want of success on the previous night, Jack announced to Tom Fairlie his generous intention of blowing her sky-high.

So all sail was crowded in chase.

The sloop bore away before the wind. She knew, perhaps, her best course for safety and escape.

It was very tantalizing but very exciting withal. She might have been a phantom ship, so steadily did she crack on all day long, Jack never getting a knot nearer, nor she a knot farther off. Stun'-sails were set and carried away, all was done that could be done; but when at last the crimson sun sank in a pink and purple haze, all on board could see that the sloop had won the race.

But strange things happen, and but for this sloop Jack would never have had the honour of being at the battle of Camperdown. They had sailed very far north; and about five bells in the morning watch, while it was still dark, the Tonneraire found herself surrounded with mighty men-of-war. Now, if these were Frenchmen, the days and years of the swift Tonneraire were assuredly numbered. But they were not. They were the ships of Britannia, who was even then ruling the sea—the fleet of bold Scotch Duncan, who had been refitting at Yarmouth, when he had heard that the great Dutch fleet of De Winter had at last crawled out of the Texel, and was on its way south to effect a junction with the French, then—Heaven help Britannia!

“Going to join the French fleet De Winter is, is he?” Scotch Duncan said when he heard the news. Duncan never said a bad word, but on this memorable occasion he hitched up his Scotch breeks and added, “I’ll be dashed if he does. Make the signal ‘Up anchor!’” Having issued this order, he coolly entered his state-room to lock his drawers and put away his papers and jewellery, for he knew the ship would be knocked about a bit. As he did so he whistled “Johnnie Cope.”

And now the Tonneraire was hailed by the flagship, and told to fall in with the fleet.

Tom Fairlie rubbed his hands with delight, M’Hearty chuckled, and old Simmons rumbled out some remark to the effect that he knew Duncan well, and that “you youngsters” (that was Tom and Jack) “will soon have your fill of honour and glory.”

So they did.

And braver battle than Camperdown was never fought. Not only did our fellows exhibit the greatest of courage, but gallant De Winter as well.

The Dutch had about twenty ships, and we nineteen in all. Since the suppression of the mutiny at the Nore, Duncan had regained all his fleet; and the men seemed determined to wipe out the stain that had blackened their characters. And right well they succeeded.

You must go to history for a complete account of the battle. Suffice it for me to say that on coming up with the enemy's fleet on the 11th of October, Duncan broke right through it and got inshore. De Winter could not have got away had he wanted to ever so much. The great battle was fought dangerously near to the coast indeed, for here were shoals and sands that were quite unknown to our fleet. The beach was lined with spectators, who must have been appalled at this terrible conflict of giants.

The Tonneraire was splendidly handled. Old Simmons himself took the wheel, and carried her grandly alongside a Dutchman nearly double her size, so close that the guns touched, and seemed to belch fire and destruction down each other's iron throats. But Jack had no intention of stopping there to be blown out of the water by the Dutchman's broadsides.

"Away, boarders!" It was Jack's own brave voice sounding through the trumpet, high over the din of battle.

Then, ah then! a scene ensued that it may be just as well not to describe too graphically. Our marines and blue-jackets boarded pell-mell and together, and amid the roar of cannon from other ships, the incessant rattle of musketry from the tops, the hand-to-hand fight raged on, with shouts and groans and shrieks of execration. Hitherto no wounded man had been borne below to the cockpit, so that M'Hearty was idle as yet. He was on the rigging with the captain, from which they had a bird's-eye view of the battle.

"Look, sir, look, the captain of marines has fallen. Oh, I can't stand this!"

Next moment he had leaped below. Off went his coat and waistcoat and hat. He seized a cutlass, and in a minute more was on the Dutchman's deck, flailing away like a perfect Wallace Redivivus. Many a head he broke, for he literally showered his blows like wintry rain.

He saved the marine captain's life, although that sailor-soldier was severely wounded. It is almost unnecessary to say that, under the circumstances, Captain Jack Mackenzie forgave the gallant doctor for leaving his ship without permission.

But the toughest fight of all raged around Duncan's flagship, the Venerable, when she tackled that of the Dutch admiral De Winter—namely, the Vreyheid. Just as in days of long, long ago the chiefs of opposing armies used to delight to single each other out and fight hand-to-hand, so did bold Duncan keep his eye on the Dutchman, and as soon as the battle had commenced he went straight for her. As he bore down towards her, however, the States-General presented a target that he could not resist, for she was stern on to the Venerable. Murderous indeed was the broadside Duncan poured into her, raking her from aft to fore. This vessel soon after left the battle ranks, with a loss of over two hundred and fifty killed and wounded.

“Bold Jack Crawford nailed the colours to the mast.”

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And now the great tulzie commenced in awful earnest, for Duncan ranged himself up against the Vreyheid to the lee, while to windward of her was the Ardent. But three mighty Dutchmen came down hand-over-hand to the defence of their brave admiral's ship. So fearful was the fire of these latter that Duncan's ship would speedily have been placed hors de combat, had not others come to his rescue and restored the balance. But nothing could withstand the fury of Duncan's onslaught; and at last, with every officer dead or wounded, the brave Dutch admiral hauled down his flag. Twice during the terrible combat had Admiral Duncan's flag been shot away. It was then that bold Jack Crawford, whose name indicates his Scottish origin, wrapped the colours round his waist, and providing himself with nails and a hammer, climbed nearly to the main-truck and nailed the ensign to the mast.

Duncan received De Winter's sword, and soon after the battle was over and the victory ours. A glorious day and a glorious victory, but, ah! how dearly bought. It gives us some faint notion of the pluck and go of our navy in those fighting days of old, to learn that the Ardent had her captain and forty officers and men slain outright, and no less than one hundred and seven wounded.

The scene in the cockpit during a fight like this is one that genius alone could graphically depict. The centre-ground of the picture is the big table, around which the surgeons are at work, stripped to their shirts, their faces stained, their hands and garments dripping gore. The whole place is filled with stifling smoke, through which the glimmering lights are but faintly seen; but all around are ranged the wounded, the gashed, the bleeding, awaiting their turn on the terrible table. You can hear them if you cannot see them—hear them groaning, sometimes even shrieking, in their agony; and the mournful call for

“Water! water!” is heard in every lull of the fight or momentary cessation of cannon’s roar. And bending low as they move among them are the stewards and idlers of the ship, serving out the coveted draught. But down the blood-slippery companion-ladder come the bearers incessantly, carrying as gently as a Jack can their sorely-stricken messmates. Verily a sad scene! On deck war is witnessed in all its pomp and its panoply, on deck is honour and glory; the dark side is seen in the cockpit—the sorrow, the despair, the hopelessness, the agony, the death.

As We Sweep Through the Deep by William Gordon Stables

CHAPTER XX.

NELSON AND THE NILE.

“With one of his precious limbs shot away,
Bold Nelson knowed well how to trick 'em;
So, as for the French, 'tis as much as to say,
We can tie up one hand, and then lick 'em.”
Dibdin.

THINGS in England began to look up. Those who preached revolution were forced to hide their heads with shame after the great battle of Camperdown. For this fight had completely restored confidence in our country's powers, and for the time being the fears of invasion had fled far away.

In many a lordly hall over all the land the feast was laid, on many a lofty hill the bonfires blazed; it was indeed a season of great rejoicing.

In one of the window recesses of Mr. Keane's somewhat lonesome and dreary suburban mansion, as the shadows of evening fell on the almost leafless elms around the house, sat Gerty. She was looking out into the gathering night, looking out at the slowly-falling leaves; for though a book lay in her lap, it was almost too dark to read. By her side sat a beautiful deer-hound, with his muzzle leaning on her knee, and gazing up into her face with his brown earnest eyes, as if he knew there was sorrow at her heart.

He—Jack—had given her that dog as a puppy, and no power on earth could make her part with him. As she turned her eyes from the window, she noted his speaking look, and as she bent to caress him, a tear fell on his rough gray neck.

Presently there was a knock at the door, and in rushed Mary the maid.

Mary seemed about half daft. She was waving aloft a copy of the Times, and scarce could speak for excitement. But she managed to point to a certain column.

“What is it, Mary? I cannot see.”

“Which it’s our boy Jack as is mentioned for conspeakyewous bravery. Aren’t you glad and proud?”

“Glad and proud? O Mary! silly child. And I am to be the bride of another. Nay, father insists that I shall give Sir Digby his answer to-night at the ball.”

“An’ I should do it, missus; that I should. I’d put it in fine polite English, but I’d put it straight, all the same. When he knelt before me,—‘Jump up, old Granger,’ I should say. ‘Right about face. Shoulder hip. Quick march. I loves another, and I cannot marry thee.’”

“O Mary,” said Gerty, smiling in spite of herself, “how you talk! Hush, child; not another word. I’m bound to make my father happy, and—I will.”

The ball to which Gerty and her father were going that evening was Sir Digby’s. This gentleman possessed both a town and a country house; but if the truth must be told, he was at present absolutely living on his future prospects.

“Well,” he told one of his chief cronies that evening before the arrival of the guests, “when my brother dies—and he is a terribly old buffer—I shall drop into a nice thing. But it is just like my confounded luck that he should linger so long. And to tell you the truth, D’Orsay, I’m a bit pinched, and some of the Jews are pressing.”

“Why don’t you marry?”

“Well, I’m going to. Ah! she’s a sweet young thing, Miss Keane; and though the father is a skinflint, he’s wealthy, and I’ll make him settle a bit before I give my ancient name away. Wager on that.”

“Hold hard, Digby; I wouldn’t be your friend if I didn’t tell you.”

“Didn’t tell me what?”

“Why, man, haven’t you heard? The firm of Griffin, Keane, and Co. is ruined. ’Pon honour. South Sea biz, or something. Had it from a friend, who had it from one of the firm. It’s a secret, mind. But it is true.”

“Good heavens, D’Orsay, you do not tell me so? Then I too am ruined!”

“What! you haven’t proposed—you’re not tied?”

“Nay, nay; all but. That is nothing, D’Orsay—nothing; but on the strength of this marriage I have borrowed thousands. Fleet prison is my fate if what you say is true.”

“Look here, Digby,” said D’Orsay, after a pause, “you are a man of the world, like myself. Now if I were you, I should transfer my affections. See?”

“In which quarter?”

“Why, there is Miss Gordon; a trifle old, to be sure, but positively rolling in wealth, and rolling her eyes whenever she sees you.”

Sir Digby muttered something about a bag of broken bottles, but D’Orsay went on,—

“I’d marry her; ’pon honour I should.”

“Think of life with that old hag.”

“Think of life in the Fleet, my friend.”

Sir Digby winced, and for a time made no reply.

“D’Orsay,” he said at last, “I am a man, and, I trust, a gentleman. I’d prefer to marry Gerty even—even—”

“If she were a beggar. Bravo, Digby!” And D’Orsay laughed in the way men of the world do laugh.

“I didn’t say that. I—I—’pon my soul, D’Orsay, I do not know what to do.”

Miss Gordon was the belle of that ball, as far at least as dress and jewellery were concerned. She came of a noble family, too, and gave herself all the airs common in those days to ladies of title—hauteur, dignity, and condescension by turns. But towards Sir Digby she was as soft and sweet as a three-month-old kitten.

If Sir Digby Auld had meant to propose to sweet Gerty Keane that night, he never had a chance, for neither she nor her father appeared. It was reported that he had had a fit. But this was not so. After he was dressed, however, and the carriage waiting, he received a letter. He no sooner read it than it dropped from his hands on the floor, and he leaned back in his chair with his face to his hands.

Gerty was by his side in a moment.

“O father, are you ill?” she cried. “Shall I summon assistance?”

He recovered himself at once. “Nay, nay,” he said; “only grief for the death of an old friend.” He smoothed her hair as he replied. “Gerty, we will not go out to-night.”

But the letter he picked off the floor and carefully put away in his pocket-book.

A whole half-year passed away without any events transpiring that much concern our narrative. Jack Mackenzie was still on the war-path, playing havoc with the commerce of France and Spain. Indeed he had constituted himself a kind of terror of the seas. His adventures were not only most daring, but carried out with a coolness that proved they were guided by a master mind. Indeed Jack Mackenzie and all his officers knew now to a very nicety what might be done with the swift Tonneraire, and what could not. Her bold young captain did not mean to be either captured or sunk, and he was wise enough to run away whenever he found himself overmatched. But this was not very often.

One surprise, during this time, Jack and his officers had received, and it was a very happy one. While lying at anchor with Lord St. Vincent’s ships, one day a boat pulled off from the flagship, and there leaped therefrom and came swiftly up the ladder—who but young Murray himself. He saluted the quarter-deck, and he saluted Jack as he reported himself, smiling all over like the happy boy he was.

“I’ve come on board to join, sir. Isn’t it jolly, just? And I’m promoted to a lieutenancy.”

M’Hearty, Simmons, and every soul in the mess were most pleased to see him, and that evening Murray was the hero of the hour; and a very long and strange story he had to tell of his imprisonment, his harsh treatment, and his making love to the prison-governor’s daughter, through whose cleverness he at last managed to escape, dressed as a grisette.

He kept his messmates laughing till long after seven bells in the first watch; and it must be said that not this night only, but every other night, Murray infused into the mess a joy and jollity to which it had been all winter a stranger.

Meanwhile a greater hero than Jack Mackenzie must hold the stage for a brief spell—namely, Nelson himself. Napoleon Bonaparte, after lying awake for a night or two, gave birth to a grand idea. Hyder Ali, in the south of India, hated the British as one hates a viper, and gladly would have crushed our power under his heel. But he needed help. It occurred to Bonaparte to aid him, and so oust us from our Indian Empire, which was then being quickly built up. It was a pretty idea, and well carried out at the

commencement; for Bonny, as our sailors called him, managed to sail from France with thirty thousand veteran, well-trying troops; and having the good luck to elude our fleet, he called at Malta, which he quickly brought to terms, then made straight for Egypt. Here he landed from his fleet, which I believe had orders to return, but did not.

With such men as those old troops of Napoleon's the conquest of Egypt and the Mamelukes was but a picnic, and all very pleasant for Bonny and his merry men, though sad enough for the country on which these human locusts had alighted. Cairo fell, and the great warrior now set himself to rebuild the constitution of the country and create a native army.

Lord St. Vincent sent the brave one-eyed, one-armed Nelson with a fleet to destroy the French expedition. That he quickly would have done. He speedily would have cooked his hare, but he had to catch it first. Where ever was the French fleet? No one could tell him, and his adventures in search of it would fill a goodly volume. It reads like one long entrancing romance.

Jack Mackenzie, in his *Tonneraire*—the real name of the ship I am bound not to mention—joined this fleet, and thus was present at the great battle of the Nile.

Poor Nelson was almost worn out with anxiety and watching; but when he arrived at Aboukir Bay and found the foe, all his courage and all his calmness returned, and although the sun was slowly sinking in the west, our Nelson resolved not to wait an hour even, but attack the enemy there and then.

As We Sweep Through the Deep by William Gordon Stables

CHAPTER XXI.

WILLIE DIED A HERO'S DEATH.

“Then, traveller, one kind drop bestow,
’Twere graceful pity, nobly brave;
Nought ever taught the heart to glow
Like the tear that bedews a soldier’s grave.”
Dibdin.

CANNOT help thinking that if glory is to be measured by pluck and skill combined, the battle of the Nile was even a more glorious fight than that of Trafalgar. The former battle required more physical exertion from the men individually, and therefore was a greater strain upon their courage. How? you may ask. I will tell you; and although my view of the matter may savour of the reasoning of the medico, still I think you will admit I have common-sense on my side. Besides, I am a sailor-surgeon; I have seen our brave blue-jackets working, and fighting too, under various conditions, so it cannot be said I speak altogether without experience. Well, the battle of Aboukir Bay or the Nile began in the evening, when the men were more or less jaded or tired. They had, moreover, just come off a weary voyage or cruise, and a night’s good quiet sleep would have made a wonderful difference to them both in physique and morale. Trafalgar was fought by day, beginning in the forenoon. Aboukir was contested in the hottest season of the year; Trafalgar in the cool—namely, toward the end of October. Therefore, I say, all the more honour and glory to our brave fellows; and may we fight as well and as fortunately during the next great naval war, which cannot now be far away.

I never can read or even think about that long hide-and-seek cruise of Nelson’s in the Mediterranean, in search of the French expedition, without a feeling of disappointment. Why, oh why was it ordained that he should not catch Napoleon with his fleet and his army at sea? Could he have but sent the firebrand to the bottom of the salt ocean, what conflagrations Europe would have been spared, what shedding of blood, what hopeless sorrow and bitter tears!

But there! I am keeping the fleets waiting. For his part, Brueys, the French admiral, would have preferred to wait. “He means to attack,” he said to one of his captains, referring to Nelson, “but he cannot be mad enough to attack to-night.”

But Nelson was mad enough. He was burning to give it to the French, and give it to them hot, for all the trouble and anxiety they had cost him. He was as eager as a wild cat to spring at the throat of his foe. Another night of waiting might have killed him. No, no, he cannot, will not wait. “Make the signal for general action, and trust to Heaven and the justice of our cause!”

Along the bay lay the great French fleet, with shoal water behind them, supported by gunboats and bomb-vessels, the ships moored one hundred and sixty yards from each other, and with stream cables so that they could spring their broadsides on their enemy.

And their line extended for a mile and a half.

Had Brueys thought that Nelson would attack that night, he would have got under way, and thus been free either to manœuvre or show his heels. He did not know our Nelson. Nor could he have believed that the great British admiral would have done so doughty and daring a deed as to get round behind him, so to speak, betwixt the shore and his fleet, despite the sands and shoals. But Nelson did with a portion of his fleet, and each war-ship took up position with all the precision of couples in a contra-dance. Oh, it was beautiful! but when the battle fairly began, and tongues of fire and clouds of rolling smoke leaped and curled from the great guns, lighting up the dusk and gloom of gathering night, while echoes reverberated from shore to shore, oh, then this thunderstorm of war was very grand and terrible!

To describe the battle in detail, and all the heroic actions that took place that night, would take a volume in itself. But it is all history, and probably the reader knows every bit of it as well as, if not better than, I myself do. We must honour the French, though, for this fight. They fought well and bravely, and you know the gallant Brueys died on his own quarter-deck, refusing to be carried below. He was a hero. So we might say was the captain of the *Sérieuse* frigate, who had the cheek to fire into the great *Orion* (Sir James Saumerez) as she was sweeping past. It was like a collie dog attacking a mastiff. Saumerez couldn't stand it. He stayed long enough literally to blow the frigate out of the water or on to a shoal, where she was wrecked. The *Orion* then went quietly on and engaged a foeman worthy of her steel. It was plucky of the *Bellerophon*—the old Billy Ruffian, as sailors called her—of seventy-four guns, to attack the great *Orient* of one hundred and twenty, and of the *Majestic* to range alongside the mighty *Tonnant* and coolly say, “It's you and I, isn't it?” Then one can't help feeling sorry for poor Trowbridge in the *Culloden*, because he ran ashore, and had to remain a mere spectator while burning to have a finger in the fearful pie.

But the two events of this memorable battle which I daresay dwell longest in the minds of the young reader are the wounding of Nelson, who was carried below, his brow gashed so terribly that the skin in a flap hung over his eyes, despite which, you will remember, he bravely refused to have his wound dressed until his turn came; and the blowing up of the great ship *Orient* with her bold Captain Casabianca and his poor boy, who refused to be taken off or give up his duty without his father's orders.

There are those who would rob us of this romantic story. I have no patience with such gray-souled sinners. There are people in this world who cannot endure romance and beauty; people who would paint the sky a dingy brown if they could, and smudge the glory of the summer sunsets. I do not love such people, and I hope you don't, reader. I verily believe their blood is green and sour, and that they do not see this lovely world of ours as you and I do, through rose-tinted glasses, but that to them it must appear an ugly olive green, as it would to us if we gazed upon it through a piece of bottle glass. No; we shall keep the brave boy of the *Orient*, and still read Mrs. Hemans' delightful and spirited verses:—

“The boy stood on the burning deck,
Whence all but he had fled;
The flame, that lit the battle's wreck,
Shone round him—o'er the dead.

“The flames rolled on—he would not go
Without his father's word;—
That father, faint in death below,
His voice no longer heard.

“There came a burst of thunder sound,—
The boy!—oh, where was he?
Ask of the winds, that far around
With fragments strewed the sea,—

“With mast, and helm, and pennon fair,
That well had borne their part!
But the noblest thing that perished there
Was that young faithful heart!”

The battle is past and gone, a whole month has elapsed since then, and the swift *Tonneraire* is homeward bound with despatches. Many were killed and wounded, among others good old Simmons, the master, who fell at Jack's side on the deck of a French man-o'-war. He would never grumble again; his deep bass, honest voice would

be heard no more. There was hardly a dry eye in the ship when the kindly old man's hammock was dropped overboard in Aboukir Bay.

Yes, the *Tonneraire* was homeward bound at last, after an absence of two busy and eventful years. But the saddest, probably, of all her adventures had yet to come. M'Hearty, Tom Fairlie, and young Murray were in the captain's cabin one evening towards sunset. Murray was particularly bright and pleasant to-night, and his laughing face and merry, saucy blue eyes did every one good to behold.

Suddenly there is a cry on deck, "Sail ahead!" and next minute the drum is beating to quarters. The *Tonneraire* has been working against a head wind, and now down upon her, like some monster sea-bird with wings outspread, sweeps a huge French ship of war. The battle will be very one-sided, but Jack will dare it. Already it is getting dusk; he must try to cripple the monster. He manages to rake her, and a broadside of iron hail is poured through her stern. He rakes her a second time, and this time down thunders a mast. Well would it have been for Jack and the *Tonneraire* if he had now put his ship before the wind. But no, he still fights on and on, and suffers terribly; and just as the shades of night deepen into blackness, he manages to hoist enough sail to stagger away, and the Frenchman is too sorely stricken to follow.

Very early next morning, before the stars had quite faded in the west, or the sun had shot high his rays to gild the herald clouds, M'Hearty, looking careworn, unkempt, and weary—for he had never been to bed—entered Jack's state-room and touched him lightly on the shoulder.

Jack was awake in a moment.

"Anything wrong, doctor?" he asked quickly.

"Alas, sir!" replied M'Hearty, and there was a strange huskiness in his voice as he spoke—"alas, sir! poor young Murray is dying fast."

"Murray dying!"

"Too true, sir. His wounds are far more grievous than I was aware of. He cannot last many minutes. He wants to see you."

The boy—for he was but little more—lay in a cot in the sick-bay. He was dressed in his scarlet coat, and his sword lay beside him, for he had refused to be divested of his uniform. He was in a half-sitting position, propped up with pillows, and smiled faintly as Jack knelt by his side and took his thin white hand in his.

It was a sad scene but a simple one. There was the gray light of early morning struggling in through the open port, and falling on the dying boy's face; falling, too, on M'Hearty's rough but kindly countenance, and on the figures of the sick-bay servants standing by the cot-foot tearful and frightened. That was all. But an open Bible lay upon the coverlet, and in his left hand the young soldier clasped a miniature—his little sweetheart's.

"Bury it with me," he whispered feebly. "See her, sir—and tell her—Willie died a hero's death.—Kiss me, Jack—I would sleep now."

The eyelids closed.

Ah! they had closed for aye.

Not a sound now save Jack's gentle sobbing, then the slow and solemn tones of M'Hearty's voice as he took up the little Bible and read from the Twenty-third Psalm: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." Amen!

As We Sweep Through the Deep by William Gordon Stables

CHAPTER XXII.

STILL WATERS RUN DEEP.

“This little maxim, for my sake,
I pray you be believing:
The truest pleasures that we take
Are those that we are giving.”
Dibdin.

OR more than twenty years, dating back from the time our story commenced, Richards had been a partner in the firm of Griffiths, Keane, and Co.; yet although he was almost every day in the company of Mr. Keane, he could neither love nor respect him. Perhaps had he been less with him he might have respected him more. But he knew him too well; knew him to be Keane by name and keen by nature—avaricious, grasping, and miserly in the extreme, and for the sake of adding to his stores of gold, very far indeed from scrupulous. His niggardly habits had undoubtedly hurried his wife to her grave, when Gerty was little more than a baby, and she was left to the tender mercies of a nurse and governess. In the transaction of his business Richards was constantly at his partner’s home, and usually stayed to dine; but for the sake of the child Gerty, he made many and many a visit to the house after her mother’s death, when he had no real business to transact. “Poor little mite!” he thought; “she is so lonely, and she sees no one; has no one to love save her father, to whom she is merely ‘the child.’”

It used to vex poor great-hearted Richards to the core to hear Keane snap out, “Take away that child; it’s troublesome.”

“Nay, nay,” Richards would say, lifting the mite from the hearth-rug to his knee, “let me have the darling a minute.”

“Richards, you’re a fool!” Keane would growl.

And with one arm round her protector’s neck, her cheeks wet with tears, the mite would gaze round-eyed and in saddened silence at her unnatural father. It is no wonder that she grew up to love Richards. What stories he used to tell her! what fun he used to make

for her! how he entered heart and soul into all her games and romps, as if he himself were but a boy in reality, as he was in his heart of hearts!

But the psychical mystery is how she could have come to love her father so. Yes, as the reader already knows, she did love him, and love him to that extent that she was willing to sacrifice her own happiness to his ambition, and marry a man whom she loathed if she did actually not detest.

A bachelor, with no expenses worth naming, Richards had saved quite a small fortune in his time; and when he came to find out that Keane was going positively to sell his daughter to the worn-out roué Sir Digby, that for his own advancement he might see her ere long a lord's wife, Richards thumped his fist down on his desk—he was alone at the time—till even the big ink-bottle leaped an inch up from the table.

“I'll save that darling child,” he had said, “if I spend every penny I have earned, and lose my life into the bargain.”

He smiled to himself a moment after.

“Everything is fair in love and war,” he said: “I'll play a game. The cause is good. Yes, Jack Mackenzie, my open-hearted, frank, brave boy, you shall marry Gerty. I have said it—you—shall.”

He laughed aloud next minute at his own enthusiasm.

“What a capital actor I should have made!” he thought. “How beautifully I could have done heavy fathers!”

Still waters run deep, and Richards was astute, though perhaps he did not look it. So he began at once to shuffle his cards for the game he was about to play—a game which he rightly judged was to be one of life or death. For he shuddered to think of the living death to which the selfishness of her miserly, ambitious father intended condemning Gerty.

“My baby, bless her sweet face,” he added, “shall never marry that bleach-eyed old Digby.”

Then he shut his ledger with a bang, and went for a walk in the park, where he could think. But the Mackenzies would lose the fine old house and property called Grantley Hall. Keane would assuredly foreclose. Then the place would be Keane's or Gerty's, it was much the same. Keane really meant it to be Sir Digby's and Gerty's, while he, Keane,

should live and be honoured and respected there—his son-in-law a lord. Richards thought he must try by hook or by crook to prevent his partner from foreclosing, if only for the following reason: if Grantley Hall once passed into Keane's hands, much though Gerty and Jack loved each other, the latter, being a Mackenzie and a Scot, would be far too proud to propose marriage, seeing that in doing so his desires might be misconstrued, and people would naturally say he was simply marrying back his own property.

The general had told his children that Keane was his only creditor. Yes, because in order to make sure of the estate, the old lawyer had bought up all the others. He could thus come down upon the brave but reckless Scottish soldier, like an avalanche from a mountain's brow.

The day had almost arrived for Keane's foreclosing. The family had already left Grantley Hall, taking little with them save the family jewellery, pictures, and nick-nacks. Flora had gone to Torquay, Jack was in town, and his father preparing to resume his sword, and once more fight for his country. The eventful morning itself came round. Keane was early at his office. He was in an unusually happy frame of mind. Yet perhaps he had a few slight "stoun's" of conscience, for over and over again he talked to Richards, bringing up the subject next his heart, and excusing himself.

"I had to do it—I had to do it," he said. "Pity for the poor Mackenzies. But the general was so improvident, and what could I do?"

"Most improvident," replied Richards, smiling quietly over his ledger nevertheless.

As the day wore away, Keane fidgeted more and more, and often looked at the clock. "Another hour," he said, half aloud, "only another hour."

Richards looked at the clock too, and he often glanced uneasily towards the door.

What was going to happen?

"Only half-an-hour." This from Keane.

"You seem pleased," said Richards dryly.

Rat, tat—bang, bang, at the office door.

Both men looked up; Richards with a sigh of relief, Keane with gray face and flashing eyes.

Enter a tall, good-looking clerk, hat in one hand, a bundle of papers in the other. He was a stranger to Keane.

“Re the mortgage on estate of General Grant Mackenzie, I’ve come to pay it off.”

Old Keane grew grayer and grayer in face, and foam appeared on his lips. He could not speak.

Richards slipped out and away.

He went out, and went down the street, positively laughing aloud, so that people turned smilingly round to look after him.

And to pay this mortgage off, the honest fellow had put down the bulk of his fortune, and borrowed thousands besides. The property of Grantley Hall was now virtually his; but he would not foreclose, and the Mackenzies should know nothing about it, for a time at all events.

Richards had played his first card, and it was a strong one.

He went straight off now to see “his baby,” and to continue the fairy story which he had commenced at Grantley Hall.

He saw some one else—he saw Mary. Mary was his first lieutenant. It was she who summoned him that evening at the Hall when he entered the room just as Sir Digby was about to propose.

A good girl, Mary, and devoted to her “missus.” She could keep a secret, too, and she could keep Richards posted, lest Sir Digby should steal a march upon them.

But time had rolled on, as we know. There were wars and rumours of wars, disaffection at home and threatened revolution, and last, but not least, as far as our story goes, Sir Digby had been ill, and at the point of death. Keane also had been abroad for his health, and with him his daughter, so that the evil day was postponed.

Evil days have a disagreeable habit of coming, nevertheless, in spite of all we can do.

Slowly and sadly, with rent rigging and battered hull, the Tonneraire staggered home. She is in Plymouth Sound at last. Letters and papers come off to the ship. Jack Mackenzie, sitting alone by his open port, turns eagerly to a recent copy of the Times.

Almost the first notice that attracts his attention runs thus: "Marriage of Sir Digby Auld and Miss Gertrude"—he sees no more. His head swims. The wind seizes the paper, as if in pity, and carries it far astern of the ship.

He feels utterly crushed and broken, and head and hands droop helplessly on the table before him.

As We Sweep Through the Deep by William Gordon Stables

CHAPTER XXIII.

“IT’S ALL UP, MR. RICHARDS, IT’S ALL UP!”

“The busy crew the sails unbending,
The ship in harbour safe arrived;
Jack Oakum, all his perils ending,
Has made the port where Kitty lived.”
Dibdin.

E return now to the day before Sir Digby’s ball.

Richards lived in chambers, and in no great state. He never cared for it. Had you gone straight into his sitting-room from the fresh air, what would have struck you most would have been the smell of strong tobacco smoke; and I believe you would have come to the conclusion that the principal furniture consisted of tobacco-pipes. They were of all sorts and sizes, and hung in rows and racks, and lay on shelves and on the mantelpiece. Well, what did it matter? honest Richards was a bachelor, and not once in a blue moon did a lady look in to see him.

But one afternoon, shortly before Sir Digby’s great ball, a lady did; and that lady was Mary herself.

“Which I’ve been dying to see you, sir,” she began.

“Sit down, my dear, sit down.”

Mary sat down, and proceeded,—

“It’s all up, Mr. Richards, it’s all up!”

The poor girl was crying now bitterly.

“Missus is as good as sold. She’s goin’ to the ball, and Sir Digby’s goin’ to propose. She told me, and Sir Digby kissed me and told me. Oh, oh, what ever shall I do?”

Richards lit a huge pipe, and walked about smoking for fully five minutes. Then he went over and took Mary's hand, and Mary looked up innocently in his face, and said innocently through her tears,—

“Do you want to kiss me too, sir?”

“Well, I wasn't thinking about that; but there, Mary, there. Now, I'll tell you what you've got to do; and I do believe it will all come right, even yet.”

So Mary and Richards had a long “confab” together, and she went back home happy and smiling.

After she had gone Richards lit another pipe, threw himself on a rocking-chair, and smoked long and thoughtfully. Then he got up and took a rapid turn or two up and down the floor. Presently he paused, and gazed curiously at himself in a mirror.

“Old Richards,” he said, shaking his fist at his reflection, “I didn't think it was in you. You're a designing, unscrupulous old lawyer. Never mind; it's all for my baby's sake. I'll do it. Hang me if I don't.”

An hour after this, Richards had called a carriage—a luxury he indulged in very seldom indeed. He first visited the lawyer who had transacted the business of the Grantley Hall mortgage for him. With this gentleman he was closeted for some considerable time. Then he drove to a fashionable tailor's, then to a jeweller's, and next to a wine-merchant's, and as all those individuals showed him to his carriage with many gracious smiles and bows, it was evident that his business with them had been of a very agreeable kind indeed—to them. Richards drove to other places which I need not name; and when he got back home at last, he sank into his rocking-chair with a tired but happy sigh, and immediately lit his biggest pipe.

He was smiling to himself. “I've done it,” he said half aloud, “and my baby's safe for a time. But if his rich old brother comes to the rescue, my game is spoiled. Poor Jack! I wonder what he is doing at this moment.”

On the night of the great ball, Sir Digby Auld was very much with Miss Gordon; and everybody said how well matched they were, which certainly was paying no compliment to Sir Digby. He gave her many dances, and he said many soft and pretty things to her, which caused her to bend down her painted face and pretend to blush.

In the course of the evening he forgathered with D'Orsay. D'Orsay lifted his brows and smiled.

"Getting on famously?" he said.

"I've been trying; but, D'Orsay, 'pon my life I can't. And look you here: I may be a fool, I may be mad, but to-morrow forenoon I go to Keane's and throw myself at Gerty's feet. There! the die is cast."

A servant in livery at this moment approached him. "Beg parding, sir. Two gentlemen wants to speak to you a moment in the library."

Sir Digby turned pale.

"I'd come, sir," whispered the servant; "there will be a scene else."

Sir Digby followed him out.

"Sorry we are, sir, to disturb yer 'onor; but we has a warrant for your 'rrest, and the carriage is awaitin' at the door."

"At whose instance?"

"Richards of the firm of Griffith, Keane, and Co."

Sir Digby muttered an oath. He staggered and almost fell.

D'Orsay, a quarter of an hour after this, informed the guests that Sir Digby Auld had been taken suddenly ill, but that they were to continue to enjoy themselves all the same.

Meanwhile the prisoner was being rapidly whirled away to the Fleet.

And the letter that Keane had received that night was to the effect that the man who proposed marrying his daughter was a bankrupt and a beggar, and would that evening be arrested in his own house and among his guests.

Having effectually disposed of Sir Digby for a time, Richards could afford to quietly await the turn of events. His practice had been sharp, but it was certainly justifiable. He had often hinted to his partner Keane, nay, even told him plainly, that the baronet was but a man of straw.

“Owes a few thousands perhaps,” Keane had replied, with an ill-concealed sneer. “They all do it. A post-obit would clear that up. His brother can’t live for ever. Sir Digby will be a lord, you know, on his brother’s death.”

“I’ll tell you what,” Richards had gone so far as to exclaim one day: “if I were you I’d pay Digby’s debts for him. Ten thou., I reckon, would do it. But I shouldn’t marry my only daughter to a beggar!”

Keane turned on him sharply.

“Richards,” he said, as calmly as he could, “I knew a gentleman once who made an immense fortune by a very simple process.”

“Indeed; how?”

“By minding his own business.” Then Keane cackled over his ledger. Richards said no more. But the idea of Keane, of all men, paying off a future son-in-law’s debts was too absurd.

When Richards went to Keane’s house a few days after Digby’s incarceration, he found his partner in the throes of packing. He was going to Italy for a time with Gerty, and of course Mary would accompany her.

Months went by, and many a long delightful letter did Richards receive from Gerty, and from Mary too, the latter always ending with “luv and sweet kisses.” Then came a final letter. They were coming home. Alas! the ship never reached England. She was captured by a Don, and all were made prisoners. Keane could have bought his liberty if he had cared to. He preferred to wait, and waiting—died.

A few weeks afterwards poor lonely Gerty returned, and Mary. Richards constituted himself Miss Keane’s guardian. Indeed it had been Keane’s last wishes that he should do so. And, strange to say, the ruling passion had manifested itself strongly in death; for by the help of a priest he had written a letter to Richards, praying him, for the sake of their long acquaintanceship and friendship, to see that Gerty married Sir Digby. He died, he said, peacefully, knowing she would yet be Lady Auld.

“A dying man’s last request,” said Richards to himself, “ought to be attended to; but—”

Then he solemnly placed the letter in the fire, and it was cremated.

Sir Digby made himself as comfortable as possible in the Fleet. Richards did not think it safe he should come out. Gerty was a strange girl. Her heart bled for the poor man, as she called him. For sake of her father's memory, there was no denying that she might even yet sacrifice herself.

D'Orsay paid many visits to Sir Digby in prison. He really acted like a true friend, and did all he could for him. He had even gone to see his old brother, and come back, figuratively speaking, with a finger in his mouth.

"No good in that quarter," he told Sir Digby bluntly. "Says you're a spendthrift and a ne'er-do-weel, and that he means to live for twenty years yet; and 'pon honour, Digby, he looks as if he could. I did hear too that he was looking out for a wife."

"I shall go and see my hero in his dark dungeon, in his prison cell, in his chains and misery."

These are words spoken by Miss Gordon heroically to herself in the mirror one morning. She had strange ideas of the Fleet.

She was astonished to find her hero in a flowered dressing-gown, smoking a Havana, which he threw into the fire when he saw her, and living in a handsomely-furnished room.

She went again and again. I do not know how she managed it, but I do know that in a month's time Sir Digby was a free man, and married to Miss Gordon.

This event took place just two days before Jack's ship staggered wearily into Plymouth Sound.

While he still sat by his open port, gazing sadly landward, Tom Fairlie came in with a rush and a run. He too had a copy of the Times.

"Listen, Jack," he cried, "and I'll read something that will astonish you."

"Don't, Tom, don't. I have already seen the awful announcement. I am a broken and crushed man!"

"Broken and crushed fiddlestick!" said Tom. "Listen, listen: 'At St. Nicholas' Church, on the 5th inst., by the Rev. Charles Viewfield, Sir Digby Auld to Miss Gertrude Gordon, daughter of—'"

“Hurrah!” cried Jack, springing from his seat and overturning the chair. “Hurrah for the Rev. Charlie! Tom, shake hands, my dearest and best of friends. You’ve made me the happiest man in the British Islands. Hurrah!”

In a week’s time the Tonneraire was paid off and safe in dock, and a carriage with postillions might have been seen tearing along the road that leads from Plymouth to Tor Bay.

The carriage contained Jack Mackenzie and his friend Tom Fairlie.

As We Sweep Through the Deep by William Gordon Stables

CHAPTER XXIV.

BY THE OLD DIAL-STONE.

“So heroes may well wear their armour,
And, patient, count over their scars;
Venus’ dimples, assuming the charmer,
Shall smooth the rough furrows of Mars.”
Dibdin.

GENERAL GRANT MACKENZIE was lounging at breakfast one morning in his private rooms in the big barn-like barracks of C—. At his right hand sat one of his captains, with whom he was talking—languidly enough, it must be confessed.

“You are right, Moore. By Jove, you’re right; and to-day I send in my resignation. Here have we been lying waiting the French for more than a year, and the rascals won’t show front. No; I shall go in for club life in London now.”

“We’ll miss you, general.”

“Ah, Moore, it is good of you to say so; but what can a fellow do? When I rejoined the service, I expected to see some fighting. Disappointed. And now I’m parted from my daughter, and lying in this old barn positively getting mouldy. Besides—”

“Some one to see you, sir,” said the servant.

“Why, Richards, my dear old boy, who could have expected to see you? Nothing wrong, I hope?”

“No, everything right—more than right. Prepare to hear news that—”

He glanced at the captain.

“My friend Captain Moore. No secrets from him—knows everything.—Captain Moore, Mr. Richards, my family lawyer, and, bar yourself, the best fellow in existence.”

Richards bowed.

“Well, Jack’s come. Had terrible fighting. I hurried over to tell you.”

“But not for that alone?”

“Nay, friend. Now sit down, or catch hold of something. I’m going to startle you. Your old uncle is dead.”

“What, the man that disinherited me?”

“The same; only—you are heir to Glen Pollok. It is all yours—a cool £10,000 a year.”

The general could not speak for a moment; then he grasped the kindly old solicitor’s hand once more, and with tears in his eyes.

“God in heaven bless you, Richards,” he exclaimed, “and his name be praised. Poor Jack and dear Flo, they will not now be beggars!”

“And, Richards,” he added, “Flora shall be wedded with all the pomp and glory due to a daughter of the proud house of Grant Mackenzie.”

“Ah!” laughed Richards, “there is the old reckless Celtic blood asserting itself again. Don’t forget, my friend, that even £10,000 a year can be spent, and that right easily too.”

“I won’t, I won’t; you shall be my guide.”

“And then, you see,” continued Richards, “there is the mortgage to pay off on Grantley Hall.”

“Grantley Hall! why, isn’t that sold long ago?”

Richards laughed heartily now. “O bother,” he cried. “I’ve let the cat out of the bag, and I didn’t mean to. I meant to give you such a pleasant surprise. Well, well, well,—

‘The best-laid schemes o’ mice and men
Gang aft agley.’”

Then Richards told him all he had done.

The tears stood in General Mackenzie's eyes. "Richards," he said, "I could not have believed such kindness possible. I—I—I can't say another word."

The meeting between Tom Fairlie and Flora was all that lovers could desire. Mary positively hugged Jack. He was still her boy. I'm not sure she did not shower upon him "luv and sweet kisses."

"But, bless me, Jack," she said, "how tall you've got! and really you makes poor me feel old."

Gerty met Jack with a bonnie blush.

Ah! how he longed to take her in his arms and tell her all, and all she had been to him throughout the last two long and eventful years. But no, he would not, dared not. When in a few months' time a ship was once more at his command, he would go quietly away to sea; but he ne'er would speak of love.

For his old Highland pride had come to his rescue. She was rich; he was very poor indeed.

No, it never could be. And so he told Tom, and so he told his sister. The former laughed at his scruples; the latter thought her brother was right.

Richards and the general were at Grantley Hall and as busy as the traditional bonnet-maker. They had a little secret between them, for neither Jack nor Flora had yet been told of the change in the fortunes of the Grant Mackenzies. It would be such a delightful surprise. And so the two old friends worked away, as merrily as school-boys building a rabbit-hutch, and in a few weeks' time the old place was put to rights, and every nick-nack and every curio and souvenir and picture replaced in the drawing-room, just as it had been in the dear, reckless days of long ago.

But near the finish of the arrangements M'Hearty was invited down and let into the delightful secret, for he it was who should bring Jack and his sister, with Tom, Gerty, and Mary the maid, down to the old place.

"Do you know," said M'Hearty about a week after this, as he stood with Jack and his sister on the balcony of the priest's drawing-room at Torquay, "I'm dying to see old Grantley Hall just once again."

"And I too would like to see it," sighed Jack, "if—if I thought Flora could stand it."

“Oh I think I could.”

“The old dial-stone.”

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“Well, the weather is delightful; why shouldn’t we sail round?”

“Agreed,” said Jack; “we shall.”

They hired a yacht, not a very fast one. There were no Thistles in those days. But she was most clean and comfortable, and the party had favouring winds all the way round, and in due time arrived safely in Lowestoft harbour.

Then nothing less than a coach and postillions would suit M‘Hearty.

“It shan’t be at your expense though, Captain Jack,” he said, “nor yours either, Tom. Why, I have made oceans of prize-money, and an old bachelor like me doesn’t really know how to spend it.”

The surprise began when they reached the lodge gate. “Why,” cried Jack, “there is some one living here. I expected to find the place in ruins.” The surprise increased when they reached the lawn, for here the general and sly old Richards met them laughing. But when the party were ushered into the drawing-room, and saw everything in its place as it had been years ago, and the general and Richards “ready to die” stifling a laugh, why, then the surprise reached a climax.

“Pinch me, Tom,” cried Jack. “I’m in a dream.”

What a happy first-coming that was, to be sure! but there were many more to follow.

The autumn tints were on the trees, evening primroses and dahlias nodded by the pathways, and many a rare old flower besides.

One evening Jack, with his sister and Gerty, was walking in the bright moonlight along the broad and grassy path that swept under the lime avenue. Flora had gone on, and Jack had given Gerty his arm.

Suddenly they came to the old dial-stone. And here they stopped, for Jack had remembered his dream. He was Gerty’s equal now in every way, and so he told her his dream, and he told her something else; told her of all his manly love that neither absence nor the vicissitudes of war could ever banish from his heart. And much more,

too, he told her that we need not pry into. Flora went on and on. Just once she glanced behind. Gerty was very close to Jack.

When, a whole hour after this, they entered the great drawing-room arm in arm, they looked very happy indeed. There was no one there but Richards and the general. “Why, where ever have you two truants been?” said the latter.

“We have been cleaning the moss off the old dial-stone, and rolling back the scroll of time. Father, let me present to you your future daughter-in-law.”

“My own brave boy,” said the general. “Gerty Keane.”

That was all; but I do not know yet which was the happier man of the two—Jack’s father or Mr. Richards.

As for Mary, as soon as she heard the glorious news she must seek out “her boy” at once. She found him in his room, and with the best grace he could muster he had to submit to “luv and sweet kisses” on the spot, Mary assuring him that he had made her the happiest girl in all Norfolk.

There is a good deal of similarity about weddings; but it was generally admitted that the double event that took place at Grantley Hall in the spring of ’99—namely, the marriages of Tom and Flora, and Gerty and Jack—was the gayest wedding, or rather pair of weddings, that had ever taken place in the north. I cannot say that bonfires blazed on every hill, because there are no hills in Norfolk worthy of the name; but the rejoicing far and near was universal, and with all his old Highland hospitality and lavishness, General Grant Mackenzie, ably supported by Richards and the gallant M’Hearty, kept open house for a whole fortnight to all comers.

Meanwhile, in a charming yacht, under blue skies and with favouring winds, the happy couples were sailing round the shores of merry England and green Caledonia.

Ah! there is many a less happy life than that of the sailor, and many worse people than sailors; and had I my time to begin again, I should still be sweeping through the deep.

Freeeditorial 