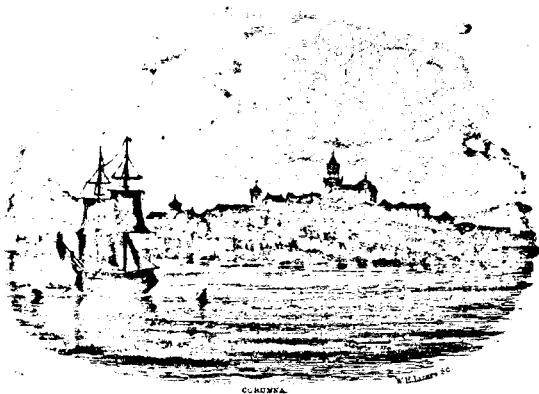


FRAGMENTS
OF
VOYAGES & TRAVELS

BY
CAPT. BASIL HALL.

R.N.

VOL. II.



COROMANDEL

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FRAGMENTS
OF
VOYAGES AND TRAVELS,

INCLUDING
ANECDOTES OF A NAVAL LIFE:

CHIEFLY FOR THE
USE OF YOUNG PERSONS.

BY CAPTAIN BASIL HALL, R.N.
F.R.S.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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FRAGMENTS
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CHAPTER I.

THE EFFECTS OF BEING WELL COMMANDED.

PEOPLE who have no acquaintance with the intricacies of naval discipline can scarcely comprehend how vast a difference is made in the efficiency of a man-of-war by the character of the commander. A stranger, indeed, when he first goes on board a well-regulated ship, is apt to fancy the captain of little or no use; and in proportion as affairs are well ordered, so, it is not improbable, he may, for a time, be confirmed in his error. Every thing appears to go on so regularly—so much like clock-work—that the officers and men, it might be thought,

have only to follow an established routine, as the hands of a watch obey the revolutions of the wheels, and all will go right. Yet, in both cases there must exist within, not only some powerful main-spring, to give the original impulse, but sundry nice 'balances' and 'escapements' to keep the movement uniform.

Early in the year 1805, we were made abundantly sensible of the truth of this remark, by an important change which took place in the highest office on board. From a state of languid inefficiency, we started, in a single moment, into the most vigorous activity; and from being almost the laughing-stock of the fleet, for the clumsiness of our gait, and the want of success which attended our cumbrous exertions, we soon outstripped them all, not only in the speed, but in the useful result, of our services.

Our good ship, the *Leander*, whose name I cannot even now write without summoning up a thousand images of early joys, and ten thousand promises of future happiness—few if any of which have been blasted—the dear

old Leander, was one of the handsomest ships of her class, and certainly the most delightful sea-boat that ever swam—a very duck in the water!—When well used, she would, according to the fond expression of those who sailed in her, “do any thing but speak.” She could sail well—fight well—and weather a gale of wind, with any ship in the Navy, either in port with three anchors ahead, or lying to at sea under her storm staysails; and as for the arts of peace, she knew them all right merrily, when the time served; for many a jolly dance has shaken her elastic decks. I might compare my good ship to an elephant—docile, firm, and sagacious, when properly directed; and though her motions were not so swift as those of the boastful frigates by which she was surrounded, she contrived, somehow, to get to the end of the journey occasionally before them all; and often lugged rich prizes into harbour, when the more dashing ships of the squadron were prancing impatiently about, in search of what we had already snapped up.

This will be seen presently. In the mean time, I may stop to remark, how very singular an effect is often produced by the mind of one person on the thoughts and actions of others. There is certainly some mysterious agency in our nautical economy, by which the genius of a commanding officer knows how to impart a portion of its spirit to every one under his orders, so as not only to combine and direct the ordinary capacities of his crew, but, at times, almost to change their very nature.

The truth is, that man, however fond he may be of liberty, is so essentially and naturally an obedient animal, that there are few things more satisfactory to his mind than being well commanded. At first sight, this would seem to imply something servile in our disposition; but experience clearly proves, that there are few situations in which a man of spirit can so well maintain his real independence of character, or bring all his talents, knowledge, and industry, into such useful operation, as when he is acting under the vigilant superintendence of a highly-

gifted superior, who is fully competent to judge of his conduct, and is willing to do justice to his merits.

This influence extends itself, in various shapes, to every class of men under authority:—to the person who possesses abilities and is desirous of exerting them—to the inefficient—the indolent—and even to the wicked. When a person of talents is placed under an able commander, he feels confident that nothing he does will be passed without notice, and consequently that his exertions must tell to his advantage, exactly in proportion as their utility makes itself felt. This consciousness will, of course, stimulate him to fresh endeavours to excel; and from thus feeling sure that his conduct is duly appreciated, he has an immediate motive to bring his whole strength into play—an exercise which must ever produce good results. A right-minded person, thus circumstanced, will become sensible, that, so far from his office being of a servile nature, it is one in which he obliges those whom he officially obeys, to acknowledge his power. If, there-

fore, he be only true to himself and to his duties, he may continue as thoroughly independent as it is possible for any man to be, whatever be the nature of his situation in life.

Suppose the case differently put, and let the superior in station be the inferior in abilities or experience, or not so zealous in the execution of his duty as the man he commands. The situation of the inferior is now far from being so independent, or so well calculated to draw forth his powers as it was in the first case. The subordinate officer has no longer the same animated stimulus to exertion, for, his labours being generally unnoticed, or their result unappreciated, he is left without much encouragement to proceed in fresh endeavours to excel; while his faculties, instead of improving through generous exercise, are often deteriorated by the languid manner in which they are brought into play.

What is true of men of talents and attainments, is still more striking in the case of those whose faculties and knowledge of

their business are moderate. This description of persons stand in need of much assistance to render their services really useful. They require, at all times, to have their merits, such as they are, so judiciously applied by other hands, that they themselves shall become sensible of the value of their own exertions, when well directed. As there is nothing so flattering to our self-love as an occasional touch of over-appreciation of our merits, so there is nothing better calculated to produce good fruit as this kind of commendation, if not too broad. The reason is obvious. If a commander has skill enough to enlist the sympathies of those placed under his orders, they will feel insensibly drawn on to make common cause with him; and will afterwards exert themselves strenuously to maintain that degree of importance, derived from this implied companionship in ability, which they could hardly hope to reach single-handed. Having been thus led, no matter how, to make the discovery of their own weight in the scale, they are powerfully interested in proving themselves not unworthy

of such distinction. The invariable effect of such voluntary efforts is to improve the character. Such training will certainly not make a clever man out of a stupid one; but it may render a discontented or useless man of service to himself and the state; and, instead of his being wretched and hopeless, may make him happy and confident of success; which, alone, is something.

I suspect, however, that no one who has not been an eye-witness of the condition of a ship under the command of an ignorant, trifling, or otherwise inefficient captain, can have any notion of the mischievous effects of his misrule—or, rather, of his no-rule. Perhaps, in the long run, almost any degree of consistent severity is preferable to the uncertain, higgledy-piggledy kind of discipline on board a man-of-war in what is called slack order! The moderately-gifted persons feeling that, in these circumstances, they have no chance of notice by any exertions of their own, speedily degenerate into a sort of vegetables, so incapable of any kind of useful exertion, that they infest the ship like the

fungus called the dry-rot. This chaotic period is the holiday season of the scamps and skulkers, who then fancy their game the surest. These fellows certainly succeed in working as little as possible, and in making those about them unhappy; but, after all, without any great accession to their own comforts.

I am not speaking now of a complete state of anarchy or mutiny, but merely of that wretched condition of things which arises out of the command being placed in hands which are not strong enough, or not adroit enough, properly to arrange the elements which are given to them to manage. One of the evil consequences, out of many, which this state of affairs gives birth to, is the great additional amount of labour it brings unfairly on the shoulders of the well-disposed part of our floating community; a result attended by sundry other bad effects. In the first place, it encourages the idle to shirk as much duty as they well can; and this, of course, tends only to make those worse who are already bad enough. In the

next place, it discourages the cheerful and willing workers, by the oppression of its injustice, a feeling which speedily takes away or deadens some of the best motives to improvement. The natural result is, that the duty is done as ill as possible, by reason of its improper distribution. The captain soon becomes dissatisfied; but being unable to make out the true cause, or unwilling to acknowledge that, at bottom, his own bad government is in fault, he naturally ascribes the imperfect execution of the work, to want of exertion on the part of those whom he sees performing it, while of the skulkers he sees nothing. Thus, by his unfair censure of those who, in fact, are the most deserving of commendation, he scatters the seeds of discouragement over all the different classes exposed to his unskilful handling, and every thing falls into confusion worse confounded.

I shall not at present dwell further on this topic, by contrasting it with the effects arising out of a right system of discipline, on the indolent or wicked. It will, however,

be obvious to every one, that if there be any chance of such persons being amended, or their evil dispositions being tied down, and their services rendered available, it can only be when they are properly looked after; and that in such periods as those above described, every thing which is already bad about them is rendered more actively mischievous.

It may be useful, perhaps, to recollect that the same principles, or very nearly the same, which regulate the action and re-action of officers and others afloat, enter into the administration of all affairs on land. Probably, no person is so low in the world, as not to have occasion to exercise some of the attributes of a commander in the course of every day of his life. If a man's share of the business of the world be small, and easy of performance, it is still more incumbent on him to exercise his fraction of authority with propriety, as there is plainly less excuse for his executing so simple a duty ill. If, however, his occupations be considerable, he will certainly discover how important it is to

possess the hearty co-operation of the persons under his authority, and how essential methodical arrangement is to his success. The civil government of a great empire appears, to uninitiated eyes, such a huge task, that many people are totally at a loss to conceive how a prime minister can find time to eat his dinner—still less how he can manage to move about in society, apparently quite at his ease. But their wonder would diminish if they were to apply, to the affairs of the nation, the rules above adverted to, under the guidance of which their own domestic establishment is managed. Yet their admiration of the great statesman would only increase, as they became sensible of his skill in generalizing those maxims, and in applying them over such a wide field of human action. In every department of life indeed, there must always be more or less of discipline; and although the ostensible head of each division of society—in a house—in a nation at large—or in a ship, ought always to be the most influential person, as having most good and evil in his power, there is no

one under him, however insignificant he may be thought, who may not, by his conduct, modify the exertions of those above or below him either to useful or to mischievous purpose.

We arrived at Bermuda on the 19th of January, after a passage of ten days, from Halifax. On the 21st, while we were lying, quietly moored, in Murray's anchorage, a brig was seen to stand off and on, just outside the belt of coral reefs to the eastward of the roadstead. She had a west flying at the fore-topgallant-mast-head, indicating a wish to communicate with us. A boat, of which I was the midshipman, was accordingly despatched to her. On our going alongside, a gentleman, without asking leave, stepped into the boat; and as soon as a portmanteau and writing-desk, which constituted his whole luggage, were handed in, he called out—

“Shove off!” and turning to me, said—

“That's the Leander, is it not?”

“Yes, sir,” I replied, with a feeling of involuntary respect, inspired by the decided

manner and tone of voice of this mysterious stranger.

“ Take me on board, then,” he continued, with an air of authority that made me hitch half a yard forward along the stern sheets of the boat, while he placed himself right amidships. He did not speak a word all the way; and, for my part, I was so much awed, that for the life of me, I could not get a sentence across my lips, though I made sundry attempts.

“ Who’s that? who’s that?” eagerly asked a dozen of the mids, as soon as I came up the side. I could not tell, except that he was certainly some great knob or other; for he seemed quite at home, and ordered the boat about as if he had been the captain.

And such, accordingly, he proved. He had brought his commission for the *Leander* in his pocket, and was, in fact, but a few weeks from England. It appears that the instant he received his appointment from the Admiralty, he ordered a post-chaise, set off for the coast, and got on board the first vessel sailing for the West Indies which was

willing to touch at Bermuda. Owing to this activity he lost not a single hour—and the sequel will shew how useful a lesson this sort of energy may teach. Our new captain was soon installed ; and his easy-going predecessor was scarcely on shore, before he turned over a totally new leaf on board the 'old barky.' I well remember that the very next morning, after breakfast, one of the sailors having got into a scrape of rather a grave nature, was called to the quarter-deck before his new commander. The offence was promptly, but most patiently investigated. As soon as it was clearly made out that the unhappy man had committed an offence punishable by the usages of the service, the captain looked round, and with a deliberate sternness which made all who observed it quake again, said to the first lieutenant—

“ Turn the hands up ! ”

In less than a quarter of an hour after the crime had been committed, the culprit was in the dreadful predicament of being seized up at the gangway, preparatory to the infliction of his sentence.

“ Oh, sir !” said the poor fellow, “ this is my first offence, and I am the first person that has been brought before your honour. Do look over me, sir. It is the first time, sir !”

“ I make a rule never to forgive the first offence !” was the formidable reply of our rigid captain, spoken in a voice that reached every ear on board, and sank deep in every breast.

This lesson, stern as it appeared, and painful and decisive as it certainly was, nevertheless had lenity as well as justice for its object. By these few words, uniformly carried into effect in practice afterwards, every man and boy on board the ship was soon made to understand, that his only chance of escape from punishment was to conform strictly to the rules of the service. This was the penal side of the page, which might be read and understood by all. The other, which related to the advantages resulting from good conduct, was of course slower in its developement, but it proved not less sure in the long run ; and our eventual comfort and self-respect, were essentially promoted

by this degree of strictness, which kept every man steadily to his duty.

Between these two principles of severity in the punishment of offences, and high favour to those who took pains to do right, the ship was speedily brought into right trim. Every thing now seemed alive, and moved smartly. No time was wasted; for even the indolent and the ill disposed were made to work well. The decks became cleaner than ever they had been before—the people dressed themselves more tidily—the sails looked better furled, the yards better squared—the complaints of inattention or drunkenness grew daily less frequent—and an air of general happiness, as well as new-born energy, spread itself over the whole ship.

An immediate cruise to the southward was now the word, and every hand became active in forwarding the preparations. So magical, indeed, was the effect of this change, that, I dare say, we could then have engaged an enemy, with success, whom it might not have been so very prudent to have brought to action a week before.

It has been observed, that the simple fact of Lord Nelson's joining the fleet off Trafalgar more than double-manned every ship; and those who look about them will find, that the same effect, more or less, is produced in every walk of life, by the mere presence of commanding talents and thorough-bred zeal and energy. No one, therefore, should forget, that although it is the high destiny of only a very few to possess such an astonishing influence over their fellow-men, as that exercised by Nelson afloat or Wellington on shore, yet each in his own particular sphere of authority may often modify, to the most useful purpose, the powers of all the persons placed under him.

A sea life is fertile in illustrations of this position. In the night-time, for example, at sea, in unsettled weather, it often becomes necessary to reef the topsails; but when the canvass is wet and heavy, the air cold, and the sailors are fatigued, this operation, which, in the day-time, is a very simple affair, may prove in the dark one of no inconsiderable trouble. It is not, of course, held to be good

practice to turn the watch below out of their hammocks to assist in such minor evolutions; so that those who are upon deck must manage it themselves the best way they can; and sad work they sometimes make of it! The very same officer and the very same men, who, in day-light, under favourable circumstances, would have had the topsails lowered, reefed, and hoisted again, in a few minutes, will often labour for an hour, at night, without getting the weather earing out, or a single point tied; and, after all, probably split the sail or spring the yard, in the midst of such a bawling and abuse as well nigh outblasts the rattling of the squall, which is laughing to scorn these misdirected efforts. The half-informed, or little-experienced officer probably knows well enough what is required, but not how to execute it. Be the cause, however, what it may, the work remains unexecuted.

Suppose that, in the middle of all this noise and confusion, eight bells are struck, and the officer of the new watch comes on deck. If he be a man of abilities, and one

who understands his business, the whole scene will be changed in ten seconds. Though the night be as dark as pitch, and the rain or sleet, drifting past, still further hides the ropes and sails, his experienced eye, or rather a sort of professional instinct, insensibly acquired from long practice, tells him in a moment what is wrong, and explains the cause of the delay by which the men aloft have been harassed for an hour before. All that is necessary, perhaps, is to ease off a little of the lee topsail-sheet, so as to allow the weather-brace to be rounded in, upon which the yard settles down on the cap, the sail is spilled, the reef-tackle hauled out in a crack, the earings are passed, and the points tied! The whole of this is probably effected in less time than it has taken the inexperienced or stupid officer of the previous watch to pull off his wet boots, as he growls into his cot below, to dream of promotion that he merits not. It must be observed, that no additional men have been employed by the new officer, and that all the circumstances are the same, with the mere

superaddition of a grain or two of intelligence. I have often observed, on occasions such as that described, when the voice alone of an officer, whom the people knew to be competent, has at once given them fresh energy, and enabled them, even without any further change, or any fresh orders, to execute with spirit services which all their efforts had been unable to accomplish, when acting under a man in whom they had less confidence.

We thus learn at every turn that nothing contributes so directly to combine our efforts as a consciousness of being well commanded. When people are set to work under a man on whose skill or experience they have no reliance, even supposing them ever so well disposed to exert themselves, still, as they do not labour 'with a will, and all together,' the object fails, from the exertions employed upon it being scattered and wasted. But when the head which directs the measure has fully established its ascendancy over the minds of those who are to execute it, each man resigns his own ideas on

the subject, and submits cheerfully to what past experience has told him is the better judgment of his superior. The whole crew being now brought to act under one undivided impulse, their power, as a body, is so greatly multiplied, that the result is often quite incomprehensible to those who are not aware of the true explanation, or who cannot be made to understand how essentially men's natures are sometimes changed by the operation of causes apparently quite unconnected with themselves.

Very shortly after our new captain joined the *Leander*, we got ready for sea, and started on the 13th of February, 1805, from Bermuda, in company with one of the crack frigates of the station, a ship which had always proved herself a better sailer, and had been more fortunate in taking prizes, than we had been. Upon the strength of this good luck, they used to hold our old ship in the greatest contempt. We were, therefore, hardly out of sight of land before she parted company, probably on purpose, and from thinking that where we were there

could be no good fortune. Away we dashed, however, alone, and, if I recollect rightly, due south from Bermuda. The winds were light, and we steered on for upwards of a week, every day adding to the genial warmth of the weather, as we hourly raised the sun in the heavens, and brought new stars within our ken, in the bright evenings which form the delight of those temperate regions, bordering on the tropic of Cancer. Even there, occasional clouds, accompanied by a thick haze, blot out the sky, and prevent a cruising ship from seeing beyond half a mile in any direction. But well-directed vigilance masters even such untoward circumstances as these—What does it not master! In spite of the fog and rain, our new commander relaxed nothing of what may be called the discipline of a cruising ship, however thick the weather might be. At the mast-head there was perched a look-out-man, with a glass in his hand, ready to peer into any of those curious openings which, like fairies' avenues, cut across the wilderness of mist, for an instant, and straight are closed again. These transient breaks, which are called by

the sailors 'Fog dogs,' I know not why, are generally considered good symptoms of the weather clearing. It was about mid-day of the 24th of February, that a momentary glimpse of the southern horizon was afforded us on the lee beam, down one of these singular vistas in the fog.

"Keep a bright look-out there in the clear," cried the captain to the man standing on the jacks, or little iron cross-trees on which the heel of the royal-mast rested, with his arm twisted round the spar, and his eye glued to the telescope.

"Ay! ay! sir," replied the fellow; and instantly afterwards roared out, in a voice that was heard even in the lowest depths of the cockpit, "I can see two large vessels standing to the eastward!"

His words came so fast out of his mouth, that, to a stranger's ear, what he said would hardly have been intelligible; but to the quick, professional, experienced organs of the veteran officer they were addressed to, they sounded like the sweetest music, and full of meaning.

"Up with the helm, Mr. Falcon!" said

the captain to the officer of the watch ; and, catching the bright eye of the delighted boatswain, he called out, " Hands make sail, Mr. Cedar ! Set the stunsails low and aloft — shake all the reefs out ! "

And then, while three hundred pair of well-directed hands were busy in spreading sail after sail upon the old tub, as she was ironically, but fondly called, and the foam began to hiss and splash in broad streaks on each side of her, the captain again applied to the look-out-man aloft, and asked, " Where are the two ships, now ? "

" I can't see them, sir ; the fog has filled up the hole again through which I saw them only for one moment. "

" Confound the fog ! — What did they look like ? "

" Very large, sir ; they loomed in the haze like armed ships. I think I saw a tier of ports in each of them. They are not far off, sir — we shall be close aboard of them directly. "

" Beat to quarters ! " was the next order ; for by this time, although only a few minutes

had elapsed, the topsails were at the mast-head, and the steering-sails, smartly run up to the yard-arms, and well stretched out to the boom ends, so as not to lose a single puff of the breeze, were making the good ship tremble and spank along, like an old hunter conscious of the game. There was not much to do at the guns, as every thing necessary for action was kept at all times in such a state of preparation, that the men merely took their places, cast loose the tackle-falls and breachings, and were ready to have dashed, right alongside of an enemy, without the delay of a minute. This constant readiness for action of every kind, day and night, coupled with that matchless dexterity in the manipulations which long and unceasing practice alone can give, is in no department of life more decidedly conspicuous than in the profession of which I am speaking. At first sight, indeed, the sources of disorder and variety at sea appear so numerous—arising out of the state of the weather, the very nature of a ship, the particular description of service she is

employed upon, the uncertain hours of the day or night when the crew may be called upon to act, the different characters of the officers, the rude training of the sailors, the diversity in climate and country—all so liable to be abruptly changed—that one would think it almost impossible to bring a body of men, so desultory in their habits as seamen, to adapt themselves to these rapid fluctuations. Experience shews, however, that, under a certain well-understood course of training—pretty complicated, I grant—even these inconstant elements may be turned to the best account towards the establishment of a steady system of action, equally applicable to all times and to all circumstances.

In the course of half an hour the fog cleared away entirely, and we discovered the chase to be two frigates, one totally, and the other partially, dismasted. On our coming nearer, the largest of them displayed on her jury mainmast a huge French ensign, then the standard of Buonaparte, though once the well-known tri-coloured banner of

the Revolution, and the same which is now again hoisted as the national flag of the French. It consists of three equal portions of blue, white, and red, in vertical stripes, the blue being next the staff. It is the same as the Dutch flag, only different in position; the Dutch stripes being horizontal, with the blue undermost.

The smaller ship of the two shewed the unpleasant signal of capture, the French flag being hoisted over the ensign of England; and we soon recognised in her one of our own squadron, the *Cleopatra*, a 32-gun frigate. She had been taken, about a week before, after a tough action with the *Ville de Milan*, a 44-gun frigate of the largest class. What resistance the Frenchman might have made to us, had he not previously got pretty well peppered by the gay little *Cleopatra*, I shall not presume to say; but, hammered as he had been, he did not appear to like our double row of teeth, and at once struck, on our firing a shot across his fore foot. We had, therefore, only to secure our guns again, and be content with a good fat prize, without the

honour and glory of a scuffle; but with the great additional satisfaction of rescuing our countrymen and their ship from the jaws of Johnny Crapaud.

I may say, however, without affectation, that it was impossible, even in the midst of our joyous success, not to feel for the mortification of our enemies. They had captured in fair fight a goodly prize, and were spanking away with her to France, when pop we came upon them, and not only robbed them of their prey, but lugged them off to prison, and there shut them up for eight or ten long years, like criminals! Yet the only crime of these brave men was that of being ill commanded; or, to speak less enigmatically, their misfortune was, to serve a hard-hearted master whose stern policy it had become, seriously to alter the aspect of modern warfare amongst civilised nations, by throwing every obstacle in the way of an exchange of prisoners. The effect was, to expose many of his most deserving subjects—men of honour and high character, indiscriminately with those of lower preten-

sions—to some of the severest of those penalties due only to crime ; the shabby excuse—totally unworthy of such a man—being, that he subjected a certain number of his enemies to a similar course of suffering, while the inevitable effect was to deepen and embitter all the horrors of war, not only in the case of his foes, but on the heads of those very persons, his countrymen, who were the most deserving of favour at his hands !

This part of Napoleon's system has, naturally enough, appeared, to professional men; and, I believe, to most other people, one of the least excusable of the long list of his questionable acts of policy, even when considered with reference to his own purely selfish views, or to his more enlarged national purposes. At all events, there can be little question that it added to the irritation, as well as affliction, of the families of his captured countrymen, and therefore, probably, diminished the zeal of all those who, in their turn, might expect to be exposed to a like fate. Independently, however, of all these considerations, it certainly does appear not a

little cruel to punish, in this way, prisoners of war, soldiers and sailors who have honestly and manfully, in the open face of day, done their duty, exposed their lives, and spilled their blood, in the service of their country. To very many persons on both sides, during the last war, this imprisonment was little short of torture; to many it was death; and to some it was worse than death; for, while it broke down their health, ruined their fortunes, and shipwrecked their principles, it cast them forth at last, after ten or a dozen years of wretched captivity, destitute of character, useless to their country, and burdens to themselves.

Your Cherokee of the woods makes quicker work of it by far. He ties his prisoner of war to a tree, lights a fire under him, and dances to the sound of his cries. But these are soon over; whereas the soldier or sailor captured by the polished nations of Europe, during the late contest, was seldom so speedily despatched. He was generally left to linger out his captivity in all the bitterness of blasted prospects, affections crossed, and hopes

deferred; in nursing schemes of impotent revenge, and in the indulgence of every uncharitable as well as unpatriotic feeling. Upon the whole, it is perhaps hardly possible to conceive a Pandemonium on earth more completely destructive of happiness, or so well calculated to deteriorate the character, as the prisons in which the French and English shut up their captives for so many long years.

Since the hour, when I saw, for the first time, these honourable and gallant Frenchmen locked up like felons, and shewn through bars like wild beasts, I have often thought it might, all things considered, have been found a wise policy in us, after trying in vain every legitimate method of effecting an exchange of prisoners, to have sent all the men whom we captured back again to their country. I am quite conscious that this idea may be thought by many persons absurd enough; nevertheless, the result, I am inclined to believe, might, in the long run, have been favourable to the reputation of this country, and injurious to that of the man whose

schemes of policy so often rendered him apparently indifferent to the sufferings of his bravest subjects. A solemn engagement might fairly have been exacted from each prisoner thus sent back, not to serve again during the war. Those released would certainly have carried over with them to France a kindly feeling towards this country, instead of bearing with them, as they did at the end of the war, a degree of rancour in no respect unreasonable.

The obvious, and I confess formidable, objection to this project is, that if we had let all our prisoners off, they would have gone straightway back again to the fleet, or to the army, and so have been ready next week, in spite of all their promises, to act against us anew. Still, I really do not believe that it would eventually have mattered much if every individual French prisoner had been set adrift unconditionally: for I suspect it is seldom that mere numbers determine the fate even of a single battle, still less frequently of a whole campaign, and of a nation probably never. I cannot, therefore,

bring myself to suppose that the ultimate course of military or naval affairs of France and England would have been at all modified, to our disadvantage, had we released every prisoner made during the war.

This idea will, perhaps, not appear so very Quixotic, if it be recollected that the real sources of military success, and, indeed, of all permanent national strength, lie far higher than those which supply mere physical force. The experience of history in all ages, if rendered available by a tolerably intrepid generalization, will enable us to discover, that it is not the vulgar force of numbers that constitutes solid power, but the moral and intellectual authority of virtue, and scientific skill steadily directed towards the accomplishment of right purposes; and that the eventual preponderance in the scale of national influence is always on the side of good faith.

Be all this, however, as it may, I must confess, that there can be nothing more unlike misery than the first appearance of a captured ship's company of Frenchmen. What their

state becomes afterwards, when the excitement of the moment is past, and the effort of bearing up well against calamity, from being no longer seen, is considered useless, I need not describe; but it certainly is wonderful how these lively people contrive, in the first instance, to remove from their thoughts and looks every thing unpleasant. The French midshipmen were actually playing at cards in our birth on the very evening they were taken; and, next day, there was a proposal made by them to get up a set of private theatricals in the cock-pit! Meanwhile, the sailors and soldiers, who, to the number of several hundreds, were stowed away in the hold, were singing as merrily as if they had been the captors, we the captives. When I talk of these prisoners being stowed away in the hold, I should mention, that the upper tier of water-casks being broken up, or shaken, as it is called, and the staves placed as a flooring on the middle tier, a large, and not very uncomfortable apartment, was formed. A set of upright planks were then nailed round the square

of the hatchway, both on the orlop and the lower decks; so that all lateral escape was prevented, without any interruption to the access of air and light. In this way a small guard of marines easily kept the whole in due order and security.

There were, I think, only two or three midshipmen at that time belonging to the *Leander* who spoke French at all. One of these, who understood the language well, had no sinecure of his office of interpreter. Another, who knew it less perfectly, was led into many blunders in consequence. My own acquaintance with French was just enough to shew me how very important such knowledge may often prove to an officer. This opportunity, indeed, and many succeeding ones, have confirmed me in the opinion, that one of the most valuable pursuits to which a youngster intended for the sea can give his attention is the study of modern languages. It happened that, in the larboard mess, I was the only one who knew a single word of what the prisoners were saying, while it was with great difficulty I could

make them understand me at all. Imperfect, however, as this knowledge was, it was at all calls; and, as I was, of course, very desirous to maintain the important character of an interpreter, I laboured through my task, and learnt more French in the few weeks we were together than I have ever been able to acquire by any degree of attention in as many months elsewhere.

On the 7th of March, we reached Bermuda, with the recaptured Cleopatra, and the Ville de Milan, which ship the sailors christened the 'Wheel 'em along,' a name she never lost, even when admitted into our service, till the Admiralty—in despair, I suppose, of mending Jack's 'cachology'—cut off the 'wheel,' and positively ordered her to be called His Majesty's ship Milan, her present appellation.

It is difficult to describe the sensation which such an arrival as ours produced in a small place like Bermuda. Even at Portsmouth or Plymouth, a considerable degree of interest would have attended the arrival of two such ships. They were both, as I

have mentioned before, under jury-masts, their sides all ploughed up with shot, and their prize colours so riddled with holes that they scarcely held together, but fluttered in the breeze like rags hung up to dry. Then came the painful landing of the wounded, the marshalling of the prisoners, and the saucy importance of the victors—subjects fertile in talk for any part of the world. But, in the quiet and beautiful retirement of Bermuda, these warlike incidents, so foreign, one might fancy, to the character of such peaceful scenery, furnished even more than a nine days' wonder, and raised the jolly Leander to a station in public opinion which we, her younger sons, were not slow to improve.

There was, of course, no further quizzing against us in the fleet; and the middies, profiting by their luck, lost no opportunity of cutting as many capers as they possibly could over those of less fortunate ships. The circumstance of our bearing the Admiral's flag, whenever we were in port, gave us already sundry privileges—such as a right

to occupy the best birth in the anchorage—the priority at the watering place for our boats—and the privilege of initiating all evolutions in the squadron. On all these, and, indeed, on every other occasion, we afterwards presumed so prodigiously on the strength of the goodly crop of easy-won laurels reaped during our late cruise, that the scrapes we got into were not few.

Amongst the inhabitants on shore, we were feasted in the very best fashion the island could afford:—ham and eggs, the grand standing dish of the island—were sported at no allowance; while rum punch, Havannah cigars, and a hearty welcome, met us at every door. It is not wonderful, therefore, that we thought ourselves the finest fellows imaginable; or that Bermuda, hitherto somewhat despised, should now appear to us quite a Paradise of good cheer and hospitality.

CHAPTER II.

THE VALUE OF EARLY SUCCESS IN LIFE.

THE year 1805, which commenced so auspiciously with the capture of the *Ville de Milan*, was one of the busiest we passed on the coast of America. We had no such grand luck again, indeed, as that of the two frigates; but we took several prizes, and were throughout the year so actively engaged, that we had no time for any thing like discontent. I have always thought that beginning the campaign so favourably had a material influence on our fortunes afterwards. It certainly inspired us all with a great degree of confidence in our own good fortune, as well as reliance on the skill of the captain who directed us. Every one, accordingly, during this period, seemed to do his duty

with more than usual spirit, from a sort of consciousness that he had only to seek for the things he wished to have, and straight-way they would fall within his grasp.

The influence of early success in modifying our future fortunes seems to indicate one of the most striking characteristics of our nature. It almost invariably begets that invaluable quality, cheerfulness, and a disposition to be pleased with the persons amongst whom we are thrown, which experience shews are the surest passports to the favour of the world. It is quite true, as the amiable historian Hume says, in speaking of himself, that "a disposition to see the favourable, rather than the unfavourable, side of things, is a turn of mind, which it is more happy to possess, than to be born to an estate of ten thousand a-year;" but unless we fall in with a certain amount of good fortune soon enough in the journey, it is extremely difficult to maintain, amidst 'our crosses and losses,' the proper degree of good humour necessary first to gain, and then to preserve, the slippery favour of those with whom we have to

deal. A man whose disposition is prematurely soured, by the want of early success, generally busies himself in finding out rather the faulty views which things will bear, than the favourable ones; and, in order to justify his failure, industriously raises up fresh difficulties, instead of trying manfully to surmount those which really exist. He is never quite pleased with any thing or any person, and thus, almost inevitably, contributes to perpetuate his own want of success. Such a man's society is generally shunned, not from any thing actually vicious in his nature, but merely because he has acquired the disagreeable habit of disparaging every thing he sees. As it seldom occurs to him that he himself is in fault all the while, he goes on abusing the world and all which it inherit, and exactly in proportion as he growls himself out of company, he increases in the vehemence of his censure of people and things which, had his thoughts and feelings been differently pitched at first, might very probably have proved the sources of his fortune.

On the other hand, if a young man happen to make some fortunate hits, as they are called, early enough in his career to be put into good humour with the world through which he has to struggle, the journey of his life may turn out far easier, chiefly because he finds 'troops of friends' always ready to assist him. The great mass of wayfarers in this arduous course generally speaking, are like any thing rather than the Good Samaritan, for they will seldom help those, who either cannot, or will not, help themselves. We have at all events the authority of the parable for supposing that the chances are at least two to one against us, even in the extreme case, when we are left 'half dead;' and it seems not too much to say, that the odds become ten times more unfavourable to us when we are capable enough of assisting ourselves, but rather choose to sit bawling to Mercury to help us out of the mire, instead of placing our own shoulders to the wheel.

I have been tempted to repeat my opinions more strongly on this subject, so very

important to young men who are working their way up in difficult professions, from recollecting how material an influence the following apparently trivial circumstances had upon the whole course of my own fortunes.

I began about the busy period immediately after the recommencement of hostilities, to feel the good effects of a choice, it may be recollected, I had been allowed to make upwards of three years before, just after we sailed from England, when our worthy captain left it to the option of the youngsters whether they would keep watch or not. I had decided upon performing this duty, chiefly, perhaps, from pique at the idea of being held so cheap, or from a wish to get rid of the degrading sort of insignificance which attached to us, as mere ciphers on the ship's books. Whether this feeling influenced me, or a higher set of motives, does not greatly signify; the material point is, that I found out, by this means, the advantages of the actual practice of professional business much earlier than I should otherwise have done, and, as a matter of course,

was more ready to avail myself of the opportunities of useful employment which the progress of the war began to develop about this time.

In every captured ship, sent by us to Halifax, or to Bermuda, there was despatched a midshipman as prize-master, with one of the youngsters to assist him, and a proper number of seamen, as a prize crew, in place of the prisoners taken out. It was no small honour to be intrusted with the chief authority on these occasions; and, in a lesser degree, it was always considered creditable, as well as useful, to be sent as second in command, under the prize-master. By useful, I mean in a professional point of view; for, although the technical responsibility rested with the senior officer in charge, the actual labour, and much of the anxiety of this interesting kind of duty, were fully shared by the junior officer. Perhaps there could not be a better school for a young officer; and I considered myself in the highest degree fortunate that I was constantly employed on this service during almost every

cruise we made. At first starting I was only second in charge, but eventually became so completely one of the regular prize-masters of the ship, that for several years I never once returned to port in my own ship, being always absent in one or other of her captures. The nature of the occupation which these events engaged us in, was as different from our ordinary duty, as any two things can be conceived. As long as a midshipman remains on board his own ship, he is merely reckoned as one of a multitude of very small wheels in the great machine, and, consequently, must generally be left almost entirely without that independent responsibility which is so necessary, first to awaken his faculties, and then to sustain them in useful action when roused up. A midshipman, as I have before described, always acts under the immediate orders of superiors on deck, or is liable to be kicked and cuffed about at the pleasure of 'taller bullies' of his own class below; or it may be his fortune to be well scolded or otherwise punished at the caprice of an inconsiderate

commander, who sometimes scarcely seems to imagine that a youngster is composed of the same flesh and blood as himself.

“Well, Mr. Whipper Snapper, what makes you look so preciously glum?” said the captain to a poor middy whom he had been abusing like a pickpocket.

“Since you ask me, sir, I must say that the way you speak to me hurts my feelings.”

“Feelings!” roared the captain in a convulsion of laughter. “Feelings!—A midshipman with feelings!! Well, this is good; the service is come to a pretty pass, when midshipmen are encumbered with feelings! Be off, sir, and see if you can’t get rid of a cart-load of them. Come, sir, no reply, or you march up to the mast-head for ten hours, feelings and all!”

But a widely different story is told to the same lad, by the same commander, when a prize is taken—and when an officer with a crew are ordered to take charge of her, the aforesaid middy with the feelings is picked out as the prize-master. The captain, probably, at the very moment he was abusing,

or rather quizzing, the boy, did justice to those very qualities which the young fellow supposed were held at nought. At all events, he now finds himself treated like a man of sense and knowledge. The captain summons him to the cabin, reads him his orders, instructs him in the nature of the important duty he has to execute, shakes hands with him, and wishing him a good passage, sends him off in the boat, which carries him and his people to the captured vessel. The man-of-war soon makes sail, and the youngster who, the day before, was scoffed at and treated as nobody, now finds himself in the middle of the Atlantic, a thousand miles from his port, charged with a high responsibility, and to all practical intents and purposes the captain of a ship!

I should suppose there is almost as boundless a variety in the chase of vessels at sea, as there can possibly be in that of foxes or deer. I shall shortly, perhaps, have occasion to describe some of these animating adventures, from which it will be observed, that we cruisers are amongst the busiest sports-

men in the field. For the present, we shall skip over the intermediate details, and suppose the chase come up with, and her colours struck. The first thing to be done is to take possession. For this purpose, a boat with an officer is sent on board, who receives from the commander of the prize his register and other papers, all of which are sent, along with himself, on board the man-of-war, in order to be examined by the captain. These documents, after being examined, are sealed up, and given to the prize-master, for the inspection of the Admiralty Court on the vessel's arrival in harbour.

Every capture, it must be mentioned, requires, now-a-days, at least, to be regularly condemned by a Court of Admiralty before she can be sold, or the proceeds distributed to the captors. At some stages of the late war, and under particular circumstances, I believe many enemy's vessels were taken, condemned, and their cargoes shared out, all in the same breath. If there happened to be money on board, it was straightway parcelled out on the capstan-head, and each officer and man

got his whack, as they called it, without the tedious intervention of unintelligible legal forms, interminable proctor's bills, and the doubly-cursed agent's percentage. But those glorious days have all gone by! I cannot, indeed, speak of such scenes from personal knowledge; but I know, from officers who have participated in the plunder, that they never failed to recall the brilliant days of those delightful fellows the Bucaniers, when dollars, doubloons, huge crucifixes of gold, massy silver candlesticks, and other sacrilegious pillage of the cathedral towns on the Spanish main, rewarded their unquestioned industry and courage.

But it is very strange—passing strange—how a few hocus-pocus forms and ceremonies can soften off such things, and reconcile men's consciences to the pocketing of other people's money. All the world are now agreed, that it is a shocking scandal to land in the night on a peaceful shore, and, before morning breaks, to sack half a dozen villages, cut the throats of the unresisting inhabitants, and to rob every church and chapel within the

range of cannon-shot. This is pure bucaniering, and was performed by lawless fellows, who cared for nothing in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, and who were perfectly satisfied to go in chase of gold with a rope round their necks, utterly careless of glory, so they could manage, by fair measures or foul, to fill their treasure-chest.

I should be sorry to write an essay against prize-money; but I must say, that the man over whose mind there does not come a qualm, at the moment of making it, even in the most legitimate style of these refined days, is more or less eligible for the interesting service above described. I say nothing against that well-earned prize-money which is won by good honest fisty-cuffs. If two armed national ships meet in deadly fight—well and good—it is their express business—they hunt each other out, and are content to stand or fall by the consequences. The captor, in such cases, may very fairly dispose of his antagonist for whatever he will fetch, and distribute the proceeds with the most perfect ease of conscience.

But the affair, I have always felt, is very different, when we come to the seizure of private property. It is quite true we hold regular commissions from our government, war is formally declared, and the parties interested volunteer to incur the risk of capture, and trust their precious cargoes on those seas which they know are netted over with the tracks of their enemy's cruisers. Still it is private property; and though it be very easy to shew how it has grown into a custom, and why it is just to seize and confiscate such vessels; and, even if it were not so, that it is absolutely necessary, according to the rules of modern warfare, that the property of belligerents thus exposed on the high seas should be liable to capture; yet, when we come to the actual moment of capture, it does sometimes require all these supports, in the way of legal reasoning and political expediency, to subdue the remorse which otherwise we should feel at such proceedings.

During the chase, indeed, while our masts are bending over the sides, and we can scarcely walk the decks under the press of

canvass, while we are banging off the bow-chaser guns at the flying enemy, at whose gaff end we can see the golden flag of Spain—yellow, red, yellow, with a flaming crown in the centre!—fluttering before us, and telling a tale of bullion in huge bars, or of cochineal in bales, our whole thoughts and feelings are absorbed in the pursuit, and in the erection of castles in the air out of the proceeds of the treasure, close a-head, and all but grasped. By and by, the well aimed six-pounder, fired from the fore-castle, cuts away the peak-haulyards of the chase, and down comes his mainsail. In the next minute we are alongside of our prey, who lies gasping at our mercy in the trough of the sea. Mercy we have none to afford him, or, at least, no sympathy, for, in the first instance, all is rejoicing, laughing, shaking of hands, and mutual congratulations at this choice good fortune. The prize is hailed:—

“Where are you from?”

“La Vera Cruz.”

This answer produces a loud expression of pleasure along the decks, but is instantly

hushed to hear the reply to the next question.

“What is your cargo?”

“Plata, señor.”

Which is echoed by a hundred voices; and it is not saying too much, to suppose that the pleasure of that moment far exceeds any that attends the subsequent distribution, or even spending, of the money.

The boat is soon lowered down, and the Spanish captain, with his papers, brought on board; upon which we learn that the ship and cargo are chiefly the property of an old Spanish merchant, who, with his wife and family, are in the vessel, on their return to Cadiz, after twenty long years of honest industry in the colonies. The next boat brings the white-headed old gentleman and the ladies on board, calm and dignified under their calamity, according to the noble spirit of their country, although totally and irretrievably ruined. Then come eight or ten other persons, some gentlemen, some in lower stations, each of whom has, probably, invested his whole fortune in the prize—all now gone;

while they themselves are destined to be carried far from home, and subjected, not to poverty alone, but to imprisonment for a long course of years.

This picture is not over-coloured; on the contrary, it is rather softened, by the suppression of many disagreeable details which would shock needlessly to relate, but which live, I am sorry to say, too vividly upon the memory ever to be erased. It might savour of affectation to declare, that I have seldom paid away a dollar of prize-money got in this way, without its summoning up the image of some of these wretched groups of captives, whose grief forms such a deep contrast to the joyous expression of the light-hearted winners.

We must let these things pass, however. The prize is taken, the prisoners are removed, and a crew of Englishmen sent on board. The happy, but anxious, young prize-master has his orders to proceed, and, in the course of an hour, or it may often be much less, he finds himself alone, and, with a fluttering heart, in the middle of the wide ocean, with

a rich and important vessel in his charge, and a long voyage to make. If this is the first time his shoulders have been pressed by such a load of responsibility, he will not feel very much at ease. All the difficulties and dangers of the task press upon his thoughts, while his own capacity to meet and overcome them shrinks, for the moment, into insignificance. Heretofore, the charge of a prize has been the object of his highest ambition; but he now discovers, that when he gave lectures in the cock-pit upon his own great skill, and boasted of his knowledge of the art of conducting a ship safely to port, he must have been viewing the matter in a very different light from that which the reality presents.

He finds, also, that he had left out many items in his calculation of the difficulties. He has a crew to keep in order—a small one, indeed, but often not the more easy to manage on that account—exactly as many captains, who contrive to maintain full-manned ships in excellent kelter, are said to prove but poor disciplinarians at their own fire-

sides. He has the ship to navigate; and although amongst his fellow-mids, in the school-room, he may have been considered the best theoretical computer of a lunar on board, he will now feel no small awkwardness in taking even the simplest observation, when he reflects that upon its accuracy may depend the safety of all the lives and property intrusted to his charge.

In shaping his course, in like manner, he has many things to take into account,—he must recollect what are the prevalent winds of the season, how the currents generally set, what is the amount of the variation of the compass. All these things, and many more, which he has been accustomed to treat lightly, he soon finds pressing heavily upon his attention, as matters of the highest importance. Any one of them, at a time, he fancies he could easily manage; but when the whole catalogue of difficulties is brought to bear upon one point, and at one moment, he learns practically, for the first time, and in all its alarming force, what it is to be implicitly trusted. From the instant this knowledge is

impressed upon his mind; our young officer may be said to become a totally new man. It is true; his bodily stature is not altered; but his mind has shot up as if by magic, and is so changed, that very often he can hardly recognise it himself. From that hour forward, he becomes possessed of more generous aspirations and higher hopes—all quite strange to him; and, as he feels himself invested with new capacities, as well as a fresher and more useful set of feelings, a long vista of bright scenes opens to his view, which his delighted fancy whispers he may one day enter and enjoy. What gives this prospect its chief value, indeed, in his eyes, is the very different aspect which the future wears from that in which he has been accustomed to view it, during those obscure and unsatisfactory day-dreams with which he has heretofore been wont to torment himself. He now begins to feel confident that his ultimate success depends less upon the assistance of others than upon his own industry, and that as he has proved himself capable of gaining the first step, he may, by due exertion,

hope to win all the rest. Having thus a definite set of objects to pursue, and a distinct method of pursuing them chalked out for him, his abilities will no longer be wasted on shadows, but grapple resolutely with the substance itself.

It is not pretended, of course, that all this actually passes through the mind of every person placed, early in life, in situations of high trust; but I feel pretty certain, that if a young man really have any talents within him, which are backed by a hearty inclination towards his profession, and that his character is held together by a genuine love of independence, he is in the fairest way to success. If all these feelings be accompanied by a proper acquaintance with his duty, the most certain way, not only of calling out his powers, but of giving stability to his energies, and practical efficacy to all his virtuous resolutions, is to load him, as soon as possible, and as heavily as possible, with responsible duties which are difficult in their execution, and creditable when well performed. If, also, he be right principled

—that is to say, if he have a correct apprehension of how much he ought and can perform single-handed, and how far he will be wise in distrusting himself, such a man will either succeed in life, or secure the next best thing—the consciousness of having merited success.

We have been supposing here that the subject of our professional experiment is a young man of abilities, knowledge, and zeal, and one whose character stands on good foundations in other respects. But the expanding and improving effect of early responsibility is perhaps nearly as conspicuous upon persons less happily moulded. At least, I have seen many an indolent, and sometimes even an ill-disposed person, rescued from a life of absolute uselessness or positive folly, by the reviving operation of this invigorating stimulus. Weak minds and weak bodies are apt to give way under the pressure of too heavy obligations; but of such persons it may probably be said, that they would not have succeeded by any other course of training, or in any other profession; they must, there-

fore, be classed amongst the crowded ranks of idlers who will not move hand or foot for themselves, but rather choose their friends to work for them, and fancy themselves abominably ill-used every time they are called upon to contribute, in the way of a sacrifice of their own sleeping-time, to the promotion of their own interests.

CHAPTER III.

HEAVING THE LOG.

FOR my part I did not sleep one minute at a time during the first night I was prize-master. Every sea that struck the bows, and shook the Spanish brig I had charge of, made me jump up, fancying some accident. Or if I dropped into a half-slumber, straightway, methought, the furious Dons with their daggers were at my throat, and the beautiful prize wrenched from me! The next dream was, that we had sprung a leak; and the pumps being choked, all the cargo was melted away, and we had to return in a crazy boat, to tell a lame tale of services unperformed. On the second night, having overwrought myself, with this sort of anxiety, I lay half awake, in a sort

of fever, and fancied every thing was going wrong. I had left the deck at midnight, with the wind so dead against us, that it seemed as if our passage would never be made. I soon, however, fell so fast asleep, as to hear none of the stir which took place on deck early in the middle watch. Towards four o'clock I awoke, when all again was still. I had not taken off my clothes, and even the spy-glass, with which I had been looking at the stars, was still in my hand. Of course, I imagined the wind, as before, was blowing against us, and, starting up, I went once more on deck, to growl at the hard-hearted breeze that kept us back.

The moon, which had been high in the heavens when I quitted the deck, was now dropping into the western horizon, in the direction of the gulf of Mexico, between which and the prize there stretched a slender line, or chain, of bright silvery reflections, such as we rarely observe, except when the sea is very smooth. The surface, indeed, was scarcely broken by the smallest possible ripple; for we were then leaving the trade-

winds, and although a light air had sprung up from the southward, and promised to freshen, it, as yet, scarcely breathed along the face of the waters; still, it was distinctly felt aloft. If there had been the slightest swell, even the highest sails must have flapped against the masts. But the canvass, made of cotton, and as white as snow, being rendered quite damp by the heavy dew of the tropics, the royals and smaller studding-sails were bulged out under the influence of the light wind, and stood nearly as motionless as if the prize had been one of those beautiful toys made of glass, and the whole scene, ocean, sky, and ship, a mere illusion.

On looking over the gangway, therefore, I was surprised to see that we were stealing along at the rate of between four and five knots an hour, for the sea was so smooth, that not the smallest tremor had indicated how fast we were going through the water. The ear, indeed, when attentively pitched, could catch the faint sound of those tiny little waves, which the poets, I believe, call billows, breaking on the sharp bows of the

prize, as her cut-water glided between them, or, rather, across them, for we were going 'right before it.' The night, which had succeeded to a sultry day, was still so hot, that the officer of the watch, my assistant-mid, was pacing the deck without his hat, and his linen jacket thrown open, to catch the cool air, which he was whistling zealously to augment. He reported, that the breeze which had been directly against us when I left the deck, had died away, and in its place the light air now blowing from the south had sprung up, but so gradually, that he thought there was every appearance of its lasting.

No one, perhaps, can conceive the delight of such a scene as this, but persons who have been in some way dependent upon the winds and waves for their success, and have experienced the happiness of a change from a foul wind to a fair wind. Every stitch of sail that could be set was of course now crowded on the vessel, and every yard was trimmed with the utmost care, after which I again laid down, in spite of the picturesque beauty of the night, and in less than two minutes

was fast asleep, dreaming of sailing past old Cape Sambro, and of anchoring my charge, in full security, at Halifax. Then I pictured in my fancy the great honour and glory of marching up to the Admiral's house, to report the arrival of a prize—always a welcome communication. Nor am I clear which was really the happier period of the two—the actual arrival in port, or these visions of importance attached to the anticipated success of this first independent voyage. But of one thing I am quite certain, that all this stirring-up of the thoughts, and highly strained, yet not overstrained exercise of the faculties—this constant play of hopes and fears, anxieties during a foul wind, and ecstasies when it is fair, must be in the highest degree profitable to a young officer. My experience, at least, enables me to say, that such duties give a very just foretaste of the future cares, as well as future enjoyments, of the profession. I speak of those subsequent periods when, instead of a mere passing service, such as the humble charge of a petty prize, he is called upon to act under

responsibilities which are not only infinitely more weighty, but more permanent in their pressure, and which are varied in their kind and in their degree, much beyond the reach of experience to anticipate, or of previous instruction to render simple.

It may be useful, indeed, to remember, that while but a small portion of the higher employments of any profession, or, perhaps, of any branch of knowledge, can be taught by fixed rules, a great deal may always be done in the way of instruction, by affording the pupil opportunities of schooling his judgment, and his other faculties early in life, by this sort of practice in the way of real business. It will not, perhaps, very much signify if the first trials shall bear but little resemblance to the future and more important work, which the boy may be called upon to execute, when he shall grow up to manhood. For the grand point to aim at is the full and varied exercise of his talents under situations of undivided responsibility, and in which, above all, there shall be a necessity for prompt action; and where, although

a false step may not be utterly ruinous, it is sure to be considered more or less derogatory to his character.

Nothing of any moment occurred during this voyage, for the wind continued fair, and we reached Halifax in safety. But upon another similar occasion, I was within an ace of being shipwrecked, entirely through my own carelessness. The vessel then under my care was an American sloop, detained off New York during one of our blockades, already described. I had no regular assistant upon that occasion, but merely a quarter-master and three or four hands to navigate my little charge. During the first day, the *Leander* took us in tow, and pulled us along towards Halifax at treble the rate the old bit of a sloop had ever gone in her best days; to say nothing of what she could now accomplish, when almost worn out, half waterlogged, and the parent of a copious family of weeds, streaming from her bends, like the beard and tail of a river god in those old pictures, thrust in as filling up pieces in the corners of a map.

A strange sail having been reported in sight from the mast-head of the *Leander*, I was ordered to cast off the tow-rope. In one moment, from being dragged through the water at the rate of eight or nine miles an hour, the poor sloop's speed was reduced to a couple of knots, and the man-of-war shot out of our sight in a very short time. I now found myself jogging slowly along towards my port, all alone, with the comfortable prospect of making the passage in ten days or a fortnight, instead of being drawn merrily into port in about forty-eight hours. I know not when I have felt more desolate than I did upon this occasion, when suddenly deprived of the powerful assistance which it cost the great ship hardly any thing to lend, while it was nearly all in all to us. Whilst we were in tow, I remember observing, that, although in the sloop we had not a breath of wind in our sails, the highest of which did not reach thirty feet above the water, the lofty sails of the flag-ship, raised four or five times higher, were filled with a fine fresh breeze, which carried her through

the water, as well as the little vessel in her train, at the rate of several knots an hour.

It may interest some persons to explain, that, in nautical language, the words Mile and Knot are used synonymously. This measure of length, however, is not the statute mile of England, but is identical with what is called sometimes the 'geographical,' and sometimes the 'nautical mile.' It is considerably longer than that fixed by statute, and which is in use, on shore, in this country, and in all parts of North America. In one degree of latitude there are sixty geographical, or nautical miles, or knots; while there are sixty-nine statute miles and about a thirteenth part (strictly, one hundred and forty yards) contained in the same distance. Thus, an easy rule suggests itself for converting one measure into the other, which, though not rigorously accurate, is sufficiently near for all common purposes. If we have a distance expressed in knots, or geographical miles, which we wish to speak of in terms of a statute mile, the rough rule is, to add one-sixth to the number. If, for instance,

we have 6 knots, which we wish to convert into statute miles, we add one-sixth part, which gives us 7. And consequently, by inverting this process, the rule for converting the number of statute miles into an expression signifying knots (or geographical miles), is to take away one-seventh part from that number. Thus, 7 statute miles, diminished by one-seventh, become 6 knots.

The term knot for mile, in sea language, is derived from the method used on board ship to ascertain the rate at which a vessel is passing through the water. A line, about seventy or eighty fathoms in length, rather thicker than whip-cord, is kept on a reel about a foot and a half in width, and five or six inches in diameter. To the end of this line is fixed a flat piece of wood, somewhat larger than a man's hand, in the form of a quadrant or one quarter of a circle. To this piece of wood, which is called the log-ship, a slip of lead is attached on the curved side, of sufficient weight to make it sink perpendicularly in the water till the centre, or angular point, is just visible above the

surface. The line at the end is divided into two branches or legs, one of which is permanently fixed to one of the corners of this log-ship, while the other is kept in its place in the opposite corner by a peg, thrust into a hole when the log is to be used. This peg is so contrived that, by jerking the line, it can be withdrawn when the operation is over.

These arrangements will easily be understood, by recollecting the disposition of the strings by which a boy's kite is attached to the cord. The log-ship, in fact, is merely a miniature water-kite. As long as all the legs or branches at the end of the line are fixed to it, the plane is kept flat against the water; but if one of the strings gives way, or if the peg holding it be withdrawn, the same thing happens to the log-ship that would happen to a kite, if one of its two legs or terminating strings were cut close to the paper. The flat face of the board instantly ceases to oppose itself to the fluid, and, of course, when one of its angles only is presented, it is easily pulled back again. As long, how-

ever, as the peg remains in its place, the plane of the board offers so much resistance to the water, that as the vessel from which it is hove advances, the log-ship remains upright nearly in the same spot, like a floating anchor, and thus draws the line off the reel, which is held up for the purpose.

It will now be easily understood, that if the line be divided into equal portions of a known length, and account be taken of the number of these portions which pass through the hand in a given time, an inference may be deduced as to the rate at which the ship is sailing, in any other space of time,—say in one hour. In practice, the method is, to employ what is called a half-minute sand-glass, and to divide the log-line into portions bearing the same relation to a nautical mile that half a minute does to an hour. At the end of the first portion of the line, one knot is placed; at the second, two knots, and so on. If this sand-glass were made to run exactly half a minute (30 seconds), then, since the number of feet in a nautical mile is 6079, each knot on the line ought to

consist of 50 feet and a little more than 7 inches.

It is found more convenient, however, to use a sand-glass which runs only 28 seconds, and to divide the log-line into portions of 47 feet 3 inches, which still, very nearly, preserves the proportion between the two things compared.

In arithmetical language this ratio may be expressed by saying:—As 3600 (the number of seconds in one hour) are to 28 (the number of seconds which the sand-glass runs), so are 6079 feet (the length of a geographical mile) to 47 feet 3 inches nearly (the length of one knot or portion of the log-line).

In ships of war, the custom is to adhere strictly to these proportions; but I have been on board some vessels where the practice was to use a sand-glass which ran 30 seconds, while the length of the knots on the line was made exactly 8 fathoms, or 48 feet, instead of its being somewhat more than $50\frac{1}{2}$, the true proportion, if a half-minute glass be used. This derangement of the correct proportion is sometimes adopted from ignorance,

and sometimes from a wish that the distance 'run by log' may always place the ship somewhat ahead of her true place, and thus put the navigator on his guard. But those who defend this fallacious mode of proceeding forget that, as the true state of the case is never quite lost sight of, the subterfuge is more apt to do harm, by an undue allowance either in excess or defect, than could ever arise from an adherence to strict truth. We see something like this on shore, when the cunning master of a house sets his clock forward a quarter of an hour or twenty minutes, to secure having his dinner in good time—forgetting that every mortal in his establishment, especially that important personage the cook, being as well aware of the trick as he is himself, is sure to make his own allowance, to the hopeless destruction of all punctuality.

On board a man-of-war, it is the duty of the mate of the watch, or principal midshipman, to ascertain the rate at which the ship is going through the water, by heaving the log at the end of every hour. This simple

operation, however, like every thing else with us, is performed with a due observance of established forms, many of which, I suppose, must seem useless to uninitiated eyes.

As the log is hove regularly four times in every watch, the moment the bell strikes, the mate of the watch mounts the poop, calling out while he is walking aft—

“ Hold the reel !”

The machine on which the line is wound is, accordingly, seized by one of the lads, stationed there for that purpose by the captain of the mizen-top. The quarter-master holds the sand-glass ; and about fifteen or twenty feet of the line being pulled off the reel by the mate of the watch, and held, along with the log-ship, in his hand, he makes this second exclamation, with a strong interrogative tone—

“ Is the glass clear ?”

The answer.—“ All clear, sir !” is hardly uttered by the old, weather-beaten quarter-master, before the log is dashed from the mate of the watch’s hand, right into the sea, on the lee quarter, and well out from

the ship, so as not to fall into the wake, or come within the influence of the 'dead water,' or eddy, which is drawn along with the ship. If the rate of sailing be considerable, the log-ship hardly lights on the surface before the line flies rattling through the mate's hand, spinning off the reel in fine style. The marks or knots on the line do not commence, however, till thirty or forty feet of what is called 'stray line' have been drawn out, at which point a piece of red buntin is inserted between the strands of the line. This mark, by striking against the hand of the person heaving the log, and through whose fingers, formed into the shape of a ring, the line passes, gives indication, even in the darkest night, of the moment when the period begins, during the lapse of which an account is to be taken of the quantity of line drawn out. As soon as the mate feels this mark pass through his hand, he cries out, "Turn!" Upon which the quarter-master reverses the half-minute glass, and, holding it close to his face, brings it against the brightest part of

the sky he can find, in order that he may distinguish the exact moment when the last sands have run through. At that instant he calls out "Stop!" Upon which the mate of the watch closes his hand upon the line, to arrest its further escape, and the lad, who all the while has held the reel over his head, brings it smartly down to his knees, to prevent any more line from being drawn out. Another man springs forward at the same moment, and, catching hold of the log-line, begins hauling it on board. Meanwhile the young officer examines the line as it comes in again, and, as soon as one of the sets of knots or marks reaches him, he counts their number, if it be dark, with his fingers. If the ship be going fast, the moment the line is arrested, or within a second or two afterwards, the strain upon it becomes so great, that the peg which holds one of the two branches of the line is drawn out of the log-ship, upon which the board instantly turns round, and by lying flat on the surface of the water, is easily drawn along. If the vessel be going slowly through the

water, it is necessary to jerk the line smartly, in order to disengage the peg.

The mate next proceeds to the officer of the watch to make his report. It is his duty to state exactly the rate at which the ship is then going; but it remains with the officer to consider and to decide what distance she may actually have passed over during the hour just ended. If there have been no difference in the direction or in the strength of the wind, nor any change in the ship's course, of a nature calculated to augment or diminish the rate of sailing, nor any addition or diminution of the sail set, the officer simply answers to the announcement of what she is then going, in these words—

“ Give it her ! ”

This is quite enough for the mate of the watch, who straightway dives down to the half deck, where he finds the log-board, which consists of two flat pieces of wood, three feet long by fifteen inches broad, painted black, and made to close upon one another, like a huge folio book. Upon this he notes down with chalk, in one of the ruled columns

drawn upon it, the course the ship has been steered during the last hour, the distance she has run in knots and parts of a knot, and the direction of the wind. In another compartment he mentions what sails have been set or taken in, and any other matters which the officer of the watch may deem worthy of record. All this is copied, verbatim, next morning, into the Ship's Log Book; and the officer of each watch places his initials at the close of the different periods during which he had charge of the deck. Three copies are afterwards made,—one of which is sent to the Admiralty, another to the Navy Board, and the third to the Admiral of the station. The original log-book is eventually deposited at the Admiralty, for the purpose of future reference.

If, during the interval between the periods of heaving the log, the wind have changed in direction or in force, or if the 'ship's head has been altered,'—the technical expression for making a change in the course steered,—then the officer makes an allowance accordingly. Suppose the report is, that

the ship is now going seven knots—but, in the interval since the log was last hove, the wind has freshened so considerably as to accelerate her rate of going by a couple of miles—the officer of the watch, recollecting that, at the commencement of the hour, she was going only five knots, says, “Give her six;” or, if the change of wind has been recent, he says, “Give her five and a half;” and so on, according to a variety of circumstances, too numerous to be mentioned. . .

Before quitting this subject, it may be stated, that, when the ship is going very fast, a glass which runs for only fourteen seconds, instead of twenty-eight, is used; and, in this case, the number of knots drawn out must, of course, be doubled, in order to give the true rate of sailing. Small marks are also stuck in half-way between the different places at which the principal marks are inserted. Each knot, therefore, is actually divided by distinctive marks into two parts, each of which is again supposed to be divided into four, so that the whole of every knot, or mile, on the log-line, is nominally

divided into eight portions, which, from their being very nearly six feet each in length, are called fathoms. I mention this to explain what sometimes puzzles 'shore going' people in reading accounts of naval matters, in which it is stated that a ship is sailing at the rate of a certain number of knots and so many fathoms. The meaning of this expression is, that, over and above the number of knots, or nautical miles, she is going, so many eighth-parts of a mile (represented on the log-line by fathoms) are added, to give the true rate per hour.

It cannot be denied, that this method of coming at so very important an element in navigation as the distance over which the ship has run, is, to appearance, extremely rude. But the real wonder is, with what singular accuracy it generally gives the result, provided the interval be not too long, and no currents or tides have interfered to carry the ship in some new direction. The log, which, of course, takes account only of the relative motion between the ship and the water, is the foundation of what is called

Dead Reckoning—I do not know very well why, unless it be that, to a certain extent, its operations must be made in the dark, and, at best, in great uncertainty. The contrast which exists between the unsatisfactory nature of this method of determining a ship's place, and the confidence which arises from following the precise rules of nautical astronomy, has a tendency to bring the good old Dead Reckoning into rather too much contempt. Thus, I think, we are apt, sometimes, to hold it too cheap at moments when, if we placed no more than the proper reliance upon it, we might find it very useful.

I shall certainly take some other opportunity of explaining the principles of the more exact, and far more curious, method of navigating a ship by the aid of nautical astronomy. At present, it is but fair to return to the poor Yankee sloop, my weighty charge, which I left some dozen of pages back, wending her very slow way towards Halifax.

It is in navigation as it is in life,—with a fair wind, even the dullest sailer can make

out a passage; for even if we suppose the vessel to be such a wretched tub, as to go along, at her best speed, only four or five knots an hour, which was a cut rather beyond my good sloop, it is clearly possible that, in the course of the twenty-four hours, she may run above a hundred miles. In a week, therefore, she will have made perhaps a thousand, if the fair wind holds; and this, be it observed, would carry her, in less than a month across the Atlantic.

On this occasion we had the benefit of a slight drain of current in our favour, from being still within the north-western limit of the mighty Gulf Stream—that prodigious water course, the largest in the world, which, after sweeping out of the Indian ocean, doubling the Cape, and traversing the whole region of the south-east trade wind, enters the gorge between Africa and the Brazils, crosses the Equator, passes the Carribbee Islands, and scours the Gulf of Mexico; then gushes off, through a huge sluice, by the Straits of Florida, and, gradually expending its gigantic strength as it washes

the shores of the United States, finally deposits its load—the washings of a hundred seas, and of ten thousand rivers—in the shoals of Nantucket, and the well-known Banks of Newfoundland.

We jogged on slowly and surely, and, as the weather was fine, not unpleasantly; for it was midsummer, which, in those countries, is a delightful season. In process of time we made the land, somewhere to the southward and westward of Halifax. I had obtained a good observation for latitude, and knew pretty well where we were, so that we could shape a tolerable course to make Sambro light-house. The wind was light from the south; and about dusk, as I was quite exhausted by the fatigues of a hot day, the greater part of which had been passed at the mast-head, looking at the land, I lay down, after giving the quarter-master, who was my only assistant, precise directions how to steer. I soon fell asleep—so did my faithless officer—and so likewise, I suspect, did the man at the helm. At all events, we contrived, amongst us, by our

joint carelessness, to let the vessel drift close to the land. At midnight I was roused up by the shouts of the quarter-master, screaming out my name, and exclaiming that we were nearly on shore. I sprung upon deck in a pretty fright; and there was good reason! The night was pitch dark, but the dash of the waves on the rocks close to us made the danger but too distinctly visible; and I remember observing, even at that horrible moment, that the brightness of the foam was such that it actually cast a light on our sails. I found the vessel steering directly upon the reefs, with the wind right aft, and the main sheet eased off till the boom touched, or almost touched, the rigging. Of course, the helm was put hard over in a moment; but as the sloop rounded to the wind, which was still light, another fearful belt of breakers rose up before her which it was obvious she could not weather. To tack, therefore, appeared her only chance; but, owing either to the vessel having lost her way in the process of rounding to the wind, or to the main sheet not being gathered aft in

time, or to some other cause, we missed stays, and for several minutes the fair Margaret—that was her name—kept rising and falling with the swell, nearly head to wind, but moving gradually, stern foremost, towards the ledges of rock, on the sharp peaks of which the sea was breaking much higher than our mast-head, with a sound that will live in my memory's ear to the hour of my death.

“What is to be done now?” I said, muttering to myself.

“What is to be done?” exclaimed the American captain, who was a far older and a far better sailor than his prize-master, and who, besides, knew exactly what his vessel—the pride of his heart—could perform. “Do, sir!—why, wear her, if you can—and I think you can. She is now paying off—let her wind round on her heel; she has no way, and will veer in little more than her own length.”

This was no season to dispute on points of etiquette; so Jonathan, suiting the action to the word, jammed the tiller hard over, and,

having made it fast to the rail, sprang forward, and let go the peak haulyards. Down came the gaff, and off went the sloop, as if she knew the voice of her legitimate sovereign. As we again began to gather way, but before we brought the wind right aft, our bowsprit almost mixed in the froth which fell back in vast sheets from the face of the cliffs. We lay with our head, for fully half a minute, directly towards the shore; and I must own, that I felt, just then, rather queerish. In a few seconds more the good sloop's head came gradually round, so that the rocks were presently seen on the bow, then on the beam, and at last fairly on the lee quarter. I have omitted to mention, that the peak of the mainsail was hoisted smartly up again, the moment the wind caught it on the other side, and this in a little time enabled us to draw off from a most imminent danger in which we had been placed by my combined neglect and ignorance.

CHAPTER IV.

EFFECTS OF THE GULF STREAM.

ABOUT a year afterwards, when I was mate of His Majesty's ship *Leopard*, I was placed in charge of a much more respectable vessel, also an American, the identical ship which carried Jerome Buonaparte and his family to Europe, and selected for that purpose from being considered the fastest sailer out of Baltimore. I certainly never saw so perfect a model of a merchant vessel, or one more commodiously fitted up. I was, of course, prodigiously proud of my new and beautiful command; but had soon more important matters to attend to, in the navigation of the ship, the difficulties of which may be easily explained.

When we parted company from the *Leo-*

pard, we were within a few days' sail of the coast of America, and may then have been a hundred leagues or so to the north-westward of Bermuda; consequently, still within the influence of the Gulf Stream, already alluded to as sweeping, in a north-eastern direction, along the shores of the United States. I was ordered to take my pretty charge to Bermuda, and proceeded to the southward accordingly. Foul winds, however, detained us for several days in the Gulf Stream, for the set of which current such an ample allowance was made, that when we reached the latitude of Bermuda, $32\frac{1}{2}$ N., it seemed almost certain that we were some thirty or forty miles to the westward of the island, that is, between it and the coast of America.

From the land of Bermuda being low, it is not easily got sight of; and the whole cluster of islands being of small extent, they are often missed by navigators steering, as they conceive, directly for them. To those, indeed, who are provided with time-keepers, there is no danger in following this direct method; for these instruments are now so admirably

constructed, that an error in longitude which would carry a navigator past Bermuda, without seeing it, is, now-a-days, very unlikely to occur. Ships, however, which have not the advantage of a chronometer, and consequently may not be sure of their longitude, generally find it prudent to run into the latitude of the island, and then steer along that parallel till they come in sight of their object. Most people are probably aware that the latitude is an element in navigation almost at all times very easily determined, at least with sufficient accuracy for the purpose now alluded to. The longitude, as every mortal must have heard, is, or rather was, the grand stumbling-block in a sailor's way; and it will readily be understood, of what essential importance it must be to a ship, when running along a parallel of latitude, in search of a mere speck on the ocean, like Bermuda, that there should be no mistake as to which side of the island she really is upon. For if, in point of fact, the ship shall happen to be on the eastern side of the island, but, owing to some error in the reckoning, her

captain believes that she is on the western side, he will naturally steer east along the parallel of latitude, instead of west, as he ought, of course, to do; and thus he will go on increasing his distance from the island, instead of shortening it.

This curious case was precisely mine. The Gulf Stream, as it eventually appeared, had carried us eighty or ninety miles farther to the eastward than I had made allowance for, although an ample daily set in that direction was given her. The superficial velocity of this mighty current, it seems, is occasionally accelerated or retarded by the prevalence of hard gales. At all events, whatever might be the cause of this unusual increase in the rate of the stream, it carried me so far beyond my mark, that when I reached the parallel of $32\frac{1}{2}$ N., I supposed myself in longitude $65\frac{1}{2}$ W., that is, about forty miles on the western or American side of Bermuda. As the wind was blowing from the east, of course I struggled hard to beat up against it, from supposing that my port lay to windward. It was fortunate this breeze

was not blowing from the west, as I shall proceed to shew.

For a long time antecedent to the period in question, I had been familiar in theory with the method of ascertaining a ship's longitude at sea, by lunar, and the master had frequently been kind enough to let me take his sextant in my hand, to measure, by actual observation, the angular distance between the moon and the sun, or between the moon and the fixed stars, this being the fundamental operation in this most important of all our nautical problems. Still, it was quite clear that a great deal more practice was necessary, to give any degree of proficiency. But as I could never hope to acquire the requisite skill by the occasional use of a borrowed instrument, and could not afford to buy one for myself, I had given some hints to this effect, when writing home, in a quarter where I trusted they would be attended to. The application succeeded so well, that, in the course of a few months, I was master of one of the best sextants on board, from the hands of that prince of in-

strument-makers—Troughton. The possession of such a treasure naturally gave a fresh fillip to my exertions, and I well nigh put my eyes out in taking lunar distances all day, and often all night long. In the midst of this active course of practice, I was ordered to carry the above-mentioned American ship to Bermuda; nor is it at all improbable, that the sextant may have contributed, in some degree, to gain for its master this enviable distinction.

On the day I reached the latitude of Bermuda ($32\frac{1}{2}$ N.), I fancied the ship must certainly be on the western side of the island; the sun, however, happened not to be in distance, as it is called, and, of course, no lunars could then be observed. Having, therefore, still nothing to trust to but the dead reckoning, we, of course, continued beating all the morning to the eastward, under the full persuasion that Bermuda was in the wind's eye, due east of us, instead of being, as it really was, due west, on our lee-beam.

As the night approached, the sky became beautifully clear, and shortly after sunset I

got my sextant to work. Before the twilight was ended, and the horizon too faint to admit of the altitudes being taken with accuracy, I had observed four or five sets of lunars. No time was lost in working out, when, lo and behold! the longitude, instead of being $65\frac{1}{2}$ W., as I made it by dead reckoning, appeared to be little more than 64 W. or some ninety miles farther to the eastward; thus shewing that, although, as we supposed, we were thirty miles from the land, it was on the opposite side of the island from that on which we had imagined ourselves to be!

What was now to be done? For, although on board the flag ship, where the accuracy or inaccuracy of a midshipman's lunars did not matter a straw, I had indulged in the usual presumption of fancying myself rather an expert observer, I was now filled with doubt and anxiety. All the ordinary allowances for the set of the Gulf Stream had already been made, and it was hardly to be conceived that in a week or ten days there should have occurred an error of a degree and a half. It appeared far more likely that

some gross mistake had been committed in the figures of the computation, or in my mode of observing the lunars, than that such a huge augmentation to the strength of the current should have occurred at this particular moment.

The American captain, who, like most commanders of ships of that class sailing from the United States, was an admirable navigator, and a very shrewd, obliging, and gentlemanlike person, happened to be so ill that he could not possibly come on deck to make observations to corroborate mine. But he was able, though in bed, to go over the computations, the result of which, in his hands, agreed so nearly with what I made it, that he, at least, had no doubts of their accuracy, and recommended me at once to put the helm up, and steer to the westward. I had not confidence enough, however, in my own handy work for a decision so material to the success of the voyage. In short, I could not force my unpractised imagination to conceive that an island, which I had so much reason to suppose lay due

east of me, could possibly be hit upon by steering due west.

This perplexing kind of struggle between the Reason and the Imagination, is of frequent occurrence in every stage of our singular profession. Sometimes it augments our embarrassments, but more frequently lends a charm even to the most ordinary duties, which enables us to go on with cheerfulness in the execution of tasks otherwise extremely exhausting to our strength and patience. For example, almost the whole of our night work, when blockading or chasing an enemy, is made up of this sort of combined observation and guess work; an exercise highly useful in the formation of those habits of resource upon which professional success materially depends.

So, to work I went again, with my observations for the longitude. After all the adjustments of the sextant had been carefully examined, a new gang of lunars was taken, some with the same, and some with other stars, but all of them with a degree of attention which, if measured by the depth

of interest felt in the result, I am not sure I have ever bestowed upon any similar course of observations since. Half of the distances I gave over to my friend, the captain, to compute, while I set about calculating the rest. After a time we exchanged computations, without communicating each other's results, till all were finished, and then we laid them side by side. The agreement amongst the whole observations was so near to one another, and corresponded also so closely with those taken earlier in the evening, that I could no longer have a doubt as to what should be done. About midnight, with a throbbing heart, and a mind filled with the most painful anxiety, I bore up, and, as we had a fresh breeze, spanked along merrily to the west. It was necessary, of course, in running in such a perilous neighbourhood, to keep a very bright look out; for although Bermuda, on its eastern side, is pretty clear of coral reefs, and we were quite certain of our latitude, it was not the sort of place to approach incautiously. When the moon went down, therefore, we shortened

sail, but continued still slipping along at the rate of four or five knots, till morning.

When the eastern sky first began to give some faint promises of a dawn, I felt my anxiety mount to a pitch scarcely bearable, and I kept peering with the night-glass into the gloom which still hung over the horizon in the supposed direction of Bermuda, as if my eagerness to see what was hid beyond could have brushed away the night any quicker. When, at last, the day broke, and the well-known cliffs of St. David's Head, topped with dark green cedars and lighter-tinted orange trees, stood pleasantly up ahead of us, at the distance of a league and a half, I could have shouted for joy.

We steered straight for the harbour's mouth, and, having hoisted the signal for a pilot—a jack at the fore—we soon brought off our worthy black friend, old Jamie Darrel, and before breakfast my valuable charge was snugly moored off St. George's Town, perhaps the prettiest spot, as far as island scenery goes, in any part of the globe beyond

that enchanting region which lies within the Tropics.

I was not a little amused by finding we had reached the island before our own ship, and, a few days afterwards, I had the satisfaction of rowing on board to report myself, before she anchored. The compliments paid to our success were due, it must be owned, to the sextant so opportunely sent to me; for, unless the dead reckoning had been checked by lunar observations, we might have been kept at sea a month, and, as the ship was short of provisions, serious consequences must have ensued.

In the course of my subsequent professional life, I have seen so much benefit arise from young officers being put very early in possession of such instruments, that I venture to recommend to all parents who can by any means afford it, to consider the money bestowed on such things, not as spent, but rather as put out to productive interest for the use of their sons. It is very true, that all the sextants Troughton or Dollond could

make,—with all the books of navigation in the world, ever so well crammed into the heads of some persons, would not make even tolerable navigators of them. Papas and mammas, therefore, (if any such there be) who are conscious of having what are called, in midshipmen's dialect, 'pudding-headed hopefuls,' may either save their money altogether, or seek to direct it to some other point more suitable to the taste and abilities of their unpromising progeny.

The grand purpose to aim at, as I have already more than once observed, is to give young men an opportunity of working in earnest, and for themselves, under the joint stimulus of weighty responsibility and the possession of fitting means for executing such trusts with credit. No one, indeed, but their immediate superior officer can afford them opportunities of shewing what their abilities and acquirements really are. Still, a young officer's friends may often aid him most essentially by furnishing him with those means of improvement, which, as in the case of my sextant, have a tendency to

strengthen his chance of coming into useful notice.

There is an old saying in the mercantile world, that you never know any man till you come to do business with him. The same thing is true in nautical affairs, and probably in every thing else. You can never tell of what stuff any officer is made, till you see him placed in a situation where he is forced to act for himself from his own knowledge and talents alone, and where, while success may earn for him much credit, failure is sure to be accompanied either by ridicule or disgrace.

CHAPTER V.

CHANGE OF SHIP.

IF a midshipman's satisfaction be great in having charge of a prize, there is also an intensity of bitterness in the return to his own ship again; a feeling which will be understood, I dare say, by most people. While on board the prize, whether at sea, or after reaching his port and placing his trust in security, he is, to all intents and purposes, in the situation of a commanding officer. He is the captain for the time being, and as such is quite as much his own master as any officer, of any rank, can be. If he has the oppression of responsibility weighing upon his spirits on one hand, he has the pride of station, and the consciousness of being held worthy of his hire, to sustain him on the

other;—to say nothing of the honest and substantial pleasure, which almost all men feel, in the mere act of working hard, when conscious that their efforts are directed to the performance of what is obviously their duty. There are, besides, so many sources of enjoyment belonging to such occupations, that I have observed every midshipman selected for this duty, eager to be so employed a second time; and have seldom seen any of them come back to the ship without a very marked improvement in all respects.

But our return was generally a very bitter affair at first. We had to descend all at once from our high station of captains, to take up our old position as ‘petty officers’ in the depths of the cock-pit. Instead of having in charge the lives of many individuals, and thousands of pounds worth of property, we felt ourselves limited perhaps to the charge of a jolly-boat, sent, on a cold frosty morning at Halifax, to the butcher’s wharf to fetch off beef for the ship’s company’s dinner. And, instead of walking omnipotently on the weather side of our own

quarter-deck, directing the course, ordering sail to be set, or determining the ship's place by an appeal to the heavens, we were jammed imperiously over to the lee side, to get drenched by the rain, and chilled by the wind out of that odious mizen-staysail, the abomination of all poor middies! Then, in place of feeling that others were looking up to us for orders, and relying upon our resources to guide them, we had the mortification of being knocked about by persons for whose knowledge we had sometimes but little respect, on services which we knew, or thought we knew, to be useless, and which were frequently not only disagreeable, but humiliating in their nature.

Nevertheless, I think there can be no doubt that even this sore feeling of annoyance had an admirable effect in the long run. Medicine is often not the less salutary for being unpalatable; and I am now well convinced that our youngsters were all the better for these alternations of power and submission. Their juvenile pride, indeed, was often sorely wounded when, after re-

turning from a prize, they were called upon to execute duties beneath, what they considered, their true dignity: and, at first, the habits of recently exercised authority accorded but indifferently with those of prompt obedience. But the lessons of self-knowledge which this course of discipline were calculated to teach, seldom failed to give an impulse to the mental powers of those who really possessed any powers to set in motion. If they were mere ninnies, indeed, then, of course, neither this nor any other system of trials could stimulate them into sense or energy. But on those who really possessed talents, or who were sincerely zealous, the usual effect was to impart higher motives to work out their apprenticeship with credit, and to deserve, if not to win permanently, that enviable station, of which these temporary commands had given them a tolerably just idea.

Independently, too, of this animating result, it is very well known that much instruction in the difficult art of command may be taught through the medium of obedience.

alone. For the mere knowledge of what is required to be done, will not always be accompanied by an acquaintance with the best way of accomplishing a given piece of service. We must understand the nature of the instruments by which the work is to be executed, otherwise our force is wasted, our tools blunted, and the whole task bungled. Unless, indeed, a commanding officer have learnt, from actual experience, what it is to feel as a subordinate, not once or twice, but on a great variety of occasions, he will hardly be able to turn the capacities of those under his command to their full account. Instead of cementing his crew into one compact mass, and so bringing their united forces to bear upon the objects required by the public service, he will waste and dissipate their strength by misdirected applications of their divided and often conflicting energies, while his own temper may too frequently be lost in punishments, which might have been spared, had he only learned, by personal experience, what were likely to be the feelings and wishes of his inferiors.

But an officer who, in his own person, has gone through a full course of rigid obedience, and especially if he have occasionally mixed habits of command with those of submission to higher authority, and thus instructed himself in the peculiar difficulties of each situation, will be able, under like circumstances, to produce very different results from those just described. He will find little or no difficulty in divining the feelings of those under his orders; and though, if the number of his crew be great, there must ever be a considerable diversity of sentiment amongst them, yet, in most cases, he will be enabled to strike a pretty fair average as to the general wish, and thus secure the hearty co-operation of the majority of those he desires to put in motion.

A naval life, as I have before remarked, offers a singular mixture of energetic action and of passive routine; and it requires a good deal of skill on the part of the captain to mingle these qualities together, in such a way that there shall appear nothing inconsistent, or abrupt in the transition from a

state of comparative repose to one of high excitement. And it is well to bear in mind, that the most instructive lessons on this score are generally those taught in the early stages of the service. Yet it should be recollected, also, that the unpopularity of an officer with the junior part of those under his command seldom proves much against him; for it is only from a station many years in advance that his conduct can be viewed by them, in order to a fair estimate being formed of his professional character. I have, accordingly, been a good deal amused, and sometimes rather edified, by reading in my early letters the most unmeasured censure of my commanding officers for acts which I can now discover to have been not only very judicious in themselves, but very kindly intended to me personally.

As time rolled on, various incidents arose to change the current of our thoughts, and, in some degree, also, to alter the character of the duties upon which the younger midshipmen of the flag-ship were employed, and the occupations and amusements by which

that very interesting period of our wandering life was diversified. In the spring of 1806, our patron, the commander-in-chief, died, and in one moment the fortunes of all his followers were quite broken up. The influence we had derived from his protection was so completely gone, that, I think, we even fell back beyond our proper station, by the reaction of neglect, if I may so call it. How others bore this loss, I can hardly say; but I remember the desolate feeling which pressed upon me by so unexpected a calamity, as I gradually became sensible of being left once more altogether adrift.

But although our excellent friend, the Admiral, was gone, it did not occur to us to say we would not be comforted; on the contrary, it now became our business, more than ever, to impart, if we could, fresh vigour into those independent exertions, of which, heretofore, we had only been talking. The first and most obvious thing to be done, was to direct our friends at home, without delay, to make acquaintance with the new Admiral, whoever he might be, so as

to induce him to let us fall into his wake. I need hardly mention, that, unless in cases of extraordinary good fortune, or extraordinary good interest, an officer's chance of promotion abroad is very small, unless he either gets actually into the flag-ship, or occupies a place on the Admiral's list of protégés while serving in some other vessel of the squadron. By far the most advantageous method, however, for those who are near the period of being eligible for promotion, is to get, if possible, directly under the shadow of the flag itself. Accordingly, I laid myself out with all industry for this object, and, thanks to my active friends at home, succeeded in obtaining a place on the list of the commander-in-chief appointed to the Halifax station.

Early in 1806, the new Admiral arrived at Halifax, and, within a month afterwards, his flag was shifted from the *Leander* to the *Leopard*, also of fifty guns, and, along with it, several of the officers, and most of our young party, were transferred to the newly-arrived ship.

It is impossible to describe the degree of regret, I might almost dignify it by the name of sorrow, with which some of us left the Leander, whose good old wooden walls had formed our house and home for upwards of four years. And even if I could describe what was felt upon this occasion, I fear it might meet with some ridicule.

This interval sounds like a short period; but when it is considered that while it was passing over our heads a change had taken place in most of our lives and fortunes far greater than had ever occurred before, or can probably ever occur again, the sentiment will not appear so trivial. I, at least, who came to sea when not much above thirteen, may be said to have lived many more years than four in this interval. I had not grown up to manhood, indeed, or even come near it; but I had often been called upon to perform manly duties, and, instead of being held with my 'head under water,' had been allowed to swim about on the surface of things, and to work out my own station, such as it was, in all freedom and happiness.

This transfer, however, from one ship to the other, was fraught with great advantages to me. It was certainly with a bitter pang that I took leave of the well-known cock-pit, and tiers, and wings of the dear old ship, every beam and carlin of which I recollect to this hour; and can recall, as if it had occurred this morning, the restless feeling with which I took my last meal—a bowl of cocoa and a dry biscuit—in the larboard birth, at the substantial deal table where I had sat for so many years. “Shall I ever be so happy in any ship again?” was my exclamation, little dreaming that things in this excellent world of ours, if we chance to have any good fortune, and are ready to ‘back up our luck’ by industry, may become better and better every day, instead of growing worse and worse on our hands, as too many moralists pretend.

On first joining the *Leander*, I was considered, of course, a mere youngster, or ‘boy of the first class,’ as the rating is called, and had grown up along with the older mids, so gradually, that the relative distance between

us was generally preserved in a most mortifying degree. This did not exist in essentials so much as in trifles, for in times of real service, for instance when prizes were sent away, the selection of officers to conduct them was not determined by stature or by age, or even by length of service, but by activity and knowledge. Yet this very distinction often brought about still more provoking humiliations; for the big hands were not at all pleased sometimes that such whelps, as we were called in their uncourteous vocabulary, should have charge of a lieutenant's watch, or be sent away in a detained vessel, when they who were so much older in the service were obliged to remain behind, and to perform double duty on the lee side of the quarter-deck. Such things were characterized in the cock-pit below as 'an infernal shame,' 'blasted hard,' and so forth. So that, when these arbitrary physical-force-gentlemen had us again, but too literally, on the hip, we were sometimes made to feel, in spite of our temporary dignity, that we were but youngers, after all.

How long this might have lasted I do not exactly know; though I suppose we should, by and by, have published our Declaration of Independence, and set up for ourselves. Fortunately, this was unnecessary; for, as soon as the change of ships took place, we came amongst a new set of messmates, and, from the first, took very good care to assert and to maintain our proper station. Indeed, there was no one disposed to gainsay this; for none of our messmates in the new ship had known us in our old character of squealers, squeakers, younkers, whelps, rubbish; or by whatever more disparaging epithets we had been distinguished in our powder-monkey days—now so happily gone by!

But after all is said and done, the hardships of any young midddy's early life, and of ours in particular, are so trifling, if taken in good part, that it is more in joke than any thing else, I have here alluded to the tyrannical capers cut over us by the older hands. In fact, I am really obliged to tax my memory rather closely before recollecting a single circumstance essentially oppressive,

while I can look back with the greatest delight to kindnesses of the most valuable nature; and to friendships which, after standing the wear and tear of a full quarter of a century, have only become more interesting and useful by the effects of time. I find, in one of my old letters, a passing notice of some of the advantages and drawbacks attendant upon serving in a flag-ship; and as it was written under the influence of the moment, I shall not attempt to improve the expression, but give it as it stands.

“ I shall be sorry to leave my old ship the *Leander*, for I have formed an attachment to her, which is natural, after having so long dwelled on board of her. But I shall not have to regret the loss of many companions—that is already over. I have changed my messmates at least four times. Many of them have been promoted—some have been discharged into other ships—a few, having become tired of the service, have gone off in disgust—and some have died. In short, from one cause or other, there has been such a constant change, that there

are very few of us now left who have witnessed the whole scene from the beginning to the end. All this, however annoying it may be at the time, has certainly its advantages; for it gives us an insight into what is going on in the service, and we necessarily gain more information on this point by seeing so many persons in succession, than we should do from studying the same people over and over again every day. In the course of time, too, the regret at parting wears off, as we become more familiar with leave-takings."

CHAPTER VI.

LAST VIEW OF BERMUDA.

THINGS very soon settled into their places in the new ship, and under the new regime. It is, indeed, the very essence of a naval life to carry itself on, with a degree of uniformity which looks like instinct, and, in fact, does almost become so by long and rigid training of all its parts, in one fixed course of action. A steady purpose is kept ever in view, and this quality of the Service enables us to surmount numberless obstructions calculated, one might imagine, rather to retard than to advance our objects.

We soon put to sea again, roved about the Atlantic, visited the West Indies, Bermuda, and the coast of America, capturing French and Spaniards, and detaining Ameri-

cans with little or no compunction—enjoying ourselves in port, growling at sea, and forming a thousand projects for future promotion and for present enjoyment. Although I was extremely fortunate in being permitted to make sundry expeditions on shore, I have in vain examined the old notes kept on these excursions for materials of present interest. Almost all the incidents therein related appear boyish and flat, while the information is of so common-place a nature, that the same things, much better told, may certainly be found in most books respecting those countries.

In a journal written during a short Bermudian trip, I found hardly any thing but a set of those high-flown expressions in admiration of the scenery which travellers are so liable to substitute—and not unnaturally—for true description.

It is difficult enough to say what true description is; and ten times more difficult, I suspect, to accomplish the task when its nature has been pointed out. It is a mighty easy affair for a critic to tell a traveller, that

he has nothing to do but relate what he sees, and to tell in plain language what he feels.' He might as well say to a jockey at the starting-post, that he had nothing to do, in order to win the race, but to bring in his horse first to the goal. There are a hundred details to be attended to in both cases with which the uninitiated have no acquaintance, and for which, accordingly, they make no allowance; and it is perhaps quite right that none should be made. If the race be lost, one cares little for the good excuses by which the failure may be justified—if the object be gained, the applause which follows is given without much reference to the particulars by which the success has been brought about. This holds true in most things, and in none more than in descriptions of scenery, which, after all, in order to be effective, must include in their very essence a degree of poetical colouring which few men have it in their power to apply. To describe well, is exactly like painting well:—if the artist possess true genius, like Claude of old, or Turner now, the picture

will not only be admirable, but may appear to have been done with perfect ease. Let any one else, however, take the brush, and see what will be the result!

The most pleasing and most exact description which I know of Bermuda is to be found in Moore's 'Odes and Epistles,' a work published many years ago. The reason why his account exceeds in beauty as well as in precision that of other men, probably is, that the scenes described lie so much beyond the scope of ordinary observation in colder climates, and the feelings which they excite in the beholder are so much higher than those produced by the scenery we have been accustomed to look at, that unless the imagination be deeply drawn upon, and the diction sustained at a correspondent pitch, the words alone strike the ear, while the listener's fancy remains where it was. In Moore's account there is not only no exaggeration, but, on the contrary, a wonderful degree of temperance in the midst of a feast which, to his rich fancy, must have been peculiarly tempting. He

has contrived, by a magic peculiarly his own, yet, without departing from the truth, to sketch what was before him, with a fervour, which those who have never been on the spot might well be excused for setting down as the sport of the poet's invention. But he knows, at least as well as any one of the tens of thousands of his admiring readers, that, with all his genius and vigour, as well as delicacy of thought, and with all his powers of expression, his numbers, polish them as he may, must still fall short of nature, even in her quietest mood. And thence, while he learns modesty, he is likewise taught the art by which alone he can hope to enter the field with any chance of success. It is not by describing, however graphically, as it is called, one or two, or even one hundred striking points in the landscape, that the bewitching effect of Moore's description is produced, but by selecting, as it were by chance, those features which the instinct of his genius and exquisite taste tells him are characteristic; and afterwards, by combining these, at his own choice, in such a way as

to give them, in the fullest sense of the word, the character of generalization, without depriving them of any part of their individuality. His descriptions, accordingly, are the true 'beau idéal' of the art, which, though very different from mere copies of nature, are something greatly better.

An ordinary traveller would tell us the number and size of the islands grouped together in one view, with the size and aspect of the fishing-boats, the shape of the houses, the names of the trees, and the various colours of the coral seen through the clear and shallow water, in the narrow passages which divide these singular clusters; but at the end of the account we should be left nearly where we were, and really be little more acquainted with the scenery of the spot than if we had been examining a map, illustrated merely by a set of sailing directions for entering the port.

St. George's Town, such a writer would say, the seat of government, nestles itself in a delightful little valley, on the south-eastern side of a small island, the most

eastern of the group known by the name of Bermudas or the Summer Islands, the 'still vext Bermoothes' of Shakspeare. The shores of this valley form the northern side of a diminutive and shallow, but very secure harbour, of the same name with the island. No ship larger than a sloop of war can enter this snugget of ports in consequence of a coral bar or ledge which lies across the entrance. The appearance of the town, viewed from the Barrack-hill opposite, is beautiful. The houses, which are mostly very small, and of the purest white, are scattered about irregularly, amongst trees of such obviously foreign growth, that the consciousness of being in a strange land strikes the senses at once. The long, broad, thickly-matted leaves of the plantain, banana, and calabash, together with various members of the palm tribe, which afford a perfect shade to the little cedar-built verandas, encircling most of these dwellings, are so characteristic of the climate, and suited to the rest of the scene, that in viewing them we readily yield up our imagination, and consent to believe

that we are transported to another world — somewhat in the same way that we relinquish all control over the reason at an opera, and, giving the reins to our fancy, follow wherever the witchery of the music, and the acting, and the scenery, may happen to transport us. Amongst these tropical-looking trees, we discover the orange, the cedar, and the lime; and when we come to examine more closely the ground upon which they stand, we find the commonest weed is the geranium, and most of the shrubs are myrtle. Or if we choose to go afloat with a fair wind, and in fine weather, which can almost always be reckoned upon, we may sail through openings, hardly wide enough for our boat, between islets covered over so thickly with the exuberant verdure of this fairy region, from the very top to the water's edge, that we can hardly see the ground, and often find difficulty in landing.

Owing to the sea at Bermuda being quite clear, the bottom can be seen at the depth of many fathoms; and this, when not spread with a coating of the whitest sand, is overlaid with

a gorgeous natural mosaic, of various coloured corallines, long brilliant weeds, and innumerable specimens of the sponge tribe, of a purple, red, or green colour, and often of a bright saffron, approaching to yellow. The intermediate spaces lying between the rocks are generally spangled over with shells, some of them not inferior in point of beauty to the corals. The variety in the scenery, both terrestrial and submarine, is, accordingly, so great, that hardly any two points of view are quite alike; while every hundred yards brings out new combinations of lights and shades, colours and forms.

After passing the ferry at the western end of George's Island, we land on the great island known by the name of the Continent, which, though only twelve miles in length, and two in breadth, is looked upon by the natives as a prodigious expanse of territory—and so it is, compared to any of the three hundred and sixty-five islands they talk of. It is certain that some hundreds of rocks may actually be counted above water in this singular cluster, which stands alone in

the middle of the Atlantic, not unlike one of those beautiful nebulæ in the heavens, to ordinary sight only specks or little clouds, but which, when viewed through a telescope, are discovered to be collections of separate stars.

In the middle of this continent we find a large basin or arm of the sea called the Great Sound, which may be passed in two ways. One road leads along the rocky beach, on which the sea breaks with prodigious violence when the wind is from the north. The other path is carried inland, and brings the traveller eventually in sight of many beautiful inlets, Hamilton Harbour, Port Royal Bay, and others, surrounded by hills, all clad with the richest verdure, and studded over with villages and insulated cottages. The surface of the water, in some of these coves, is so perfectly smooth and still, or what is called land-locked, from being nearly shut out from the open sea all round, that it reflects the banks, skies, and trees, in a manner rarely witnessed elsewhere. These natural mirrors are broken only at those places where the

pretty little boats of the island, with sharp pointed sails flapping in the calm, are rowed backwards by the merry-hearted negro slaves.

So much for the story of a mere traveller, writing in plain prose. But I cannot deny myself the pleasure of pilfering a little from those stores of the poet above alluded to, and which, though amply enjoyed by the public at the time, have been so much outshone by the lustre of what the same pencil has since produced, that, by very many eyes fully capable of appreciating their merit, they may, perhaps, never yet have been perused. To such persons the following lines will have the advantage of novelty, and I can answer for their fidelity. These poems happen to have been written at the very time (1804) when I was myself on the spot, and when, with what little store of imagination any mind can be supposed to possess, I was feeling exactly as the poet did.

The epistle from which these extracts are taken is addressed to the Dowager Marchioness of Donegall, and, after some happy allusions

to her ladyship's taste and skill as an artist,
it goes on thus : —

“ Have you not oft, in nightly vision, strayed
To the pure isles of ever-blooming shade,
Which bards of old, with kindly magic placed
For happy spirits in th' Atlantic waste ?
There, as eternal gales, with fragrance warm,
Breathed from Elysium through each shadowy form,
In eloquence of eye, and dreams of song,
They charmed their lapse of nightless hours along !
Nor yet in song, that mortal ear may suit,
For every spirit was itself a lute,
Where virtue wakened, with Elysian breeze,
Pure tones of thought and mental harmonies !
Believe me, lady, when the zephyrs bland,
Floated our bark to this enchanted land,
These leafy isles, upon the ocean thrown,
Like studs of emerald o'er a silver zone ;
Not all the charm, that ethnic fancy gave
To blessed arbours o'er the western wave,
Could wake a dream, more soothing or sublime,
Of bowers ethereal and the spirits' clime !

The morn was lovely, every wave was still,
When the first perfume of a cedar hill
Sweetly awaked us, and, with smiling charms,
The fairy harbour wooed us to its arms.
Gently we stole, before the languid wind,
Through plantain shades, that, like an awning, twined

And kissed on either side the wanton sails,
Breathing our welcome to these vernal vales ;
While, far reflected o'er the wave serene,
Each wooded island shed so soft a green,
That the enamoured keel, with whispering play,
Through liquid herbage seemed to steal its way !
Never did weary bark more sweetly glide,
Or rest its anchor in a lovelier tide !
Along the margin many a brilliant dome,
White as the palace of a Lapland gnome,
Brightened the wave ; in every myrtle grove
Secluded bashful, like a shrine of love,
Some elfin mansion sparkled through the shade ;
And, while the foliage interposing played,
Wreathing the structure into various grace,
Fancy would love, in many a form, to trace
The flowery capital, the shaft, the porch,
And dream of temples, till her kindling torch
Lighted me back to all the glorious days
Of Attic genius ; and I seemed to gaze
On marble, from the rich Pentelic mount,
Gracing the umbrage of some naiad's fount."

The prose of great poets would seem to partake, almost insensibly, of the refined diction of their verse, without the constraint of its limitations. So that we can often discover not only in the rhythm, but also in the thoughts which even their simplest

language conveys, distinct traces of the original poetry, from which, indeed, it only makes a slight departure, analogous to that practised by musicians in their variations to well-known airs. Thus, even in the unpretending shape of foot notes to the above poem, we have something almost as good as the numbers themselves.

In speaking of his arrival at Bermuda, Mr. Moore has these words, in which it is quite amusing to see how the witchery of the art runs away with the artist, and the gods make him poetical, in spite of his evident desire to be purely and soberly descriptive.

“ Nothing,” says he, “ can be more romantic than the little harbour of St. George’s. The number of beautiful islets, the singular clearness of the water, and the animated play of the graceful little boats, gliding for ever between the islands, and seeming to sail from one cedar grove to another, form altogether the sweetest miniature of nature that can be imagined.”

“ The water,” he adds at another place,

“ is so beautifully clear around these islands, that the rocks are seen to a very great depth ; and, as we entered the harbour, they appeared to us so near the surface, that it seemed impossible we should not strike on them. There is no necessity, of course, for heaving the lead ; and the negro pilot, looking down at the rocks from the bow of the ship, takes her through this difficult navigation, with a skill and confidence which seem to astonish some of the oldest sailors.”

And, finally, he remarks, that “ among the many charms which Bermuda has for a poetic eye, we cannot for an instant forget that it is the scene of Shakspeare’s Tempest ; and that here he conjured up the ‘ Delicate Ariel,’ who alone is worth the whole heaven of ancient mythology.”*

* Moore’s Epistles, Odes, and other Poems. 4to. London, 1806. Page 42. Epistle III.

CHAPTER VII.

RETURN TO ENGLAND.

WE sailed from Bermuda in His Majesty's ship *Leopard*, on the 27th of February, 1808, and anchored in Cawsand Bay, at Plymouth, on the 23d of March. On our way home we touched at Fayal, one of the Azores, merely to get fruit and vegetables; after which, without anchoring, we threaded our way to the eastward along the southern shore of Terceira, so called from its standing the third in that singular group of volcanic mountains, known by the name of the Western Islands.

As I afterwards visited these islands, under more advantageous circumstances, I shall say nothing of them at present, except that the Peak of Pico, the most remarkable of all the Azores, was in greater beauty than I

ever had the fortune to see it at any future time. Its summit, which rises to the height of about nine thousand feet, was covered with snow; and nothing could be more striking than its appearance as we first saw it projected upon a sky so dark, that by the contrast it seemed almost black. Teneriffe, it may be mentioned, is never, at any time, so effective,—as a grand-looking object at least,—when viewed from a distance, as Pico almost always appears, whether near or remote. The Peak of Teneriffe, properly so called, rises to the height of more than twelve thousand feet, which is, at least, three thousand feet higher than Pico. But there is this remarkable difference between the two:—the sugar-loaf of Teneriffe starts from the level of a plain or ridge seven or eight thousand feet high, extending from end to end of a large island; on the other hand, this beautiful cone of Pico takes its rise directly from the sea, not abruptly, however, but gradually; and it thus presents, when viewed from a distance, an object decidedly more splendid than its rival peak in the Canaries.

It is not mere height, we must recollect, which constitutes the magnificence of a mountain, any more than mere magnitude determines the grandeur of an architectural structure. The temple of Neptune at Pæstum is a grander building by far than the immense Duomo of Milan; and, in the same way, Gibraltar is more striking than most parts of the clumsy Andes, although the Cordilleras are generally ten times higher than the celebrated rock just mentioned—the one being seventeen hundred, and the other seventeen thousand feet above the sea. It is true, that innumerable associations interfere to disturb and bias, or more properly to regulate, the judgment in these cases. The whole current of our previously formed ideas dispose us to prefer the celebrated Teneriffe;—yet the superiority of Pico in apparent altitude, in symmetry, and even in sublimity of character as a volcanic mountain, are so indisputable, that I have often wondered how so little was known of this great ornament of the Azores, lying almost at the threshold of the British channel.

I am very proud of being an honorary member of the Yacht Club, and, as such, should rejoice greatly if I had influence enough with any of my brother amateur sailors to persuade them to make longer trips than they usually indulge in; for example, to those beautiful islands, the Azores, which in the summer months would be a most agreeable excursion. In place of running races from Cowes, round the buoy of the Royal George, and back again; why, out of the many noble vessels which belong to the members of this spirited and business-like Club, should not two or three, or twice as many, start from Spithead, like ships in earnest, and shew who can soonest sail round Pico, and return to tell what they have seen of foreign parts? In such a trial, no small degree of skill and perseverance might come into play, and some discipline, also, as well as a touch or two of science: whereas, at present, in most of our Yacht Club smooth-water races, the prominent feature is the quick sailing of the vessels. In such a trip as I have ventured to propose,

the race would not always be exclusively to the swift, as it is just now ; for in proportion as these professional exploits were rendered difficult and complicated, so, I am convinced, the energies of our Club—as in the analogous case of the Navy—would rise to meet and overcome them. If not, then—as Dogberry says —“They are not the men I take them for.”

We had a spanking fair wind from the Azores to Plymouth, and I shall not soon forget the sensations with which I once more got sight of the cliffs of England. I had been absent on this my first trip, a little more than five years and eight months—and busier years and months could hardly have been ! It is not easy to describe what I felt on putting my foot on British ground, after so long an interval. Not one opportunity of writing had, I believe, ever been omitted on either side, so that an active enough intercourse had been kept up. The best correspondence, however, goes but a short way ; and the wild sort of curiosity which I felt to see my friends, and, perhaps, to shew myself off to them, was very great.

Some of our party of mids were rather inclined to the mock heroics on the occasion of our arrival in Old England ; and I remember one clumsy chap suggesting, that when we first landed we should all prostrate ourselves like Persians, and kiss our mother earth — a proposal which was received with acclamation. A midshipman, however, is rarely sentimental, except after supper ; and this resolution being made over night, it cooled before we landed next morning. Indeed, as the ground was wet and dirty (as it always is at Plymouth), and we were dressed out in ' our very best togs,' the ceremony would have afforded some sport to the watermen, and to sundry groups of sea-port belles who lined the wharf, at that most elegant of spots called Mutton Cove.

We had quite enough to do besides enacting such fooleries. Letters were to be written, announcing the important event of our return ; and, as it was very difficult, and we thought quite needless, to distinguish between the importance which such incidents bore in our own eyes, and the indifference

with which they were viewed by the rest of the world, we wrote as if nothing had ever before occurred in the world so interesting as the arrival of our ship. Projects innumerable were made for meetings; and if some expressions, indicative of an anxiety about future promotion, did slip in, these selfish considerations were overwhelmed for the time in the delightful prospect of a speedy visit to our friends and home.

But, besides these natural thoughts and feelings, there were others which claimed our notice, and helped to make the first few days after our reaching England a glorious sort of intoxication. The very look of a London newspaper, only a day or two old, was a phenomenon scarcely intelligible. The appearance of the country, the shops, the people, the carriages, were all so different from what our eyes had been accustomed to elsewhere, that it seemed as if, instead of having left the Azores only a week before, and Bermuda not a month, we must have been absent from them for years. Scarcely one person in fifty whom we met knew a

word about such places, or cared for them if they did; and as for us, no mortal took the slightest notice of the Leopard's arrival, any more than if we had been a fishing-boat, in place of a 50-gun ship, with an Admiral's flag at the fore. Up to this moment, whenever we anchored at Halifax, or Bermuda, or any where else, all the world was agog; and, of course, we pelting petty officers were parties in the distribution of the thunder—that is to say, we took good care to come in for a share of the notice which streamed down from the Admiral to the humblest of his followers. No matter where we touched at abroad, we always reckoned upon receiving a certain amount of attention; and, if nothing more substantial arose, we had at least the honour and glory of being gazed at by the black fellows as we swaggered along, with dirks by our sides, and cockades in our hats, as jolly young reefers as ever fancied themselves great officers. But at Plymouth, and still more at Portsmouth, to which we proceeded after a day or two, all our airs

and graces were sadly neglected. And as for those hospitalities and other attentions which we had almost come to consider when we were abroad as a matter of right, and due to our present worth and high future prospects, they were clipped down in England to the troublesome impertunity of a waterman canvassing for a fare, or to the compliments of a knowing shopkeeper on our taste in the articles he wished us to buy.

I learned, in after years, that precisely as no man is a prophet in his own country, so a naval officer is seldom in very great request at an English sea-port. Generally speaking, I suspect he will find that the further he strays from Point Beach, the more attention he is likely to meet with. Malicious folks might say, that at home he is perhaps too well known; or, according to the uncourteous expression, 'better known than trusted;' and that to be well received, he must contrive to outstrip his own history. But the explanation is readily made, without having recourse to so uncivil a theory. Since, for one naval officer

that figures like a comet at a foreign port—Halifax, for instance—five hundred must necessarily make their appearance at Portsmouth; so that although the natives in Hampshire are not, I am sure, a whit less friendly to our cloth than those of Nova Scotia, still their means, and their time, would require to be fifty times greater before they could attempt to shew a tithe of the hospitality we received not only in America, but in every other part of the world.

On first arriving in England, the Admiral's followers were in great hopes that he would be re-appointed to some other station, when we should have moved in a body along with him, to take our chance of promotion as vacancies occurred. But in this expectation we were cruelly disappointed; for the flag was struck, and we were all thrown as much adrift as we had been when Sir Andrew Mitchell, our first patron, died. A complete and final dispersion now took place amongst our old set, and all those ties which had sprung up amongst us, from a common

set of duties, and of interests, during so many years, were broken up for ever. Some of the midshipmen, quite hopeless of advancement, and fairly sickened by long expectation, found their patience worn to a very small thread, which they now cut across altogether, and left the service. Others sought out fresh protectors; and some, trusting solely to their own fortunes, and their own right arms, aimed at getting on board ships employed in active services, in which their zeal might bring them into notice, and their ability afterwards earn for them that promotion, which they could no longer hope to gain by favour alone.

In short, there was a general scatter; and, as nothing very obvious arose for me to do, I resolved to wait quietly, and, in the meantime, managed to get my name transferred to another ship's books, the captain of which, in consideration of my having been nearly six years from home, allowed me a fortnight's leave of absence, and off I set for Scotland.

To give any thing like an account of the details of this visit is manifestly impossible.

without sailing rather nearer the wind in domestic matters than would be quite suitable to a book of travels. But this I may say, that there certainly never was a happier midddy than I was, since the establishment of that important order. The loss of both my patrons, and the consequent destruction of all my schemes for promotion, sat very lightly on my young shoulders, which I then trusted were broad enough to bear a great deal more ill luck. So I kept my spirits up with the hope that, sooner or later, I might, in some way or other, be able to carve out my own professional fortunes.

I suspect it is one of the characteristics of a naval officer's character, that he should not only be restless himself, but almost always the cause of restlessness in others; I at least took pretty good care to keep up this distinguishing attribute of our class. In the first stages of the naval life, a schoolboy transformed into a midshipman, with a rating on the ship's books, a uniform on his back, and without the slightest promise of a beard on his apple chin, nevertheless conceives

himself to be a person of first-rate consequence, and worries his friends to get him placed with a particular Admiral, or on board a particular ship. By and by he finds all his economy unequal to making both ends of his odious accounts meet; or, if abroad, perhaps he falls ill, and writes home that the climate does not agree with him; or he takes the pet, quarrels with his captain, abuses the service, and is trundled home for his pains, rather more perverse than he set out. If he have headpiece enough to avoid such serious scrapes as these, he probably neglects to write home, and thus wears and tears his anxious mother's heart out, by fears which have no foundation. In short, no mid, I fancy, by hook or by crook, ever served his six years without establishing his claim to being a very considerable plague to all connected with him.

As that weary period of probation draws to a close, our young gentleman generally begins to quake a bit; for he now feels, that unless he makes some sort of a show, behaves with all propriety, and proves him-

self worthy of promotion, he has no good right to expect that his friends are to bestir themselves in his behalf. He soon discovers, much to his discomfiture, that there are probably many hundreds of older and abler men than himself entitled to go before him,—some of whom have passed their examinations for years, and almost all of them having infinitely stronger claims to advancement from their services than any of which he can boast. Unless, therefore, he himself, or his friends, can manage to bring some other lever into operation, more powerful than the mere fact of his having served the allotted period of six years, it is demonstrable that he may remain a midshipman, as many unfortunate fellows are compelled to do, all the rest of his life.

This state of things—whether it be right, or whether it be wrong—is so well understood now-a-days by all the parties concerned, that no mortal, if he knows what he is about, ever dreams of standing on the insulated ground of mere eligibility, or the still more dangerous footing of ‘claims.’ The

inevitable risk, which a young person incurs by resting his application on such pretensions of right, is, that his mouth can be stopped at any moment by a numerous list of other men, whose claims are far higher than his own, and who, even he himself cannot deny, are entitled to prior notice—if merit or services are to regulate such matters. Accordingly, no one, or I ought perhaps to say, hardly any one, will act wisely to dwell much on what he is entitled to, or fancies he is entitled to, when soliciting advancement. He may let his pretensions peep out, if he will; but if he puts them forward too broadly, he actually removes one of his best chances of success—for what person who has the undisputed power either to grant or to refuse an application, will not be disinclined to yield to representations which remove from himself all merit in the gift? It does very well to talk—amongst one's friends (and over a bottle)—of rights, and justice, and independence, and claims, and the vile neglect of 'impatient merit,' and so forth—but when we actually enter the

great field of patronage, we must conform to the customs in established use there, or, in other words, be content to give in exchange for what we solicit, that return which the possessors of the good things require. If our object be the attainment of a certain point, we must go in search of it in the manner which experience has shewn is most likely to succeed. In adopting this rule, however, there is only one especial consideration which should be kept constantly in mind. We must never allow the motive, be it what it may, to seduce us into terms unworthy of the station we occupy in society, or of that which we aspire to fill in our particular profession.

This maxim rests upon the common-place, but high ground of moral obligation: at present, however, I refer to it chiefly in a purely selfish, or what is called a worldly point of view. For public men become so skilful in the business of official detail, that they see at once through all kinds of false pretences, very speedily detect unworthy motives, and despise any servile flexure. At the same time,

nothing can be more natural than that an official person, or, indeed, any other man, should prefer granting a request to one who will receive it as a boon, than to an applicant, who, without possessing more merit, shews that he considers the favour as his right, and who, consequently, will not consent to pay back any gratitude for the gift. Of two candidates, therefore, whose real claims are supposed to be equal, there can be no doubt which is most likely to succeed—he who sticks up doggedly for his claims, or he who, trusting to the official man's discernment to do him justice, takes care to shew, likewise, that he relies upon his patron's favour to grant the request, and that, if successful, he will be grateful.

Few people, indeed, will deny that, in cases of equal claims, the applicant who takes the course most agreeable to a person in power will have the best chance of success; but even where the candidates' pretensions are unequal, the same line of conduct will generally prove the best. It is seldom difficult

for those who are in authority to give to things the particular aspect most suitable to their own views. The suitor, therefore, whatever be his opinions, or those of his friends, respecting his extraordinary merits, will do well to recollect, that, besides his own eyes, there are many others which are viewing his claims through a very different medium. He may rest assured, therefore, that, unless he can win some portion of the confidence and the good-will of the authorities to whom he is applying, there is little chance of full justice being done to his suit.

It seems a great mistake to suppose that this quiet and unpretending deportment, on the part of an officer, when trying to bring his services into notice, or to gain a wider field for the exercise of his talents, is inconsistent with the independence and true dignity of his professional character. In fact, it is the noisy, bullying, vituperative or growling styles, which carry with them the real degradation; and perhaps public men are never more completely justified in

their refusal of favours than when they are applied to in terms much more suitable to Wapping than to the Waiting-room.

At first sight, it certainly looks very hard to see old stagers grumbling away their existence in disappointed hopes ; yet there can be little doubt that the Navy, and, of course, the country at large, are essentially better served by the present system of employing active, young, and cheerful-minded officers, than they ever could be by any imaginable system of promotion by seniority.

It must not be forgotten, indeed, that, at a certain stage of the profession, this arrangement of promoting officers in turn is already made the rule, and has long been so : but, by a wise regulation, it does not come into operation before the rank of post-captain has been attained. Antecedent to this period, there must occur ample opportunities of weeding out those persons, who, if the rule of mere seniority were adopted, would exceedingly embarrass the Navy list.

It is perhaps no paradox to assert, that the more an officer depends upon pure favour

for his early advancement, if he be a right-minded person, the more strongly will he feel the necessity of shewing, by his future exertions, that such patronage has not been ill bestowed. Generally speaking, I think it is observable in the service, that officers who are the most certain of getting on, are also among the most earnest in their endeavours to justify, as far as depends upon themselves, those acts of distinction by which they have been, and are still to be put before older men, perhaps no less worthy of promotion. The opinion will hardly be contraverted, that persons who are the most gentlemanlike in their habits of thought, in sentiment, and in manners—supposing their talents and opportunities alike—generally speaking, make the best officers.

I believe it will be found that it is this, amongst many other reasons, which renders it of so much consequence to the well-being of the Navy, and to the maintenance of its high tone both of feeling and of action—the qualities upon which, in the end, nearly all its value to the country will be found

to rest—that we should encourage men of family to enter the Navy. It is not the mere possession of rank which gives efficacy to the services of such persons; since quite as good blood, for the ordinary purposes of daily business, might be found in profusion in the other walks of society. But what is indispensably required in the naval profession, above all others,—if its present lofty station is to be preserved,—is not alone great mental powers, or zeal, or industry, or experience, or even all these combined, to any conceivable amount, but the essential spirit, if I may so term it, of a gentleman. This quality in the character of an officer must, by some means or other, be made to predominate, and, as it were, to exalt all the others. Without this the Navy would be nothing, or worse than nothing—it would certainly become ruinous and disgraceful to the country.

In other professions having any claims to what is called liberality of object, the same spirit is undoubtedly more or less required; but in the Navy it may well be said to be all

in all. It would, perhaps, occupy too much space at present to shew why this is necessarily the case; but one of the reasons seems to be, that many of the most important duties of a naval officer are, and ever must be, performed without witnesses, and often beyond the reach of scrutiny. Consequently, any dereliction on his part is extremely difficult of detection. Besides which, the power necessarily placed in an officer's hands—in all the steps of his rise, but particularly in the higher walks—is of such a nature, that, unless it be regulated by the principles which form the distinguishing features in the character of a gentleman, it is apt to degenerate into tyranny and oppression. All this is now so generally felt and acknowledged, that it would be easy to point out innumerable occasions upon which, unless officers were controlled by this curious and almost magical influence, this innate sense of honour, which is equally true to every climate, and to every possible variety of incident that can arise, in the endless complications and embarrassments of a naval life,—this service,

now so elevated in its rank in the world; would inevitably decline. The country would discover the evils of this fatal deterioration in its moments of need, but, probably, not till it was too late for reparation. This leading principle of all success—this genuine point of honour, if once let slip, is not to be recalled at a word; and, at all events, it should be remembered by the advocates of change, how many long years it has cost to place the Navy where it now stands; and let them take care not to risk its destruction by too rude attempts to reform what works so well already.

It may be asked, as I have often heard it scornfully asked, when these views have been advanced, “Are no gentlemen to be found beyond the pale of the higher classes? and if there are, why push men of rank forward in the service, as we see done every day, with such manifest injustice to older officers, and equally good men?”

I think the practical answer to this natural remark most easy. There are, no doubt, to be found many gentlemen, as sound and

true, out of the aristocracy, as if their blood were derived from that of 'all the Howards;' but it becomes a question, bearing directly upon the purpose in hand, to determine in what proportion, and for how long a time, the true gentlemanlike spirit, above alluded to, actually existing in the country, in those ranks of society which are not of the aristocracy, would continue to exist, in its genuine and practically useful purity, if the aristocratical classes of the community were destroyed, or their means of influencing the rest of the nation essentially diminished? It seems more than probable, that, after no very long interval of time, consequent upon such a catastrophe as should break down these distinctions of rank, there would be found little or none of this ennobling or chivalrous element of our nature left behind throughout the land.

One of the duties of the aristocracy, and by no means their least important function, is to keep alive this sacred fire, this quality by which, after all, 'earthly power doth shew likest God's.' It is they, and they

alone, who can give a right tone to manners, by setting the fashion in every thing which is true in principle, or practically wise in morals and in politics, and by encouraging science, letters, and the fine arts, or otherwise contributing to soften the asperities of vulgar life. This is the true intent and purpose of a powerful aristocracy; and if its obligations be duly fulfilled, its members execute a task not only of the highest possible utility to the country, but one which, for many reasons, no other class has the means even of attempting to perform.

Let the scoffers at high rank and unequal wealth say what they please, there can be no doubt, that, since these are the obligations which time has fixed, no matter how or when, upon the aristocracy of this country, so, in the main, the persons who compose that order actually perform, and indeed must always continue to perform, their duty, as long as the merciless searchings of our inquisitorial press, goaded on by the vigilance and insatiable curiosity of public opinion, shall place all its members; all their pro-

perty, and all their proceedings, in the fullest possible review before the world.

Those who have formed a different conception of the structure of English society will not go along with me, perhaps, in what follows; but I am persuaded, that precisely what the aristocracy does, on the great scale, for the community at large, in maintaining, at a high level, the pure standard of national manners, the introduction of a proportionate number of persons of good family into the Navy does for that service in particular.

There are, undoubtedly, very many officers now in the service who are not sprung from the class alluded to, but who possess this gentlemanlike spirit as completely as any nobleman, or nobleman's son, that ever lived. But, it is probable, that even these officers themselves are every way sensible of the value of the aristocratical companionship we are speaking of; and, in practice, they certainly experience great advantage from the countenance it lends to those habits to which, otherwise, they might not be able single-

handed to give adequate currency. Besides, it is probably from this very source that they have derived the greater part of these feelings, which it is their pride to cherish and extend.

The truth of these positions does not appear to be essentially lessened by saying that there exist exceptions to the rule, and that members of the aristocratical branch of the community, whose conduct furnishes no good example, are to be found in the Navy as elsewhere. I speak, and with confidence, of what generally occurs; and certain I am, that as the service has derived very high advantages from this admixture, so, to stop the source from whence such rich blood flows, would be to risk the action of the very heart of our system.

“But,” I have heard it said, “why not put matters in this respect on a fair and equitable footing? If this sprinkling of the aristocracy do good, as you say it does, to the spirit of the Navy, why not let men of family enter the field on equal terms with

the rest, and so take their chance along with men of humbler birth?"

The simplest answer to this appears to be, that as there is no method by which such persons can be impressed into the service, we must of necessity enter into some tacit kind of compromise, and agree to take them upon the best terms for which we can enlist them as volunteers. What the men of family say upon the occasion seems to be perfectly reasonable, and strictly in accordance with every thing else in the constitution of English society. By the arrangements of our system—the growth of centuries of trial—all classes in the community, without exception, are not only left free to do what they like best, but they are actually encouraged by bounties, varied in a thousand shapes, to follow up as zealously as possible that course of action which, in the long run, turns out best for themselves; and this, as long as they are left free, will always be best for their country. Such persons say, or their parents say for them, when they are

balancing as to what profession they shall follow, that unless they are tolerably sure of speedy promotion in the Navy (supposing them to be duly qualified), they can do better for themselves by going into some other walk of life, where their fortune, or their family influence, will be sure to raise them sooner to that station in society which they are justified in expecting to reach.

It is quite true there is no such express stipulation as this made respecting the rapid, or, as it is called, unfair, promotion of young men of family; but it seems perfectly clear that unless they were certain, or next to certain, of getting on, shortly after becoming eligible to the different ranks, such persons would speedily cease to exist in the Navy at all. This abstraction of men of rank from the service, though it might perhaps be hailed as an advantage by a few short-sighted observers, would most inevitably and speedily prove injurious to many of those minute and often unseen, but invaluable, refinements by which the character of the profession is preserved in its purity, and by which it has hitherto

been enabled to exist, unshaken, through the severest trials of danger, difficulty, and temptation.

Those who object to this system are very much mistaken, however, if they suppose, that because the young men in question are promoted sooner than their companions, they are, at any stage of the profession, exempted, even in the slightest degree, from all its pains and penalties in the event of error, or that they are permitted to do their duty one whit more negligently than their less fortunate companions. There is no such thing as a privileged class in the Navy. All ranks and orders are alike in respect to the discipline. It certainly is true, and most important to remark, that, in practice, these gentlemen get into fewer scrapes than others. This, however, I have always considered to arise from the extreme pain which a well-bred man feels on receiving just censure, and also from that habitual delicacy of mind, which it is one of the chief points of good manners to teach. Some officers are content to work only so much as the rules of the ser-

vice strictly require ; but a man of honour holds it to be disgraceful not to do his duty at all times, to the very best of his powers.

An illustrious example of the beneficial effects of high rank, in maintaining the character of the service, will here suggest itself to every one. Nor can there be a doubt that the zeal and success with which His present Majesty devoted so great a portion of his life to the active duties of the Navy, will be referred to, for centuries to come, not only with pride and gratitude by the country, but with eminent advantage to every class of officers.

It may be said, that men of family enter the Navy, like others, at so young an age, that they cannot have acquired those manners and habits of thought which give to their class on shore the useful ascendancy it has acquired in such matters. That this is a mistake, I think all who have had an opportunity of observing the fact will cheerfully testify ; nor can there be, I suppose, even on land, a more striking difference between the manners of any two classes, than I have

witnessed between two different midshipmen's births, in one of which there existed this admixture of rank, and in the other there happened to be none of it. Besides which, it must be recollected, that the young men of family visit their friends from time to time : so that, even in the earliest stages of the profession, the utility of their presence is considerable ; but its influence gradually increases as they advance in station, and at every step they impart more and more of that tone to manners, which, while they acquire it themselves, as it were instinctively, or, as some express it, by right of blood, they communicate, by insensible degrees, to their companions, and without the slightest presumption.

The sailors, who are very quick-sighted to the merits and faults of their officers, and form critics of great correctness, understand the distinction perfectly between a well-bred or high-caste officer, and one who, not having been born in a class where good manners are an essential characteristic, has not contrived to adopt them from others.

Above all things, a ship's company like to be commanded by gentlemen; and there is nothing they hate or despise in an officer so much as that coarseness of thought and behaviour which belong to their own class.

My object in this discussion will, however, be greatly mistaken, if it be supposed that I ascribe to this cause alone all the high and chivalrous spirit which belongs to the Navy, and which has contributed to give it a peculiar character, both afloat and ashore, for so great a period of time. The introduction of the members of the aristocracy, their sons, or their connexions—these 'sprigs of nobility,' as we used, good-humouredly, to call them, in the midshipman's birth—does unquestionably lend a very useful hand to purify our general style of thought and action; but, after all, this is only one of a great many maintaining powers, which are brought into constant play by the nature of the profession. To these other causes I may have occasion to refer more distinctly at a future time; meanwhile, I must advert, in passing, to the agreeable and useful circum-

stance of naval officers on foreign stations being admitted, at once, and quite as a matter of course, to the best society of all the places at which they happen to touch. There is no exception to this rule abroad ; and as the same principles regulate good manners all over the world, with slight modifications in practice, which men employed in real business readily catch up, naval officers have ample means of improving such opportunities, not as express matters of study, but insensibly, and in the common course of their daily occupations.

I must now return, however, to a topic which, shortly after coming to England, engrossed all my thoughts. I mean the most important of all promotions, that from midshipman to lieutenant.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE FIRST STEP ON THE LADDER OF
PROMOTION.

HAVING no particular pretensions on aristocratical, or, indeed, any other grounds, I saw no hope of advancement, except by getting on the list of some Admiral on a foreign station. I therefore put in motion every engine I could think of to accomplish this purpose, but with so little expectation of immediate promotion, that I should most cheerfully have bargained for securing that grand object, in two or three years after passing for lieutenant. I was, however, fortunate enough to secure it much sooner.

Let a young fellow be ever so well informed, or so well prepared, or ever so confident in himself beforehand, I defy him to come before a set of examiners who are to

pronounce on his qualifications, without a certain allowance of doubt and apprehension. This state of mind, in the fashionable language of the cock-pit, is defined by the term 'making buttons.' I presume the phrase comes from that sort of convulsive twitching and twirling of the culprit's fingers, applied to the buttons of his waistcoat and trousers, by which you may at any time recognise a sort of Neptune involved in a scrape. Be the etymology what it may, I can answer for there being a glorious manufactory of these articles at Somerset House, on the 1st of June, 1808, the awful passing day. There could not be fewer, I think, than twenty or thirty midshipmen assembled there, for the purpose of undergoing their trials, or examinations, before the commissioners; and I certainly never beheld anxiety more strongly expressed than upon this occasion. The floor of the great lobby or hall, was studded over with variously-occupied groups of wretched probationers and their anxious friends. Some being huddled up in a corner, with Hamilton Moore's Com-

plete Navigator on their knees, drilling and re-drilling into their dull memories; and still duller intellects, the simplest rules of navigation; while others, aiming at higher things, strove to master the complicated cases of that most useless of all problems, the Double Altitudes; or sought to reach the sublime doctrines of Lunar Observation. I heard more than one poor fellow bitterly denouncing his own confounded negligence, as he called it, by which he had been prevented from learning any thing till within a month of these fearful trials; and not a few were reproaching the government, with a great shew of reason, it must be confessed, for not providing every ship in the Navy with a schoolmaster.

“How on earth,” I heard one of these exclaim, “could I possibly have learned all these crabbed rules by mere instinct, as a blind puppy is taught to swim? I am not a dog—(though I have been treated pretty much like one)—and now, I dare say, I shall be turned back, because I am not a star-gazer or a moon-scraper—a lunarian,

forsooth! I wish the commissioners would let me off with this cursed navigation, and try to puzzle me with their seamanship. I think I could meet the old bucks there!"

I know not whether it may be necessary to explain, that the word seamanship refers exclusively to the rigging, steering, sailing, anchoring, and so on, of vessels; while navigation is a term applied, technically, to that branch of the profession which relates to the determination of the ship's place, and deciding what is the proper course to be steered in order to reach a given port.

These have long been, and still are, the only two grand divisions into which an officer's duties are divided, in treatises upon nautical subjects. But there is a third branch, at least of equal importance to the well-being of every ship that swims, and of the Royal Navy in particular, which is hardly ever alluded to, and never, as far as I know, made to form any part of these examinations: I mean the science of discipline: and it has often occurred to me that one third part of the time spent in examining a young man's

qualifications, before he is declared eligible to hold a commission in the service, would be well bestowed in ascertaining whether or not he had any acquaintance with that important department of his duty, which relates to the management of the people under him, and of his obligations to those by whom he is commanded. At the time I speak of—and I suspect it is no better now—all this was left pretty much to chance, so that officers had to pick up what knowledge they could of discipline as they best might.

There seems no good reason for this great omission in naval education; and there can be little doubt, I think, that the state of ignorance of most young officers on this topic, is a fertile cause of misunderstandings between them and their superiors, and also leads to many punishments on the part of the seamen which might be prevented if their superiors were duly instructed in the difficult and complicated art alluded to. It is very true, that there are many intricacies and refinements in discipline, which can be taught by experience only; but surely this is no reason why those

parts which can be so imparted should be neglected so completely as they are at present. Hardly a day of his life passes during which an officer has not to investigate complaints, and yet how very few young men can be at all aware of the most elementary principles of the law of evidence? How indistinctly is the necessity of patience and self-command impressed upon their minds? And how often are they led insensibly to make themselves parties instead of judges?

The miserable mids I spoke of, though called in, one by one, to be examined in seamanship and navigation, were summoned up stairs two at a time; one poor caitiff being left outside, while the other was ushered by the door-keeper into the awful presence of the examiners. Human ingenuity could not invent a more perfect imitation of purgatory than the predicament of the expectant, button-making reefer outside. The one who is called in has his part to play, well or ill, according to his capacity and attainments, and being fairly brought up to the scratch, as it is called, he knows the extent of his

antagonist's arm, and is naturally roused to make the best fight he can. But the poor devil without, uncertain which of a hundred and fifty questions are to be asked him, keeps scourging up his memory to retain the whole set of answers. His imagination, too, being under no sort of guidance, he torments himself by embodying, in his fanciful conception of the examining commissioners, every stern and unrelenting quality which his experience of Tartars—as nautical martinets are called—has furnished him with opportunities of smarting under.

Although we assembled at ten in the morning, it was past three before it came to my turn to be summoned. I had felt confident enough on first entering the scene, but my presumption gradually evaporated, till I became infected, in the course of the day, with the general fidget. My poor father, who was with me all the time, became more and more anxious as he beheld the long visages of several rejected candidates, and heard them, on being successively turned down stairs, ejaculating ana-

themas against the service, the passing officers, the country, and every thing but their own pig-headed stupidity—the sole cause of their discomfiture!

I had brought a letter with me, written by a friendly old Admiral, addressed to one of the passing captains, and given me the day before, with directions to send it up on going to Somerset House in the morning. The letter was sealed; so that I knew not whether it was merely introductory, or if it contained any request in my favour. As I thought, however, that I could get through my examination without any extra favour or assistance from any one, I resolved to break the Admiral's orders, and keep the letter till all was over. But in the course of the day, as the plot thickened, I half repented of my magnanimity, and began to consider it as a duty I owed to the Admiral not to trifle with his directions. Still, after reflection, I resolved to go through with it, and my turn came at last, with the epistle still in my pocket.

A heavy-looking youth, whom I had seen

poring over his book all the morning, and asking questions of every acquaintance in the lobby, to their great annoyance, was called up along with me. His name stood before mine on the list, and consequently he was ushered into the presence of the commissioners first, while I was left alone in the passage or space between the wall and the circular railing at the top of the western stair—a spot I never pass, even to this hour, without feeling my flesh creep.

Most of the other midshipmen had been kept in about a quarter of an hour, or so; but my unhappy ‘pendant’ did not make his appearance till nearly twice that interval had elapsed; and when at last he did shew his countenance, it was so inordinately elongated, that I hardly recognised him.

“Well, my boy!” I eagerly asked, “how did you get on? Are they as sharp as they tell us? What did they ask you?”

“You’ll soon find that out—I have not passed,” was all the reply I could get from him. He had no sooner spoken, than the words “Mr. Hall!” were bawled out by the

messenger. I was so completely startled by the sound that I could not move, while the staircase appeared to spin round—in fact, I could distinguish nothing, and forgot where I was.

“Mr. Basil Hall!!” again vociferated the man, in tones which fell on my ear like a thunder-bolt, though it was but the ordinary voice of the door-keeper. I almost think I could now select the fellow out of a thousand, at the distance of two and twenty years, by his awful voice alone!

On I marched, in a sort of bewilderment, into a small room, lighted by a single window, with three very good-natured-looking persons seated at a table covered with black leather. I forget exactly if they asked me to sit down. I think they did. At all events, the tone in which they spoke, and their manner altogether, were so different from what I had conjured up during my residence in the midshipman's purgatory at the top of the stairs, that I felt quite re-assured before the first question was put.

“Now, Mr. Hall,” said one of the officers,

“ we have sent out that young gentleman you met at the door just now, merely to refresh his memory; and we shall begin by asking you the very same question which has puzzled him for the last quarter of an hour.”

“ He had split his main-topsail, unbent what was not blown away of the old one, and had succeeded, with some little trouble, in getting the new sail nearly into the top; but, for the life of him, he could not get it over the top-rail. What had he omitted, do you suppose?”

“ It is likely,” I answered, “ that if he made use of the topsail haulyards, he neglected to take up the tie.”

I saw them nod to one another; and it gave me ample confidence for what was likely to follow, when I found they had hesitated for one moment about turning back such a noodle as my predecessor must of course have been, who could have bungled a petty job like this. In fact, the examination, instead of turning out, as I had anticipated, an over-strict one, proved so ridi-

culously easy, that I was rather provoked at its simplicity, and almost felt unfairly dealt with, for being denied an opportunity of displaying my prodigious stock of well-crammed knowledge.

I have much pleasure in stating, that the examinations, now-a-days, are infinitely more rigid than they were; and I have every reason to believe, that this change, so far from being unpopular with the better class of midshipmen, is universally approved of by young men of spirit, and has contributed essentially to introduce a much better system of preparation.

As soon as it was announced to me that I had passed, I produced my letter, upon which the gentleman to whom it was addressed exclaimed—

“Hillo! young fellow, why did you not send this up to me, as you were desired, in the morning? I have a great mind to turn you back for shewing that you don't know how to obey orders! There—read it yourself.”

The letter ran thus:—

“My dear ——. As the bearer of this, Mr. Hall, who is to be examined to-morrow, will be accompanied by his father, who wishes, on account of business, to get away early, I shall be glad if you can take him soon, in order that he may be enabled to go at once. Yours, &c.”

I said I had fancied it might contain some request to ease me off gently.

“And so,” cried he, “you fancy we old cocks job into one another hands in that way, do you? However, never mind, we have passed you; and, for all your suspicions, we shall not reverse our decree. So, as you go along, send your friend in again, to see what chance there is for his maintop-sail, which has been banging about between heaven and earth all this time.”

I scampered down stairs like a shot, and, rejoining my party, never dreamed of my companion with his double allowance of purgatory.

A long time afterwards, however—several years at least—I met one of my passing captains, and asked him what they had

done with the youth in question. "That," said he, "is a very sore subject, and has cost me some remorse. The truth is, we ought to have turned him back; but we agreed to pass him, in consideration of his knowledge of navigation, and because he was really not deficient in ability. Some months after the time we are speaking of," continued the officer, "I saw his name in the newspapers, amongst the list of promotions, and, shortly afterwards, his appointment as lieutenant to a sloop of war. I confess I did not feel quite easy, and still less so, when, in the course of the season, I read an account of this vessel's shipwreck, in which all hands perished; nor have I ever been able to free myself from the idea, that possibly the loss might have taken place during this very young man's watch, and consequently that his incapacity may have sacrificed one of His Majesty's ships and her whole crew. I have no reason for knowing that it was so, only let me recommend you, if ever you attain to my rank, and are called upon to examine young gentlemen, not to execute

the trust as lightly as—to my shame be it said—I did on that day.”

This mighty affair over, I had next to set about tormenting my friends to get me promoted. I had no acquaintance with any of the men in power; and although my father was in Parliament, he had kept so much aloof from both parties, that he could reckon upon the assistance of neither. It certainly was not his intention to remain for ever in this intermediate state, but having only recently entered the House, he thought it right to take time to study the bearings of the different parties before he made his election between them.

It will naturally be supposed, that I urged him to decide this matter in the most orthodox way; but I had made no great progress in sapping his neutrality, when accident, I may almost call it, decided the matter as far as I was concerned, and sent me spanking off to sea again, with an elastic bound of spirits, which kept me in motion for the next dozen of years.

Most people will recollect, that in the

session of 1807-8, a violent attack was made in parliament upon the Marquess Wellesley's administration as Governor-general of India. The inquiry, as every body now knows, had only the effect of raising that nobleman's renown as a statesman. But at the period I speak of, his friends in the House of Commons were a good deal pressed, and the support of any independent member was, of course, extremely valuable, but still more so if that support arose exclusively out of a thorough knowledge of the subject.

I forget exactly from what cause my father had been originally led to direct his attention to Indian affairs, but I know that he studied, with great care, the charge against Lord Wellesley which related to his lordship's management of the Carnatic territory. He was induced, if I am not mistaken, to take up this particular branch of the subject, from seeing it so confidently handled by another member, who, by his personal opportunities, must be thought to have learned all its details. At least, I re-

member his coming home one evening from the House, and expressing to me his great admiration of the way in which the whole of these eastern questions were treated.

“I was much interested to-night,” he remarked, “with the resolute manner in which this topic was taken up by Sir Arthur Wellesley, brother to the late Governor-general. He stood forward on the floor of the House, demanded investigation, and defied all the attacks against his relative, with such an unusual degree of confidence, as went far to satisfy me that every thing must be right in that quarter. Indeed,” he added, “I have seldom seen any thing more vigorous or manly, in all respects, than Sir Arthur’s challenge, and I should feel it a sort of duty, were it on this ground alone, to go to the bottom of the affair, whatever time or labour it may cost me.”

To work he set, accordingly, with renewed vigour, to master the complicated point at issue; and by devoting himself exclusively to the subject, he made himself minutely acquainted with every paper and every tittle

of evidence that had been produced on the question—a task which, probably, very few other members, totally unconnected with the parties, could have found either leisure or perseverance for.

Upon various occasions, during the debates which ensued, my father shewed, in the House, that he not only comprehended the matter thoroughly, but that he fully approved of the Marquess Wellesley's conduct. This was the more agreeable to that nobleman's family, as it came from a person entirely independent of either party, and evidently speaking from the conviction grafted on his mind by a minute acquaintance with the details. It will easily be understood, also, that this rare degree of familiarity with so difficult and distant a topic brought him into acquaintance with the different friends of the nobleman whose conduct was under investigation. Several of these gentlemen requested to be introduced to him, in order to thank their new ally for his unexpected support.

My grand anxiety, on hearing all this,

naturally was, to ascertain if the Secretary of the Admiralty, Mr. Wellesley Pole, (now Lord Maryborough) was of this number of grateful persons; and upon learning that he was, I begged my father to lose no time in introducing me to him. This ceremony was accordingly gone through, upon which occasion the secretary was most affable. He took down my name, asked where I had served, and wished to know if I were ready to go afloat again. I satisfied him on these points, by putting, as it is called, my best foot foremost. Nothing further passed between us at that time.

Within a few days of this interview, however, a most portentous-looking official packet was delivered at the lodgings in which we resided. It was addressed to my father, who, unfortunately, had just set off upon business to the city. I saw by the superscription that the despatch was from the Admiralty; and as I, of course, conjectured it must relate to myself, I felt vehemently tempted to break the seal. Had it been from any other office than the stern head-

quarters of our stern profession—the fountain-head of strict discipline, I might possibly have trespassed. As it was, I dared not venture to open it, but set off in the freshest-looking coach I could discover on the stand; and offering the coachman double fare, cantered away to the city with my precious budget. The glorious vision of a real parchment commission, and the brilliant celebrity of seeing my name in print in the next month's Navy List, haunted my imagination as a degree of happiness almost too great to be borne. I thrust my head out of the hackney-coach window every three minutes, to urge the wondering driver to still faster speed. In rumbling along Fleet Street, we found the passage, as usual, blocked up. I could have soused the whole pile of carriages and drays into the bottomless pit for their barbarous interruption!

At length we reached the house of a gentleman with whom I knew my father had made an appointment; and I believe that, antecedent to the days when cabs were created, no regular Jarvie ever made the

journey in so short a time. I leaped out of the vehicle, thundered at the door, and tugged at the bell, to the prodigious indignation of the wondering footman—who, however, had his full revenge for my violence, in the forlorn drooping of my visage, as he said, in answer to my eager inquiries,

“Sir James has left this a full quarter of an hour ago, or it may be twenty minutes, sir. You’ll hardly catch him, sir,” said the rascal, as he glanced his eye at the steaming horses, lathered with foam from tail to nostril.

“Take me back again,” I exclaimed, in despair, to the driver; and, at the word, away we jingled once more to the westward.

My father, in the interval, had called at the lodgings, but had been obliged to go out a second time. As he felt uncertain when he might return, he left word for me to place the Admiralty packet on his table. I remained at home for several hours half dead with impatience to know whether I was really and truly a commissioned officer in His Majesty’s service, or whether I re-

mained still Mr. Nobody—a mere zero in the profession, employed to make up a sum total, but not even the fraction of a unit. At last, finding I could stand it no longer, I set out to try what reading the papers in Hatchett's coffee-house would do. The whole set were demolished, advertisements inclusive, without my understanding one word of them. I then ordered dinner, and sat in grim repose, till at last the door opened, and in walked my father, with the Admiralty letter open in one hand, and a note in the other. There was no gathering from the expression of his countenance what was the news; but when he put into my hands the following line, I gave such a spring and such a shout, that the waiters fell back in amaze upon the bar, doubtless thinking the young gentleman, who had previously seemed so uneasy in his mind, was now fairly cracked. The precious billet ran thus:—

“ Mr. Wellesley Pole presents his compliments to Sir James Hall, and is happy to have it in his power to enclose his son's commission as lieutenant of the Invincible.”

The White Horse Cellar, in all its vicissitudes of company, never entertained two happier persons. As for me, I may safely say that this must ever remain one of the brightest hours of my existence, come what may. I felt that as I had now got my foot fairly planted on the first step of the ladder, it remained with myself to get to the top. With all the confidence, therefore, and some tolerable share of the presumption of youth, health, and spirits, I never dreamed of distrusting the result.

But I can recollect with satisfaction, that even at that moment of high exultation I was fully aware of the pressing sort of obligation which this early advancement imposed upon me to work hard. I felt bound, not only in gratitude to the gentleman who, unsolicited, had raised me into such a new world of bright promise, but, in a tenfold degree, became rivetted to the service of which I was now an accredited member. Although Lord Maryborough will, no doubt, have forgotten long ago all about this affair, I trust he will believe that the young mid

whom he so kindly promoted, has never for one instant ceased to feel, or failed to acknowledge, to whose well-timed protection he owes this first and most important turn in the wheel of his fortunes.

It is right to bear in mind, that however much services and merit, whether these consist of actual deeds, or only of talents and knowledge, may furnish claims upon public patronage at more advanced stages of the profession, these recommendations can scarcely ever be used, even in the imagination of the most Utopian patriot, as guides in regulating the general run of promotions from midshipman to lieutenant. At that early age, the course of events will very rarely have furnished opportunities enough for the developement of abilities, or of any of those other attributes in a naval officer, by which alone men in whose hands the distribution of patronage is vested could be able to regulate promotion according to what is called strict justice. In practice, accordingly, for one midshipman that is made a lieutenant for real services, there may be, for

ought I know, five hundred advanced from sheer favour.

In some cases the Admiralty are the patrons, in others the admirals in command of foreign stations, and, in some, a dash of parliamentary influence—like that to which I stand mainly indebted—is the moving cause. But to whichever of these the promotion be due, it seems obvious that, precisely in proportion to the absence of what are called claims for past services, the load of obligation for the future is increased upon the shoulders of those who are thus distinguished before their companions. I think, also, I am correct in stating, that in the great majority of cases the binding nature of this obligation is duly felt by the parties themselves; chiefly, perhaps, in consequence of the gentlemanlike spirit which, from causes to be investigated presently, pervades all ranks in the Navy. Upon the whole, therefore, I have little doubt that the amount of exertion heartily employed in the public service, is greater under the present system than it could be rendered under any other distri-

bution of patronage bearing on the earlier stages of the profession. It will be quite time enough when we come to the more advanced ranks, to discuss the modifications which are made, and of others which some people think ought to be made, in the rules which regulate promotions to those higher offices of the Navy.

I need scarcely add, that I allowed none of these philosophical or political refinements to disturb my enjoyment in the possession of my first commission. It is true, I felt the urgent necessity of sparing no pains to justify what had already been done for me, by making out, by the event, that the Secretary of the Admiralty, with the characteristic penetration of his family, had only given me credit in advance for services which he reckoned upon being paid to the public, but which, without this well-timed lift, might have lain for ever beyond my reach. To have things put on such terms was, of course, exactly what I wished. I desired nothing but opportunities; and before I slept that night had framed many a wise reso-

lution, and erected many a goodly castle in the air, as to the fittest method of securing the next step, never doubting that as soon as I was eligible to be made a commander, that is to say, in a couple of years more, some other equally friendly, equally powerful, and equally discerning patron would be found to calculate, in like manner, upon the probable good to the country by my promotion! The result turned out widely different, however, as will be seen in the sequel; for it cost me six very hard, fagging years of tough work over many a land and sea,

“ In every clime the sun's bright circle warms,”

before I attained the stage I then thought—perhaps naturally enough—a great deal more accessible than it proved.

CHAPTER IX.

HOW TO EFFECT AN EXCHANGE.

AFTER the first burst of rejoicing was over, at this extraordinary good fortune, I began to disquiet myself, and not in vain, about my appointment, and to wish that, instead of being named to a line-of-battle ship, I had been ordered to join some more active vessel—a frigate, for instance. It may be said, that nothing could well be more unreasonable than this discontent, and that I ought quietly and thankfully to have taken the great good which had fallen to my lot, instead of worrying my friends and myself with fresh anxieties. But the very nature of our business seems almost to require that officers should never rest satisfied with any thing. It would, of course, be nonsense to

deny that they should be ready to obey every order with cheerfulness and alacrity; but still it is quite consistent with this submission, that they should be eternally and earnestly bent on getting into higher and better situations for the exercise of such qualifications as they fancy themselves to possess.

After a good deal of ruminating and plotting, I resolved to attack, in person, that particular lord of the Admiralty whose department it was to regulate the appointment of lieutenants. The actual promotion of officers, I may mention, is one thing—their distribution in the different ships another. In whose hands the first and grandest power of all resides—I mean that of promotion—I shall not say, for many reasons—one of which is, that I really do not know; and even were I admitted to a knowledge of such an official secret, I hardly think I could venture to divulge it. ‘Shore-going people,’ as we used in the cock-pit to style all the rest of the world, have no means of forming any just conception of the mysterious sort of dread with which a naval officer enters the solemn

portico of the Admiralty. Whether or not there be any far advanced stage of the profession—when Fortune has showered her stars and garters upon an officer in high professional command, or in high political station—at which this immeasurable awe wears off, I cannot tell; but, as far as I have yet observed, I have seldom seen one, even of the most favoured sons of Neptune, who, on entering the Admiralty, did not look grave as he passed that most attentive of porters, Mr. Nutland, or who, on coming out again, did not look still graver.

I know not what I might do now, but in those early days it would, in sea language, have required a good strong purchase, to have induced me to apply, actually in the Admiralty, to one of the powerful demi-gods who rule there, within three days of my first promotion, and to beg I might be removed from a line-of-battle ship to a frigate. This change was what my whole heart was set upon, yet nothing could be more unreasonable than to expect such a thing; unless, therefore, it were managed in some round-

about way, it was obvious I should get nothing but a rap over the knuckles for my pains. I, accordingly, flatter myself that I set about this affair—which then appeared to me the most important thing in the world—with some discretion. At all events, my efforts were crowned with success.

I had little or no personal acquaintance with the officer whom it was my object to move upon this occasion, or, to speak correctly, he had no knowledge of me. I knew him well enough as one of the best officers in the Navy, and had heard him described as an extremely good-natured and hospitable man. I had likewise often observed that people are generally in the best humour, and most disposed to do kind things, about breakfast time, after their bodies and minds have had rest, and before the cares of the day have ruffled their thoughts. So I hired a hack one morning, not long after my promotion to lieutenant, and rode out to Camberwell, to breakfast with this lord of the Admiralty. I carried with me a letter of introduction from a person who was intimately

acquainted with him, which set forth that the bearer, before joining his ship, was anxious to have the advantage of an acquaintance at head-quarters, who might be useful to him in the event of any difficulty arising, and so on.

I took care to arrive some ten minutes before the breakfast hour, that by sending my credentials before me, I might appear less like an intruder. Yet a sly kind of expression on the veteran's countenance implied a suspicion of some design being intended upon his patronage beyond the limits of his tea and toast, which, by this time, stood smoking away in great style on the table. Possibly, however, this was merely the suggestion of my own evil conscience, for he let slip nothing which gave me the smallest reason to suppose he dived into my thoughts. I felt more and more embarrassed as the meal went on, for it seemed as if I should have no opportunity of pressing my suit. When we rose, however, he said, "Well, young officer, will you ride into town with me?" which words threw me into such a fidget, that I

could verily have counted time by the sound of my pulse.

Of course, I accepted a proposal which promised some opening for popping the question with which my breast, indeed, was as full as ever was that of a sighing swain on the look out for an opportunity to win the favour of his mistress. Why all this anxiety should have existed, I know not, or, at all events, I should despair of explaining the reason to any one who has not served six years as a midshipman, and become acquainted with the measureless difference which lies between a mighty lord of the Admiralty and a poor lieutenant of only a few days' standing!

In spite of this huge interval between us, however, we jogged on very agreeably towards Charing Cross. But my companion gave me no opening to introduce the topic which was uppermost in my thoughts; and when he began a long story about some of his own adventures at sea, my heart sunk within me. I listened, however, to what he said with such a prodigious degree of attention, that although I heard all the

words, not a particle of the sense entered my head. My thoughts, in fact, were far away, and I could fix them upon nothing but frigates, and transfers from ship to ship, till I quite forgot where I was, or in whose company I was travelling. I suppose my companion detected, by my over-acted attention, what was passing in my mind, for he suddenly changed his subject, and, turning to me, said—

“ Now, Mr. Lieutenant, I suppose some day you will get tired of your ship, and be wanting to effect an exchange?”

The certainty that the experienced officer had read the whole of my story, while I was pretending to listen to his, flashed upon me at once, and I felt that I was blushing down to my boots, at having been so caught. I was at first so confused that I said nothing, and he continued.

“ Should such a case arise, apply to me, and I’ll see what can be done. But, I suppose,” added he, “ this can hardly be the case yet, as you are not a very old officer, and have not joined your first ship?”

By this time I had rallied, and being resolved not to lose so good a chance, I boarded my friend in a trice.

“ I am ready, sir, and willing, to serve in any ship or vessel the Admiralty are pleased to put me into, and there is nothing I desire so much as to go afloat, and to be employed as actively as possible. But I should be glad, sir, to be in a frigate instead of a 74, if I could, as more likely to be in the way of service; and I should take it as very kind, sir, if you would transfer me now to some ship of that class.”

“ It is out of the question! quite out of the question!” he cried; “ and really,” he added, “ I must do the rising generation of officers the justice to say, that modesty is not a quality that encumbers them; and you Scotchmen, I observe, in particular, are not likely to lose any good thing for want of asking for it.”

“ It is but little,” I ventured to retort, “ that I know of Scotland, sir; I have been at sea, now, six years and more, in

which time I have been at home only twelve days!"

"Ho! ho! my young fellow," he exclaimed; "so you are getting up a grievance, are you, to work on my compassion? This is a claim, is it?"

"No, sir; only I thought it as well to mention the circumstance, in the hope, that if you should not be able to appoint me to a frigate, you might, perhaps, grant me the lesser favour of a fortnight or three weeks' run to see my friends. But I would much rather join a frigate, sir, as I consider the sea as my home, and desire no other."

This shot was aimed to hit the old officer between wind and water, and it took effect, I could see, just at the proper angle. Whether he thought it got up to please him, or that he considered the sentiment deserving of encouragement, I know not; but he replied, with more earnestness than he had yet shewn,

"Stick to that principle, my young friend; and always recollect, that no officer has any

business on shore, until he has reached the rank of post-captain, nor even then, if by any means he can employ himself usefully afloat. In the meanwhile, I shall take you at your word, and appoint you to the first vacancy in a frigate of which I have the nomination; but, mind, don't let me see any letters from you asking for leave of absence. Think of your ship, and your duty alone, and let home take care of itself. But, here is the Admiralty gate, so I must bid you good by; and if you attend properly to what I have just said, you will be sure to get on."

I certainly never did forget these few, but judicious words; and many a time, and oft, in subsequent years, when sorely pressed by temptations to depart a little from their letter or spirit, the friendly caution has come in aid of resolutions of self-denial all but overmastered. This generous little morsel of encouragement, too, at the end of the speech, has often comforted me amidst very bitter disappointments, and helped to reanimate hopes well nigh extinguished. As

the remark, however, was made very possibly, as a mere piece of civility, the officer himself, now an old Admiral, would be surprised, I dare say, were he to learn how materially what he then said has influenced all my professional life from that hour to this.

Such maxims are of little, or no avail, unless they happen to fall in with the sentiments of the party to whom they are addressed at the moment; but, on the other hand, it will often happen, that where there happens already to be a disposition to act well, without any precise rule to give that impulse a right direction, our resolutions evaporate in words. I shall be very happy, therefore, if the foregoing anecdote, and what follows, shall meet the eye of any young person similarly circumstanced with myself, and who may be disposed, in like manner, to lay its instruction to heart, and wear it like an amulet, to charm away those ugly blue devils, which, let him be ever so fortunate, will certainly be found to torment him, at some turn or other, in the rough path of his uncertain profession.

It so happened, as I learned afterwards, that within an hour after the conversation above related, an officer, not much my senior, called at the Admiralty, to speak to my Camberwell patron, pretty nearly on the same subject. He happened, however, not to take exactly the same view of things as I had done, and the consequences of this distinction were of some importance to me. He had recently been appointed, it seemed, lieutenant of a frigate; and, like me, had been desirous of going home for a short while. But this wish not being encouraged, he had relinquished it until more pressing domestic matters having occurred to render his presence at home necessary, he went again to the Admiralty, and, as good luck would have it, on the very morning I had the interview, of which the details have been given above.

This young man thought, and perhaps with some reason, that as the frigate to which he had been appointed was in dock, and likely to remain there for several months, his presence could not be absolutely necessary. But his, or rather my patron, thought otherwise;

for when the lieutenant signified his desire to go home, he was answered, that he certainly might go, if he chose to give up his appointment in the mean time, with the chance of being named to another frigate at the end of a few months.

“ This, however,” said the official authority, “ must be entirely your own act and deed ; for I don’t like ships to be lying without officers, and shall put some one in your place instantly, while you must incur the risk, when your leave expires, of not getting on board so fine a ship as the frigate you now belong to.

These things being understood, the officer gave up his ship, and into the vacancy thus made, as might be supposed, my name was immediately dropped ; so that before night I had my commission for His Majesty’s ship *Endymion*, one of the finest, if not the very finest frigate then in His Majesty’s service. Thus all parties were satisfied. The appointing authority kept to his rule of not leaving ships without officers ; the lieutenant, whose place I fell into, had his run home ; and

I obtained the object I had so anxiously desired.

Some months afterwards, I received a visit from an old friend and messmate, then lieutenant of another frigate which anchored alongside of us. In the course of conversation, I learned that he had been the very person who made way so opportunely for me. As there is almost as much difference between ships afloat as there is between houses on shore, it will be easily understood that the chances were against my friend's gaining by the exchange he had made. He expressed his regret with much bitterness of spirit, vowing that in future he would take precious good care how he let go such a chance as he saw me profiting by.

Indeed I believe no man or boy ever enjoyed himself more entirely than I did upon the occasion of my appointment to the *Endymion*. After what had passed in front of the Admiralty gate, between one of its most potent lords and myself, I could not, of course, dream for an instant of asking leave to go home. In fact, all my thoughts and

wishes, asleep or awake, ran so entirely upon frigates, that I badgered the tailors' lives out till my new coat was made, after which I set off to take up my commission, at Chatham, went on board, reported myself to the senior lieutenant, and then, but not till then, felt myself, in good faith, an officer at last!

The *Endymion*, which I find described in one of my glowing epistles of that period, as being "divinely beautiful," was snug enough in dock; and I regretted much to hear that she was likely to remain there, to complete her repairs, for two or three months at least. She had been for several years actively employed in the Mediterranean; and, amongst other rubs, had got well peppered in passing the Dardanelles. Upon that memorable occasion, several of those huge granite shot, used by the Turks, struck her, killing and wounding many of her people. One of these stones had stuck fast in her side, and weighed upwards of seven hundred pounds.

The object of taking a ship into a dry dock, as it is called, is to have the means of examining and repairing those parts, which,

when she is afloat, lie under water. The copper, for example, which is generally stripped off, is replaced by newly-rolled sheets, and the keel, cutwater, stern-post, and rudder, minutely overhauled. Within the ship, too, all sorts of repairs are carried on. The decks may require ripping up or caulking, and most of the bulkheads need examination. In short, a stranger would almost fancy the dock-yard artificers were tearing the poor ship to pieces instead of refitting her.

Of course, when matters come to this extremity, and hundreds of workmen are hammering and sawing away in every corner, it is impossible the officers and crew can live in the midst of the noise and confusion; nor, if they could, would it be easy to keep them out of the way of the workmen. Abroad, indeed, they are obliged to live on board, or when the demands of the service are urgent. But as this is always troublesome to the workmen, and unspeakably disagreeable to all the parties concerned, the usual practice, when a ship requires extensive repairs, is to move the officers and ship's company into

what is called a hulk. This is a sort of floating house, lying in the harbour, alongside which the ship is lashed. Sometimes, however, she is taken, as the *Endymion* was, into dock; in which case her crew remain on board the hulk, and hold communication with their ship by means of boats.

These temporary abodes are generally old superannuated ships, moored, head and stern, by strong chains in the middle of the stream, and fitted up comfortably enough, for the temporary residence of the crews of men-of-war under repair. The word hulk naturally recalls the unpleasant idea of a convict ship; and, in fact, there is not, in appearance, any great difference between the two, only we have not iron bars placed across our ports and cabin windows; though we do look pretty nearly as black and prison-like as any floating jail amongst them. We passed our time, however, very comfortably for more than three months, in the old *Brakel*, a Dutch ship taken in 1796. But as our own frigate was all this time in the hands of the dock-yard, we, the officers, who alone remained,

had but few duties to attend to. The sailors and marines had all been discharged from the frigate before I joined her.

For all the purposes of His Majesty's service, therefore, I, for my part, might certainly have been fully as well employed at home in scraping an acquaintance with my nearest relations—of whom I had seen little or nothing for so many years—as in cooperating with my shipmates in getting up amusements at Chatham. The particular terms upon which I had received my appointment, however, made it quite impossible for me to ask leave of absence; and long before such a chance occurred again, death and sickness, alas, had done their work in thinning the circle I was not allowed to join, at the only period I could have visited Scotland without loss of professional time.

But I was vastly too happy with my newly-acquired rank in the world to let this or any thing else discompose me, and I set to work upon half a dozen different pursuits at once, from thinking that such an opportunity of leisure might not soon return. Ac-

cordingly, the second lieutenant and myself, being desirous of improving ourselves in modern languages, and not readily finding a French teacher at Chatham, engaged a gentleman to come from London to live with us, in order, as we said, to combine rigorous study with familiar intercourse. This answered pretty well; and what with an elementary course of mathematics, an active correspondence with a scientific friend on geology and linear perspective, an hour or two of every day in drawing, as many in riding, to say nothing of the numerous dinner parties, and pleasant evenings spent in flirting and dancing with the belles of the dock-yard, and parts adjacent, we managed to let off some portion of the high pressure of animal spirits, which all this unexpected good fortune had given birth to.

The first thing, I well remember, which broke across this whirl of idleness—for, in fact, it was little more, though dignified with the name of study—was the account, published on the 1st of September, 1808, of “Lieutenant-general Sir Arthur Wellesley’s

successes at Vimeira over the French army in Portugal, on the 17th and 21st of August." When we contrasted our own useless, languid situation, as far as public action was concerned, with the hard work to which the sister service was exposed, we became exceedingly impatient to be in the midst of the fray; and, as we naturally participated in the furious, but, as it now appears, the ill-founded outcry, raised immediately afterwards, all over the country, against the Convention of Cintra, we rejoiced to find that we should ere long be at sea. The ship was no sooner warped out of dock than we were supplied with several hundred seamen and marines, and the equipment went on like magic. The language-master disappeared, Euclid was put on the shelf, and the young ladies of Chatham and Rochester 'sighed, and looked, in vain,' for those faithless beaux, who, but a week before, they had some reason to imagine were far more devoted to their service than to that of His Majesty!

In the beginning of October, we learned for the first time that the coast of Spain was

our destination—a piece of news that fell in admirably with the tone of our spirits, vehemently roused, as they naturally were, at that strange juncture, by the sudden rise of the Spaniards against the French in the Peninsula. We soon got ready for sea; and on the 17th of October, 1808, started from our moorings in the Medway. Before the month was ended, we sailed from Spithead for Corunna, with upwards of two hundred transports, containing troops for Sir John Moore's army. In three weeks we reached our port with the greater number of our flock; and here a totally new scene opened upon us.

CHAPTER X.

FIRST GLIMPSE OF SPAIN.

OF all European countries, Spain is probably that which, to English eyes at least, has the most decidedly foreign aspect; and, consequently, is the one which least disappoints a traveller's expectation when he first visits it. Italy, no doubt, is more fertile in subjects of enduring interest, and will bear minute examination better; but I speak at this moment chiefly of the romantic as well as historical and, in some respects, classical associations which engage our feelings towards Spain. These are of so varied and singular a nature in themselves, and are so curiously mingled together in our thoughts, that the resulting impression, even on the dullest minds, is not a little dazzling, while upon those gifted

with any fancy at all, it is in the highest degree inspiring.

It matters little whether we cast our eyes far back into its history or take a nearer glance, or whether we dive into the middle periods. The contest of the Romans under Pompey, with Sertorius and the guerillas of those early days, marks how eminently well the Peninsula is adapted for that species of warfare, which, in later times, after many centuries of severe fighting, thrust out the Moors, and, more recently still, cut so deeply into the armies of Napoleon. The very name of the Moors is enough to call up before the fancy the shewy turbans and glittering cimeters, the strange military religion of the crescent, and all the hardihood of the followers of Mahomet. We have placed before us, likewise, Cordova and Granada with its palace of the Alhambra, clad with a thousand oriental images, which, if not indigenuous to the soil, were so long established there, that they will continue to give a peculiar character to the inhabitants of that country, probably for ages yet to come.

The days of knight-errantry which succeeded the crusades, must ever shed a mysterious kind of interest over those highly-exciting periods which preceded the revival of letters; and this interest is not lessened, but, on the contrary, rather enhanced by the enchanting work of Cervantes. For it may be remarked, that the author contrives to imbue every part of his narrative with such a generous and gentlemanlike tone of chivalrous feeling, that one is apt, in reading it, to regret that nearly all traces of such things are now gone. We are even led to suspect, sometimes, that Cervantes himself must have grieved in his heart at the destruction of the fantastic but graceful edifice which his too successful satire was knocking to pieces. At all events, it is quite clear (whether with or without reason is no great matter), that every one, after reading Don Quixote, conceives he has a distinct notion of Spain and its manners. And as most things in that slow-moving country are at this hour pretty nearly what they were in the days of Sancho, the modern traveller, with a little help from his

fancy, can easily transport himself back to those times, which have almost as distinct a place in his memory as any through which he himself can have passed. Such, indeed, is the graphic skill of this incomparable writer, that I would even go farther, and say, that I am not conscious of retaining in my memory more than a very few real scenes, and all of early date, which are more vividly traced on the mind than those over which the worthy knight of La Mancha and his squire performed their most delightful of all journeys in quest of adventures.

The history of Columbus, too, with all its slaughters and treasures, is pressed into the service of our imagination, along with his cold-hearted patrons, the Reyes Catolicos; the celebrated Ferdinands and Isabellas of the sixteenth century; and so strongly are we fascinated by the deeds of those romantic times, that the very words Castile and Arragon—Mexico and Peru—Cortez and Pizarro—in spite of all their horrors, compel us to admire the energy of days, supposed by some to be now quite gone by. I certainly am

not of this opinion; but, be that as it may, those ancient events have left behind them the most striking marks of their existence in every corner of the Peninsula—just as the Moorish occupation of the country for so many centuries, has left a portion of its swarthy hue to the inhabitants, and given a character at once of vigour and of ornament to their beautiful language.

The Inquisition, and the whole framework of Catholicism in Spain, though they would be intolerable for us to live under, have by no means failed to contribute their share of picturesque interest to that country, when viewed at a little distance. Our imagination, I have often found, is very curiously acted upon when we come into the actual presence of such things for the first time in our lives. Up to the moment of our visit, although we cannot reasonably deny their existence, we have yet a sort of latent doubt as to their being real; and are apt, accordingly, to come to the falsest conclusions.

All mankind, at least all European mankind, take a merry sort of interest in Spain,

from the scampish adventures of Gil Blas, which form a capital low-life pendant to the proceedings of the well-bred Don Quixote. With all its coarseness, and in spite of the hero being a thorough-bred Frenchman in thought, word, and deed, there are left so many touches of genuine Spanish, as well as of universal nature, in Gil Blas, that the picture of peninsular manners is incomplete without him, exotic though he be.

To whichever side, therefore, we turn our attention on viewing Spain, we discover more objects purely fanciful, or which are raised above the vulgarity of every-day life, than we can, perhaps, expect to meet with in almost any other country. By far the greater part, indeed, of what we know of its history and adventures belongs to the imagination, and thus comes to occupy a place in our thoughts side by side with those fairy lands, of which, while many of the incidents are wild and impossible, there is yet preserved enough of resemblance with our own world to claim—we scarcely know how—our strongest sympathy.

When to these permanent sources of interest we come to superadd the reflected heat of that enthusiasm which had set the Peninsula in a blaze about the middle of the year 1808, in consequence of Napoleon's designs against that country, it will easily be understood that we newly-fledged officers, looked about us with delight and astonishment at first landing; and that we caught with eagerness at every little symptom which ministered to the passions, and prejudices, and wild expectations, we had imported with us.

“ First from his trance the heroic Spaniard woke;
His chains he broke,
And casting off his neck the treacherous yoke,
He called on England—on his generous foe !
For well he knew, that wheresoe'er
Wise policy prevailed, or brave despair,
Thither would Britain's liberal succours flow,
Her arm be present there.”

SOUTHEY'S *Carmen Triumphale*.

Thus sings the most truly Spanish poet that was ever born out of that noble peninsula. For it is difficult, indeed, to conceive, and still more difficult to find, even in Spain, any

author who seems to possess a deeper or a more genuine poetical enthusiasm in every thing relating to that country, than marks almost every word which this powerful writer has said upon it.

Of course, like our betters, we gave the Spaniards credit, in advance, on the present occasion, for every patriotic virtue under the sun, including military courage and discipline, a generous self-devotion to the patriotic cause, and, above all, a total absence of jealousy towards those allies whose wealth and strength were streaming in upon them, to aid them in the unequal contest with their gigantic enemy.

It cost us some time before these goodly visions were swept away, and we became sensible, by sharp experience, that although the Spaniards are the most agreeable company possible, and their history the most romantic in the western world, they are the very worst persons on earth to co-operate with in services requiring, besides mere animal courage, the qualities of promptitude of action, and fidelity to concerted arrange-

ment. These attributes, which are the life and soul of all military operations, are doubly necessary when allied forces are to act together, and where, of course, those habits of obedience and exact order which form the essence of discipline cannot be so fully established as when the whole army belongs to one nation. But since the Spaniards will obey nobody but their own officers, and not always them, any military concert with such people is totally out of the question. These truths are now as well known to military and naval men as any proposition in the science of engineering; but many a brave fellow bit the dust ere they were properly recognised, or acted upon in practice. The great and gallant Sir John Moore, whom, by the way, I saw carried from the field, though amongst the first, and certainly the noblest, was not the last victim to the delusion, which borrowed from history a character and a name almost as unsuited to the modern Spaniard, as that of the 'world's masters' would be if applied to the Romans of the present day!

Of all this, however, we knew nothing, and cared nothing, when we first anchored in the *Endymion*, off the town of Corunna, on the 8th of November, 1808. As soon as circumstances allowed of it, and the more active duty of disembarking the troops was over, another officer and myself obtained leave to go on shore, and having no fixed object in view, we landed at some distance from the city. The first thing that struck us as curious was hearing two plough-boys on the top of the bank whistling, "for all the world," as my notes have it, "as they do in England." I suppose we had expected to find every thing different, and were therefore surprised to encounter any objects of resemblance. My companion being an older traveller, was familiar with such scenes; but I think it was the first time I had landed in any country where the language, and more or less the manners, were not English. In the West Indies, indeed, where, as I should have before stated, we barely touched, in my midshipman's days, the scenery is widely dissimilar; but even the rudest negro there

jabbers English; and along the continent of America there is no difference of moment in these respects.

I had taken a hammer on shore with me to break a specimen or two of the rock for a geological friend; and I dare say the youths were quite as much surprised to see an officer in a cocked hat and sword cracking stones, as the said officer had been to hear them whistling at their plough. As our heads were more full of the patriotic mania, then at its height, than of geology, we at once commenced experimenting on this point with our new acquaintances, and I said to one of them, in Spanish, previously got ready for the purpose, by help of the dictionary and grammar, "What sort of a person is Bonaparte?" "How do you like him?"

"Que tal?—What does he seem to me?"—bawled out the young Galician, punning, loud enough to be heard half way to the ship: "No es *Buenaparte*, sino *Malaparte*!" "He is a bad—bad-hearted fellow," he continued, "and if I only had him here; you should see how I would beat him to pieces." Then

stepping forward, he snatched the hammer from my hand, and thumped away so lustily at his own breast, that I almost thought he would knock a hole in it, in practical illustration of his enthusiasm.

We then tried him on the other tack, and called out "Viva Fernando Septimo!"

"Ah—Viva! viva!" screamed out both the youths, "and may George the Third also live for a thousand years!" It was chiefly out of such vapouring materials that people, whose imaginations were ready to take fire, were kindled into enthusiasm, as they supposed. And, accordingly, after we parted from the boys, we strode along the hills with all the animation of those classical heroes, the knights-errant of romance, come to deliver a magnanimous nation from the grasp of foreign tyranny—to hurl the despot from his throne—and to perform those prodigies of valour which mean nothing at all!

Upon the first notification we had of our probable destination, shortly before leaving England, I had written off to a friend who I knew had acquaintances in Spain, and begged

him to send me letters of introduction. By return of post came simply a parcel by the mail, but no letter. I knew the handwriting, and opened the packet with some curiosity. It contained nothing but a Spanish grammar and dictionary, without any note or message. The hint, however, was sufficiently broad; and in consequence two of my messmates besides myself, after a good laugh at the quaintness of the implied advice, commenced that very day to study the language which was to serve as our best introduction to the inhabitants of the new country we were about to visit. Both my fellow-students got on rapidly; and one of them, in particular, who possessed in a high degree the enviable faculty of acquiring languages, succeeded so well, that before we reached Corunna he had mastered the elementary stages of the grammar, and only waited for practice to give him a just pronunciation and a greater command of sentences. The other officer followed at some distance in his friend's wake; but it was nearly as many months

before I could accomplish, by hard labour, as much as these gentlemen had gained readily in a few weeks :—so great is the difference between men's capacities in this respect. I believe, however, that I materially retarded my own progress, by tormenting myself too much with the grammar, and by endeavouring to get a number of insulated words by heart. The system of Dufief, called now, if I mistake not, the Hamiltonian method, appears to be far the best for persons who, like us, were anxious to acquire, as soon as possible, the habit of conversing in a foreign language, without being particularly desirous to go deep into the subject, or in the first instance to master its refinements.

The principle of this method, as most people are perhaps aware, lies in committing to memory, as a primary step, a great number, not of insulated words, but sentences, of more or less length and complication, and having these so completely ready for use, that, when any idea suggests itself, the words will follow as readily as they do when the ex-

pression is required to be given in our native language. By this means, M. Dufief assures us, and I have had ample means of knowing the truth of his assertion, not only are many more words acquired than by any other method, but, insensibly, though correctly and firmly, a considerable part of the grammar is likewise taught. Then, and not till then, the rules themselves may be looked at with advantage; for at this stage only can their meaning be so well understood as to render them available in the practice of speaking. To commence with grammar, in learning a spoken language, is perhaps the most complete instance of putting the cart before the horse that is anywhere to be met with. How is it that children learn their own language? Not by grammatical rules certainly. And why should grown people disdain to follow nature in her method of teaching the art of speaking? Such is M. Dufief's very simple and obvious reasoning; and experience seems to shew its solidity.

Some twelve years after the period I am now writing about, I was sent to South

America in command of a ship ; and one of the first things I did was to get several copies of Dufief's book, adapted to the Spanish language. It bears the affected title of " *Naturaleza Descubierta, or Nature Displayed in her Mode of teaching Languages to Man.*" The first volume consists entirely of sentences, beginning with short and easy ones, and going on to others longer and more idiomatic : the second, of grammatical rules, with copious and clear examples ; and although I think the verbs are expanded to a needless and troublesome length, nothing can be more satisfactory than the explanations. That is to say, if they are studied only by persons who have already grappled manfully with the first volume, and thus put themselves in possession of a considerable mass of the language, including the grammar, though, all the while, they may be no more conscious of this fact than a child is aware that it is chattering grammatically in its own mother-tongue.

In South America, when amongst the Spanish colonists, I put Dufief's book into the

hands of the midshipmen under my charge, and recommended it also to several of the officers who applied themselves to the study of Spanish by this method. An immediate effect in every instance was obvious; and it was very pleasing to notice how much, after a little time, the grammar, which in general is the greatest of all conceivable bores, and a positive impediment to conversation, became a help to the students. I frequently observed my young friends dipping, as it is called, a good way ahead, and searching, with no small curiosity, amongst the rules, in the second volume, in order to ascertain whether or not the notions they had themselves formed on this subject, by the mere study of the sentences in the first volume, were correct or otherwise. In this way grammar may be rendered, as it ought to be, a powerful auxiliary; just as a knowledge of the principles of mechanical philosophy materially assists a seaman in the management of a ship's sails—or an acquaintance with astronomy directs the eye, and gives precision to the hand of the navigator who has

already learned the ordinary manipulations of his art.

In the course of service I have had occasion to find it useful, and in some cases absolutely necessary, to study French, Spanish, Hindustani, and Malays. On all these occasions I unfortunately went the wrong way to work, by commencing with the grammar, and not choosing to go faster with my tongue than I could follow with my head. The consequence was, that the unintelligible grammar entangled itself so inextricably with the words, that the sentences which, had they been learnt by ear alone, would have flowed readily, were in general found to jostle one another, and to fall so far behind the sense, that, instead of being a pleasure to converse in a foreign tongue, it became a positive pain.

It is so very great an advantage to nautical men, to possess a knowledge of the dialects spoken in other countries, that I venture again and again to recommend it as one of the primary studies to which a young sailor's attention should be directed. Of course I mean his chief extra study—for his strictly

professional duties must, at all times, and under all circumstances, be his first object.

I was once in a Spanish port, where it became my duty to open a correspondence with the local authorities, and it was of the greatest importance to get answers speedily. Speed, however, is not the quality for which the worthy Dons are most remarkable; and I was vexed to find that the only interpreter which the local government could procure was a renegado English seaman, an illiterate fellow who, from having made a certain number of voyages to Cadiz, besides being confined a year as prisoner of war at Ferrol, readily undertook the office of linguist. Even his English was not the most classical; but his Spanish was a horrible jumble indeed!

It is the established custom in the Navy for all our communications on official business to be written in English — not in the language of the country where we may have anchored. It is obvious that this is necessary; for no stranger could be expected to convey his meaning so accurately in a foreign language as not occasionally to commit

his own authorities at home, upon some point of language : and it is quite enough, as most governments, I suspect, know too well, to have the other sins of their officers to answer for, without adding to their mistifications the errors which would arise from communicating in a strange dialect.

On the occasion above alluded to, I had good reason to know that my despatches, however clearly they might be expressed in English, would stand no chance of conveying to the Spaniards any notion whatsoever of my meaning, if subjected to the process, miscalled translation, adopted by their precious interpreter, nicknamed by them "Juan Ingles," probably from his knowing so little Spanish. In this dilemma I adopted a practice recommended to me by an experienced hand in such matters, which, from its obvious nature, I suppose, must be often followed in like circumstances. By the help of my books, I concocted the best translation I could of my own letter, got the clerk to copy it, and placed it under the same cover with the original English despatch, but

without signature, or any other mark which could impart to it an official character. Possibly the Spanish was not, in strictness, much more purely Castilian than the translation which Don Juan, the interpreter, would have hammered out ; but I felt quite sure of its being truer to my own meaning than any thing which could have been produced by a person so completely uneducated, and so incapable of really understanding the sense of the English letter itself.

The result, at all events, was, that the Spanish authorities sent their answer in as reasonable a time as could be expected from persons of their habits, and probably quite as soon as they would have done had my despatch been written in the choicest Spanish. What was more to the purpose, I had generally the satisfaction of seeing that the meaning I had wished to convey was not misunderstood.

Before leaving this subject — of the utility of languages to officers, which, though nobody can possibly doubt it, few people appear sufficiently aware of — I may mention one

anecdote, out of many, which might be adduced in favour of such acquirements.

We contrived, when Sir Samuel Hood had his flag in the *Minden* 74, as commander-in-chief in India, to run our ship on the Colcroon shoal, which lies on the Coromandel coast, forty or fifty leagues south of Madras. There is not much tide in those seas, but what little there was appeared to be ebbing, so that the ship fixed herself firmly on the edge of the shoal; and as there was every appearance of our being under the necessity of lightening the ship of her guns and stores before she could be hove off, the Admiral was anxious to have the assistance of boats, and rafts, on which to place these things.

At that time, I was fifth lieutenant of the ship, and being despatched in the jolly-boat to get assistance of the description alluded to, and also to ascertain exactly whereabouts we were, felt not a little puzzled how to proceed. The night was dark, I had no knowledge of the coast, and the usual heavy surf which prevails along this whole

shore was rolling on the beach ; so that, although there was but little wind, I saw no chance of being able to effect a landing. To have returned to the Admiral, however, with a cock-and-a-bull story of difficulties not overcome, would have ruined me for ever in the opinion of that great and most energetic officer, who, as he never made a difficulty himself, had little patience for those persons under his command, who, in place of executing the service required, were ingenious in substituting good reasons for having failed. I therefore rowed on for several miles, in great doubt what to do. To have attempted crossing the surf on the shores of the Carnatic, in a man-of-war's jolly-boat, would have served no purpose but giving the sharks a supper. At length, to my great joy, we hit upon one of the natives fishing from a catamaran, the rudest of all sea-going contrivances. It consists of a couple of logs, each six or eight feet long, lashed side by side together ; and on this the man places himself on his knees, resting the weight of his body chiefly on

the heels ; for if his feet were left to dangle overboard, they would very soon be snapped off by John Shark. My acquaintance with Hindustani was not very extensive ; but as I had made a journey not long before, across the peninsula of India, from Madras to Bombay, what I knew proved quite enough to enable me to hold a conversation with this fisherman, and to learn from him that we were off a place called Porto Novo. He added, that if I could only get into the creek, the Company's master-attendant would readily furnish any number of boats and rafts for the purpose required by the Admiral.

On asking this poor fellow where the entrance was, he pointed to the surf, and said there was a passage at least ten feet wide, adding that nothing could be easier than getting safely through. Not the smallest opening, nor any thing like one, could I see, but only a huge, boiling surf, guarding the whole shore, like a great rampart of snow, or rather of coral—for in those regions such frigid images never strike the fancy. A small bribe induced the Hindoo fisherman to haul

up his stone anchor, to seize his double-bladed paddle, and to act as our pilot. I was a little posed at first by his technicalities, till I got into the bow of the boat, just astern of his catamaran, and made him point out the path we were to follow. Had I not possessed a certain scantling of his language, however, I should hardly have been justified in poking into such a place in so dark a night. The passage was sufficiently terrific, even with a pilot—and without one it would have been completely impracticable. By watching the surf as it broke, and using the other precautions necessary in such cases, we succeeded in getting into still water within the cove or creek of Porto Novo.

The master-attendant was just stepping into bed, when I beat up his quarters. With the decision which belongs to every branch of our admirable Indian administration, he drew on his jacket, caught up his straw hat, lying on the top of his palanquin in the corner of the verandah, and was half way across the compound, or enclosure, of his bungalow, in two minutes after I had de-

livered Sir Samuel Hood's message. In less than a quarter of an hour from that time, all the male inhabitants of the village, suddenly roused up from their sleeping mats, were assembled on the banks of the river, launching their boats and catamarans, so that the scene which an instant before had formed, by its perfect stillness, such a curious contrast to the tumultuous sound of the waves beyond, now almost rivalled the surf in uproar. The natives of India, it is right to mention, accompany every description of labour with a wild song, not very musical, perhaps, but always harmonious to ears which drink in with delight, as mine have ever done, all sorts of sounds connected with the fairy regions of the Eastern world.

I waited till I saw ten or a dozen great boats, and as many rafts, afloat, and then observed to the master-attendant, that I thought he and I had better recross the surf, and, by rowing on board quickly, let the Admiral know the assistance he sent for was coming to him.

"I beg your pardon, my good sir," replied

this experienced public officer, laughing; "I know the cut of your commander-in-chief's jib far too well for that! Consider how foolish I should look, were I to take a passage with you, as you are good enough to offer me, and all these fellows were to walk back again to bed, as soon as I had reached the back of the surf. No, no; go you off to the Minden, give my compliments to Sir Samuel, and tell him I shall not leave the harbour till the last of the boats is out, and that I shall keep in the rear of my catamaran fleet, pushing them on till they are all safe alongside the flag ship."

It was well I adopted this suggestion; for, on my regaining the Minden, before the native boats and rafts were in sight, the Admiral naturally supposed I had failed in my mission, and began one of those pithy and pertinent lectures for which naval discipline is so famous. He had only reached as far as — "Well, sir, and what the — has brought you back?" — when I ravished his ears by the news of a set of boats, capable of holding half the guns in his ship, being

almost in sight. In fact, the first detachment of the master-attendant's mosquito squadron, as the sailors called it, were then actually within hearing, though scarcely in sight, for the sun, still far below the horizon, was only just beginning to send forward some faint touches of a dawn. Ere long, however, the *Minden* was surrounded by the natives, and the master-attendant himself, leaping on board, explained to the Admiral the nature of the Colcroon shoal, and encouraged him to expect that in a very short time the ship would again be afloat.

The sequel of this story I must defer to another opportunity, as it has no immediate reference to the subject in hand—I mean, the utility of a knowledge of foreign languages to naval officers. But it is now high time we should return to our first walk along the granite cliffs of Corunna.

CHAPTER XI.

SPANISH THEATRICALS AND ENGLISH CRITICS.

As we strolled along the path leading to the heights of Santa Cruz, which overlook the town of Corunna, every peasant we met with saluted us, and wished us good day. This custom, which, I believe, is universal in Spanish countries, we set down to the feeling of the moment, and were gratified accordingly. On coming to a village, we observed a wine-house crowded with people, and thinking this a good opportunity for studying manners, in we entered. Every one took off his hat, and rose, while the landlord stepped forward with a cup of his best beverage. Of course, we drank to the health of Ferdinand the Seventh, which appeared to please them amazingly, for the men shook hands with us in turn as we took leave.

On a little grass plat in front of the house, several women were assembled. They had heard that some English officers were in the pulperia, as these public-houses are called, and had crowded round to see what was to be seen. As I could not then be aware that it was contrary to the customs of the country for gentlemen to shake hands with ladies, I naturally offered mine to a very pretty young person standing near the door—a tall, black-eyed girl, deeply bronzed by the ardent sun of the Peninsula—a circumstance which in no respect lessened the interest of the picture in our eyes, which were looking about for any thing and every thing characteristic. The Spanish damsel startled at this unwonted freedom, drew back amongst the group of women; upon which, of course, I could do no less than pay her some compliment upon her bashfulness. This, however, I could only effect by repeating two or three of the most sounding and pompous phrases I had that morning got by heart out of the Spanish grammar.

The want of keeping between these high-

flown expressions and the occasion which drew them forth, added to the defective pronunciation in which they must have been uttered by a person who had never before tried to speak the language, set off the whole party, male and female, into a loud, but good-natured laugh. Upon hearing which, the old gentleman came from the house, and fearing, perhaps, that we might take this mirth amiss, stepped forward, caught the shy lady by the wrist, drew her gently back to where we stood, and, with that ready politeness which never forsakes these well-bred people, said she really must shake hands with the strangers. The nut-brown maid, though she coloured a good deal, and affected to be rather angry, complied, gracefully enough, with this unusual mandate, and the scene would have ended capitally, if the strangers had only possessed one half the tact of the natives. Unfortunately, our habits had been formed in ruder lands, and, thinking a tavern-keeper must be a tavern-keeper all over the world, we indiscreetly offered our venerable friend payment for his wine! The old fel-

low, quite indignant at this misapprehension of his character, or perhaps provoked at our clumsy blindness to the romantic sentiment of the moment, actually thrust the money back into our pockets, and then bowed us out of the village with all the dignity of a grandee of the first class!

In the evening we repaired to the opera at Corunna; a pistareen and a half, which, I think, is about fourteen-pence, was the price of admission to the pit. The house was not quite so large as the theatre in the Haymarket; and, like most foreign places of this kind, was kept, I believe on purpose, almost dark, or what we should call ill lighted. The pit was divided into separate stalls, with a contrivance to each by which the seat might be folded back and locked, till the 'open Sesame' of a quarter of a dollar should be applied to it. There were three tiers of boxes, and over all a gallery, exclusively occupied by women, at each entrance to which stood a grim-looking Cerberus, armed with a musket and fixed bayonet, to prevent any intermixture of the sexes. England, it

may be observed, is the only country where this degree of propinquity between the men and women is not interfered with. Even the pit is appropriated, in Spain, exclusively to the men; but in the intermediate ranges of boxes the natural order of things is allowed to follow its course.

The first piece was one of those old Scriptural exhibitions called Mysteries, or Moralities. It represented Nebuchadnezzar, first, in all his glory, when his greatness reached unto heaven; and then, in his downfall and misery, eating grass like an ox in the fields, with his hair like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws. These variations in the fortunes of this ill-advised monarch gave ample room for the display of theatrical tricks, which were much applauded. One of these led to some very irreverent mirth. Instead of casting three full-grown men, Shadrach and his companions, into the burning fiery furnace, they varied the history a little, and, by a broad enough poetical license, substituted three children, which change, on this occasion, led to an awkwardness in the unity

of the piece very provoking, I dare say, to the stage-manager, though it made the audience laugh heartily.

The children, after being tossed into the fire, were exhibited in the next moment, amongst the clouds, as angels. But as it might have been inconvenient, or dangerous, to set them actually flying about, a device was hit upon to produce the same effect, as far as could be. An upright pole being fixed in the back part of the stage, three bars were attached to it, on the ends of which the little angels being stuck, the whole apparatus was made to whirl round amongst a set of most substantial-looking clouds. For a time all this seemed good enough fun, and the children smiled and flapped their wings as they were bid. Presently, however, one of these little urchins, becoming alarmed at her elevation, gave a squeak, so very different from the music of the spheres, that we could distinctly hear the beatified spirit getting a pretty smart lecture from the prompter's little box in the front part of the stage. I suspect the cords which bound it

to the upper world were rather too tightly drawn; for, after one of those ominous quiescent pauses during which a child when hurt gathers all its strength, only to give out a louder roar, our young friend in the ninth heaven of the theatre set up such a bawling as I have seldom heard out of the nursery. It suited its little actions, also, to its loud sounds, by kicking and struggling, till the whole firmament of the stage-manager's invention appeared in jeopardy. The poor man, at length losing all patience, came forward and scolded the child, till the laughter of the house drowned every other noise, and the curtain fell amidst universal applause.

The next piece was also a sacred drama, called 'Daniel in the Lions' Den,' which, to our great astonishment, caused almost as much mirth as the terror of the suffering angel had done before. The natives, indeed, appeared to come prepared for this sort of thing; and although the strangers were more scandalized than they were at such impious trifling, it was totally

beyond the power of human muscles to preserve an unmoved countenance during this scene.

The lions, as may be supposed, mustered in great force, and odd enough figures they looked, sprawling about the stage amongst priests, cardinals, nuns, soldiers, and all sorts of characters, brought, for what reason I know not, into the den along with Daniel, manifestly in the teeth of all history, sacred or profane. Into the midst of this goodly company a great clumsy angel descended, by aid of stout ropes, thick enough to have made topsail-haulyards for a frigate, and, after performing the object of his mission, by complimenting Daniel on his good looks and courage, again took flight amongst the paste-board clouds and copper thunders of the theatrical sky.

As the celestial messenger was hoisted slowly upwards, all the monks, virgins, and other companions of Daniel, fell on their knees to the sound of music in the orchestra so very beautiful, and played in such fine taste, that we almost forgot the absurdity of

the rest of the performance. But the lions, who well knew their power over the audience, and were not to be so neglected, presently marched to the front of the stage, keeping correct time to the music. This was comical enough; but they had not done—for they now gradually raised themselves on their nether ends, and, with the most ineffable looks of mock piety, extended their fore paws towards the retiring angel, in the attitude of prayer. This abominable piece of burlesque was almost too much for an audience prepared, as we have seen, to swallow a good deal, for, after pausing a moment, to consider, as it appeared, whether they should hiss the lions or applaud them, they burst into a shout of outrageous mirth. The actors caught the infection—lions inclusive—and even Daniel himself, putting his hands to his sides, roared with laughter in the middle of the stage! Could it reasonably be expected, that a couple of heretics in the pit were to sit grave spectators of such a scene?

‘Susannah and the Elders’ followed, and was played in such a way, that if it had

been the express object of the evening's entertainment to turn every thing that was sacred into ridicule, nothing could have been devised more effectual. In truth, the foreigners who were present appeared the only persons sincerely shocked by exhibitions so repugnant to their tastes and habits, but which they had little dreamed of finding in a Roman Catholic country, and especially amongst a people generally reputed not only bigoted, but highly circumspect in all that relates to the church.

This strange exhibition at the theatre in Corunna, however, was only one of the first of a long series of incidents it was my fortune to witness in Spain and elsewhere, which have helped to prove to me how impossible it is, by any amount of previous inquiry, to come at perfectly correct notions upon almost any distant subject. What is even more curious, and perhaps not less important, is the fact that, even on the spot, and after a protracted experience, we are still, at times, exceedingly liable to commit almost as gross blunders in our estimate of foreign senti-

ments and manners, as on the first day we landed;—so much less simple is it to observe correctly, than people, who have not tried, are at all aware of.

That this is no exaggerated statement of the difficulty of gaining an exact acquaintance with remote scenes, I am pretty sure will be felt by most people who have travelled much, and looked about them in good faith. And yet we find by far the greater number of persons in society, particularly amongst those who have never quitted home—holding forth, with confident reliance on their own infallibility, as to this and that detail of foreign manners and customs, respecting which even the most careful, experienced, and unprejudiced observers, frankly confess themselves but partially informed. The smile of surprise, and the hopeless shrug of the shoulders, which this presumption is apt to produce in a real traveller, change to something less indulgent, when these people, who can know but little or nothing about the matter, confidently pronounce the statements and opinions of persons who have

actually visited the countries in question to be prejudiced and erroneous!

It is in vain to suggest to such dictators, that the traveller whom they handle so roughly, and whose authority they hold so cheap, has formed his opinions deliberately on the very spot best adapted for pursuing the inquiry, and with all the advantage of leisure and exclusive attention to that one object, or class of objects, upon which his critics pronounce so dogmatically, although they (the critics) have never once stirred from their own firesides, and although, for every month the traveller has given to a patient investigation of the subject, they may never have had it in their power to bestow on it one day!

Yet, to do the critics justice, we must not forget, that new information—especially of a political nature, relating to any foreign country—unless it be given with very great address, is apt to reach the mind of an opponent to the writer's views very much in the shape of an insult to his understanding. In many cases, indeed, such new knowledge irritates the

listener almost as much as a reflection on his character would offend him personally. If it shall happen, from the traveller's previous writings, or from any other cause, that very different things have been expected at his hands, the offence to the party he has ceased to agree with in opinion, is held to be double.

Exactly, indeed, according to the particular side which the author takes, so are his opinions and his powers of observation, and of description, sure to be rated by those persons, to whose preconceived views his facts or his reasonings stand opposed. If he chance to fall in with the dogmas of their party, straightway he is "judicious—experienced—observant—a valuable accession to the good cause—a very philosopher afloat!" If, however, he shall presume to advance facts, or broach arguments on the other side—then he is scouted as "hasty in his observations, ill-informed on the subjects he discusses, and, above all, he is prejudiced." In short, to sum up his condemnation in one awful sentence, the poor man "Is lost for ever to the liberal party!"

Now, I should ask, who and what are the people taking upon themselves to pronounce thus arrogantly? What, I mean, is their relative capacity of forming a sound judgment on the subject, compared with that of the traveller whose account they deride and depreciate at this sweeping rate?

Which of two men, whom we shall suppose are both strongly prejudiced on a particular point, but thinking exactly alike about it, and starting at the same moment to acquire further information, is most likely, at the end of a considerable period, to come to a correct result—he who shall actually go to the spot, examine it with his own eyes—diligently, patiently, and exclusively; or he who, during the same interval, shall not only have a hundred other things to attend to, but shall have no fresh means of investigating whether his original opinions are sound or not?

If two such persons are, in the outset of their inquiry, equally prejudiced, but in opposite ways, and the one who goes abroad comes back with his own views confirmed,—then there might certainly be very fair

grounds for suspecting that his investigations had not been conducted with a view to truth alone, but rather with a leaning to his own original conceptions of the matter. At all events, there would be nothing unreasonable in his old antagonist considering him prejudiced still.

But if the two persons shall begin by thinking exactly alike upon the subject in discussion, and one of them shall then set out upon the inquiry, with a strong desire to confirm, by the authority of actual observation, those preconceived notions held by them in common; and if, notwithstanding this tendency of his wishes, he shall then and there be so completely outmastered by the irresistible force of experience on the spot, as to take, in spite of himself, a different view from that which was formerly held jointly by him and his friend,—is it not almost ludicrous to hear the man who has never budged an inch from his own library, crowing over the blunders, the errors, and what he is pleased to call the prejudices, hasty observations, and confined views of the traveller, who, in the

interval, may have traversed the country in question a dozen times, and conversed with thousands of its best-informed inhabitants !

As a matter of mere speculation, this discussion may be thought to possess little more than a passing interest ; while, to young persons, it will not, I hope, be altogether without profit, as teaching them both modesty and forbearance. Practically considered, also, with reference to what really occurs between travellers and the public who sit in judgment upon their reports, some of these reflections may be found useful to those who consider it a higher duty to preserve their own peace of mind, than to struggle for conquests in argumentation. At all events, I can only say, woe betide the ill-advised writer, who, in a moment of disappointment, or of anger, or of zeal in any cause, shall dream of such folly as making a reply to those literary or party antagonists, who assert, almost in express terms, that the more a man inquires into a subject—provided he does not think with them—the less he is likely to give a sound opinion upon it !

If a traveller visits an unknown country—Loo Choo, for instance—and is called upon to describe a state of manners entirely new to all his readers, he will have some chance of general favour. In that case, he is dependent for his success, first, upon his own powers of observation, to perceive what he meets with, so distinctly and vividly as to be able afterwards to recall, or recreate it, in his imagination: And, secondly, upon his talents for description, that he may represent what he has seen in such a manner, that the picture shall not only be strictly true to the facts as they struck his eye, but shall preserve enough of fancy about its colouring, as well as its lights and shades, to prevent its becoming merely a dull, dry copy, which every one knows is the tamest thing in the world. In the instance supposed—that of a perfectly new scene—the traveller must lay his account with being occasionally accused of having too active a fancy; but if he does his duty as a writer, and makes it a point of conscience to confine himself strictly to describe how he actually did feel

on the spot, without having any object in view but to convey a just representation of what he saw, or thought he saw, and knows that he felt, he will probably leave on the minds of his readers a juster image of the scene, all things considered, than if—departing from his own natural character, and fearful of trusting himself—he had sought to check his fancy, and conform more rigidly to the scale of description which a less enthusiastic observation might have suggested.

Of course, a traveller of any taste or fancy, who without despising ordinary rules, chooses occasionally to depart from them, and, as he thinks for himself, resolves to act in like manner, must take his chance of finding, that when more sober-minded observers come to visit the same scenes afterwards, they will be astonished to encounter things so different from what, according to their reading of their predecessor's description, they had been led to expect. These new travellers forget that this want of agreement may perhaps reside essentially in the different conformation of their own mental optics. It is not, perhaps,

too much to say, that if twenty distinct visits were to be made to one spot, by as many separate voyagers, we might almost expect a score of accounts—each correctly representing what the parties thought and felt, but no two of them much alike!

The truth is, that external nature is hardly more boundless in her varieties, than she is in the wonderful diversity with which she has gifted different individuals; first, with the capacity of observing, and, secondly, with the power of describing. To which may well be added, the extraordinary differences of taste and opinion amongst those who have to pronounce upon the merits of such descriptions. Even in accounts of regions, where the traveller is required to treat of places about which we at home confessedly know hardly any thing—for example, of Otaheite, which is sometimes a Paradise, sometimes a Pandemonium, according as it is visited by a sailor or a saint,—we are still reluctant to resign the reins of our imagination into the author's hands, and are often strongly tempted to substitute our own crude notions for those sug-

gested to us by his experience. If this be true, as I think it is, how much more complicated must the unhappy voyager's task become, when called upon to treat not of unknown countries and new races of men, but of institutions, and customs, and manners, about which most of his readers conceive they already know a great deal, and whereon they have all formed, more or less decidedly, some antecedent conception, or, to give it the true name, some darling prejudice, which they have far more delight in cherishing as it is, than satisfaction in comparing with the truth.

If the irritating topic of politics enter largely into the narrative, the plot is much thickened. There are, then, two cases, and, when viewed in the widest sense, only two, which can arise; and the writer must make up his mind, resolutely, to one or the other of the following consequences, or consent to hold his peace altogether.

If the traveller be young and inexperienced in such matters, and the events he has witnessed happen either to be uncom-

mon, or very striking in themselves—as in the revolutionary scenes which I myself witnessed ten or twelve years ago in South America—the chances almost inevitably are, that he will take what is somewhat imper- tinently called the liberal side, and by de- scribing, in as glowing terms as he can muster, the triumphs of mere free will, with- out adverting to, or even knowing distinctly, any thing of the dangers attendant upon sudden independence, he will be sure to gain the noisy applause of the multitude. His book will circulate every where, and may be generally praised; because even those who distrust many of its doctrines as per- manent rules of political action, are unwill- ing to encounter the certainty of popular abuse at the moment, by assuming the un- gracious task of throwing cold water on what seem such generous aspirations after liberty.

“Nothing can be more correct than your pictures,” all classes of readers will say to the popular author;—“nothing can be truer than your inferences;—we are only

astonished to see how accurately you have described things in a country of which we knew so little."

And so the good, easy author chuckles, and fancies that all this is legitimate praise—wilfully forgetting that his readers, even by their own shewing, are not, and cannot possibly be, competent judges of his accuracy in description; and that they commend his truth of painting, not because they know it to be a good likeness, but because the portrait he shews them resembles the creature of their own fancy.

Let the same man afterwards, either from curiosity or with the natural ambition of adding to his utility, resolve to vary his ground a little, and, instead of viewing countries in their political infancy, as in the first experiment, let him examine their somewhat maturer growth, as I did lately in the United States of America. Let him also bring, on his own part, a longer experience, and a few more years, with somewhat more extensive habits of study, of thought, and of conversation, to bear on a topic of general interest;

and let him then set about investigating it manfully, not in books alone, but by close, varied, and extensive observation, on the spot.

What course, it may be asked, is this traveller to take, if he finds that, in spite of all his predilections in favour of the notions his first work may have helped to confirm, and his very natural desire to preserve the good opinion of the public by proving their first opinions correct, he is compelled, by the sheer force of actual observation, to discover that he has been all along in error? What is he now to say if he shall discover ample proofs that, so far from those popular ideas which he formerly held on the subject being judicious, they are not only full of mischief in present practice, but fraught, like another Pandora's box, with every species of injury to the cause of genuine freedom, virtue, and national happiness?

There can, of course, be but one answer as to what is his duty. But he must be prepared—as I can honestly say I was—to take the consequences; and, in addition to

the inevitable charges of inconsistency, and of being a renegade, he must be content with a very different kind of approbation from what he formerly received when supporting the more popular or vociferous side. For that party always has, and always will have, the greatest actual numbers, the loudest speakers, and the most confident pretenders to infallibility of judgment along with it.

The author will then discover that, in politics, there are two very different sorts of praise which are bestowed on those who — from preferring well-working things as they now are, to untried experiments, however high their promise — conscientiously take what is called the Conservative side of the question.

One kind of commendation which this Tory author will receive is qualified, measured out cautiously by the drop, and is always very tardy in its expression: the other — which is also the most satisfactory sort of approbation — is vehement, prompt, and unbounded. The praise first alluded to, or that which is slow, temperate, and

scarcely heard, comes from the approving friends of the existing institutions of the country, or from those who, without denying the rapid advances of knowledge, are yet extremely reluctant to meddle rashly with establishments that have done so much, and are still doing so much, to give permanence and solidity to all the blessings of steady government in church and state, and which (whether as cause or effect) are closely allied with national, as well as private virtue and prosperity of every kind.

The other sort of praise, which the defender of our present institutions should covet with even more anxiety, and which he ought to consider by much the more gratifying of the two, is the unmixed disapprobation of those persons who take the opposite view, and who conceive, that as every thing is radically wrong, nothing but radical reform will do the state any good. Even the more gentlemanlike, but, of course, severer censure of those parties who were formerly so loud in their applause of the 'liberal traveller,' is extremely valuable, as it shews that, in his statements, he

has, at all events, committed no mistake as to the explanation of his own meaning. If, unfortunately, the work of such a writer were to gain the countenance of this 'liberal party,' he might, indeed, enjoy a momentary gratification in finding that he had not, politically speaking, lost friends who once esteemed him. But a little more reflection would serve to shew that, as such approbation could only arise from his having done injustice to his subject, it ought to be regarded as the very reverse of praise.

It must, however, be confessed, that it does require a certain amount of time before these truths come to be seen and felt in their proper light, or that sincere pleasure can be derived from the disapprobation of men who must ever stand high in our esteem on other grounds, but from whom we differ in politics only. It requires a far shorter apprenticeship, indeed, to extract positive gratification from the abuse of those with whom any companionship in sentiment at all, on public affairs, would be a real misfortune.

To reply to such attacks, is evidently not

only useless, but foolish :—useless, because such orators and writers are obviously far beyond the reach of conviction ; their minds have long been made up, say they, and consequently are quite shut against new impressions. Yet these very candid personages are invariably the loudest declaimers against prejudice !

The task of answering is also foolish, because it implies that the author, instead of being delighted with, is pained by, those very circumstances which, after all, furnish the most undoubted assurance of his not having been misconceived. Instead of deprecating such attacks, therefore, the traveller should accept them with thankfulness ; I do not say with gratitude, because there is no goodwill towards him in the gift ; but certainly without any unkindly feeling towards the persons who pronounce the malediction.

CHAPTER XII.

SIR JOHN MOORE.

It was no small relief to us, after the idle and profane travesties of sacred subjects, the mysteries and fooleries of the stage, to witness an excellent ballet, upon another evening at Corunna, where we saw, for the first time, the bewitching Bolero—a dance which, if it were not imported by the Moors, is assuredly as moresque, and as different from any thing European on this side of the Pyrenees, as it is possible to conceive. There is a measured wildness in the sharp click of the castanet so peculiarly primitive, that I think it must be the device of a very rude state of society. The refinements of a more advanced age, however, have super-added the embellishments of wind and

stringed instruments to this savage kind of music, the original purpose of which was, probably, no more than to mark time with precision. And it must be confessed, that the mixture, as now managed, is exceedingly pleasing to the ear. I was lately amused by observing in Paris a curious inversion of this order of things. In one of the first quadrille bands in that capital, the musicians had introduced a kind of rattle, filled with pebbles, resembling, in all respects, the barbarous instruments of music used by the rudest savages on the coast of Africa!

The two seats we had hired lay near the centre of the pit, and, on looking round, we were struck with the curious fact of more than half the audience, in that part of the house, being English officers of the different regiments just landed, 'furred to the ears, and whiskered to the eyes,' and clanking their spurs and sabres against the floor, in all the glittering pride of the first days of a campaign, which, ere long, was to terminate in blood and sorrow.

There were not many ladies in the boxes

—for Corunna at this period was more like a great English barrack than a quiet Spanish sea-port—and, in spite of all that discipline could effect, brawls and tumults occurred every night, sufficiently alarming to most females to make them keep within doors, till a more temperate season should arise. Nevertheless, in one of the boxes, near the stage, sat two young ladies with their mamma. The beauty of these damsels, the peculiarity of their dress—the well-known mantilla—then quite new to us, together with a certain mirthful expression of countenance, engaged not only our attention, but that of some half a dozen military officers near us.

The more we stared, the more the ladies smiled, till the boleroes and fandangoes of the stage were well nigh forgotten in the realities of the audience. The simplicity of the naval uniform formed such a strong contrast to the splendour of that worn by the Hussars near us, that we soon saw we had no sort of chance at such long bowls, and therefore, prompted and supported by the

brazen god of impudence, whose agency in such times of popular excitement effects many more difficult tasks than ours, we resolved to pay these black-eyed Spanish lasses a visit, and off we set accordingly to introduce ourselves. I cannot say that we entered the box without some little misgivings—for there was first, the great risk of being coldly received by the señoritas or their duenna, which would have been followed by the triumphant ridicule of the soldiers in the pit, who stared in great amazement when they beheld their amphibious rivals marching into the very place against which they had been expending so much ammunition during the early part of the evening.

But fortune favoured us—the ladies smiled—and we made good our lodgment. I urged my companion to take the front seat, while I sat on the next, for his Spanish was so much better than mine; that it seemed fair he should bear the brunt. In truth, however, it is marvellous how small a number of words suffice to carry on a dialogue on such occasions. At that moment in Spain, and espe-

cially in Galicia, the English, being looked upon as heroes and deliverers, were admitted to a degree of familiarity, which, at other times, would, perhaps, neither have been sought by themselves, nor allowed by the natives, but which was then in keeping with every thing else. Accordingly, we flirted and complimented one another till the ballet was over, by which time it was nearly one o'clock in the morning. We could then do no less, of course, than offer the ladies an escort to their home. This they declined, at first, saying their brother was to join them, or meet them on their return. But when we begged to be allowed to guard them so far against the tumults which prevailed at this late hour, they agreed to our proposal, and away we travelled in company, as merrily as if we had been acquainted for half a year.

In passing through one of the narrow streets, we were attacked by a madcap party of half-tipsy, noisy fellows, who must needs have a look, they declared, under the mantillas of our new acquaintances.

“By Jove! we are in for it now,” cried

my friend, "and must go through with our engagement of protecting these ladies from insult." So out flew our swords, which, glittering in the lamp-light, threw the females into still greater terror. The police, aided by the military patrol, were on the spot in a moment, and the affray was instantly put an end to, by the arrest of these rude brawlers, and without further mischief than the fright. Of course, we made a good joke of the whole matter, and were in the midst of a lecture to the ladies upon the remarkable good sense they had shewn in selecting two such trusty knights-errant to guard them from harm, when up ran the brother. This fiery youth, hearing there had been a row, and seeing naked swords, naturally enough concluded that we were the offending parties, and had nearly made a tragedy of our farce. The little Spanish we possessed was insufficient to pacify the angry Don, who even refused to listen to his sisters, but went on abusing us without mercy. At last, as the matter became rather perplexing, we resolved to try the enemy in French, and

were right glad to find we could satisfy him that, so far from being foes, we were the champions of his fair sister. Upon this explanation, a general laugh and shaking of hands took place; we invited the whole family to come on board our ship next morning, while they, in return, entreated us to visit them on shore; and, then, having interchanged vows of eternal friendship, we parted—never to meet, or to see, or to hear of one another again!

Our attention was soon called away to objects of far more important interest, by the arrival of news from the contending armies in the interior of the country. But we had yet to learn how very difficult it was to discriminate between true and false information, as communicated by the Spaniards. I question, indeed, whether this art has yet been, or ever will be, fully acquired, even by the most experienced officers who have served in that country.

I shall not pretend to give any detailed account, or even a sketch, of the state of political or military affairs in Galicia, at the

time of our visit. All this has been so minutely, and, at the same time, so clearly done by Colonel Napier, the historian of the Peninsular war, and by others, that there is little wanting to satisfy the curiosity of persons who wish to examine the subject in its fullest extent. What we had an opportunity of seeing on the coast was certainly very interesting, but so completely detached from the other operations of the campaign, that it furnished us with no means of judging of what was really going on beyond our own limited field of view, and left us to be tossed about by hopes and fears, in a manner at first very troublesome, but which became eventually almost ludicrous. In examining my notes and letters, written at this highly exciting period, the ups and downs of the Spaniards' fortunes, and consequently of our hopes, are curiously intermingled.

There came a report to Corunna one day that the Spanish commander Blake had fought a general action against very superior numbers of the French, in which he had entirely routed the invaders and taken four

thousand prisoners, all of whom, it was asserted, were on their way to the coast. In consequence of this news—news, indeed!—all was jollity and happiness, and at the opera that night was enacted a piece called “The Brightest Day of Spain,” a patriotic exhibition of the times, in which the following strange medley of personages were introduced:—First and foremost came our beloved monarch, George III., not ill represented by an actor of no ordinary bulk, hand in hand with Ferdinand VII. These two sovereigns were of course in friendly communication, exchanging good offices, and spouting national vengeance, most theatrically, against the French. The measure of arming the peasantry and equipping the regular troops, and drawing assistance from England, formed the minor materials of the first act.

The next group consisted of another couple of high contracting parties apparently on very good terms with themselves. It will be anticipated, no doubt, that one of these was Bonaparte; but who, except such strange

people as the Spaniards, would have conceived the idea of representing him, cheek by jowl, with Old Nick himself! This pair of worthies, however, were introduced together on the stage, which was, of course, fitted up as the infernal regions, with a due proportion of flames and brimstone. The plottings of these two personages as to the best method of enslaving the Peninsula, occupied the second act.

In the third the tables were turned; for 'Horky Tercero,' as they pronounced the title of our King, and Ferdinand together, had got the upper hand of the confederates, and the devil having turned king's evidence, betrayed all Napoleon's secrets, defeated his plans, and left him in the lurch. As a measure of retributive justice, poor Bony was consigned to the care of his old chum below stairs, who, after treading him under foot, entertained his prisoner, and the audience, by recapitulating, in the presence of the fallen monarch, all the misdeeds of his past political life, in order, as he said, with a very good Satanic grin, to refresh his imperial memory!

On the very morning after this edifying and patriotic spectacle, in which, we were told, the facility of putting down the armies of Bonaparte was typified, a courier arrived to say that Blake, instead of being the victor, had been completely cut to pieces, after eleven days' fighting against seventy thousand regular French troops! The Spaniards, it may be observed, are never at a loss for figures, and draw upon Cocker without mercy. The messenger further declared he himself had counted six thousand dead Spaniards on the field, all in a row, thereby giving the world to understand, that these patriots had been so unflinching as to die in the ranks rather than break their line! The French, it was added, with seventy thousand men (in buckram, I suppose), were in full advance to prevent the junction of Sir John Moore's army with that of Sir David Baird, in which event the retreat of both divisions of the English army appeared to be inevitable.

As soon as authentic information of these retrograde movements reached the admiral, we were ordered in the *Endymion*, with

several hundred transports, to a port to the southward of Corunna, ready for embarking the troops, should they fall back on that point, as was then expected. Accordingly, we came to an anchor, with our convoy, in Vigo bay, at two P. M., on the 30th of November, 1808.

Along with these disheartening accounts from the seat of war we had others of a more cheering nature, about Palafox and his army—Castanos and his army—the rising of the peasantry 'en masse'—the enthusiasm of the whole Peninsula—the goodness of the patriotic cause—and, above all, the measureless treachery of the French! In short, the imagination, filled with so many novel and distracting images, knew scarcely where to settle, whom to believe, or what to wish for.

One thing, however, and only one, was quite entire—that is to say, our own enjoyment of the scene. Nothing came amiss to us young fellows afloat—we cared not where we went, for, to whatever point our steps were directed, we were sure to find amusement as well as occupation—so that our ship

had not been anchored at our new station, Vigo, two days, before we were as much at home amongst the inhabitants as we had been in Corunna. After the fleet of transports had been arranged for embarking the troops, should they make their appearance, we had nothing to do but to talk party politics with the men, or to dance, and flirt, and chatter with the gay señoritas of Vigo. All this we did to greater purpose even than in Corunna, for two reasons. In the first place, while we had lost none of our presumption, by the operation of success, we had gained a considerably greater fluency in the language, and more knowledge of the manners of the people; and secondly, we enjoyed the most delightful of all advantages — that of being almost the first, and at that time the only foreigners present. At Corunna we had to enter the field with numberless brother-officers, besides swarms of such shewily dressed military men, fresh from England, with the shine still on their gold lace, that we had little chance of general favour. But here, at Vigo, we had it all to

ourselves, and no fellows ever enjoyed their opportunities more than we did. It was really like visiting a new world! and, indeed, we sometimes almost thought, and often said, the whole must be a dream.

The city of Vigo is a most romantic place, perched on the top of a steep rock, and guarded on the land side by vast ranges of bare granite mountains girding it nearly all round, and flanked, towards the sea, by a cluster called the Bayonne Islands. The sharp ridges of this great natural break-water stand boldly up against the southern sky, and afford complete shelter to the magnificent bay, which indents the country to a considerable distance beyond the town. I have been told by military men, that had the army under Sir John Moore fallen back upon Vigo, they might have embarked at leisure, and the battle of Corunna have been spared; but I am not aware of the technicalities upon which such opinion rests, and I have even seen an opinion directly the contrary expressed by a good authority.

Be this as it may, we soon became ac-

quainted with most of the respectable inhabitants of the place; and as every body crowded on board to see the ship, we had it in our power to shew them some attention in return for their civilities to us. I dare say our style of living was as new and curious to them as theirs was to us; but all this, for a time, in every country visited by strangers, affords matter for conversation, and to young folks, in particular, is very interesting. It was our peculiar business, also, to adapt ourselves to the habits of the people we were cast amongst; and, considering the desultory kind of life which seamen lead, even in the most regular times, there was no great effort necessary to make us conform to what we found at Vigo and elsewhere, especially during this period when our popularity was at its highest.

The time for morning visits was before one, at which hour the Spaniards dine, and afterwards take their siesta, or digestive nap. In the evenings we rambled about from house to house, the doors of which were almost literally what the natives described

them figuratively to be, always open. "My house is entirely at your disposal," is the ordinary invitation,—which means, that if you are inclined to enter, you are sure of a welcome, whenever and wherever you see an open door. In most of the drawing-rooms there was a piano-forte,—in all of them several guitars, and never any lack of skilful hands to touch them. A visitor, and especially a foreigner and an Englishman, who should bring his flute in his pocket, and knew the art of using it, as one of our naval party did right well, was sure to get on. I must state, however, that I was not this fortunate youth, seeing that I cannot tell one note from another, though I once laboured for three months, at the rate of four hours a day, under the master of the band, but never got beyond the second bar of "God save the King."

There was occasional dancing, too, at these evening parties, or tertulias as they are called; but no bustle or stir, nor any derangement of the ordinary establishment of the household for the accommodation of the company;

all was natural and easy, without any appearance of preparation; the people went in and out, from house to house, without ceremony, like bees trying flower after flower, and sipping the sweets of each. At one house we found a concert, at another a waltz, at a third a country dance, which, though it bear the same title, is a very different affair from its namesake in England. The word is probably of French origin—'contre danse'—from the parties standing opposite to one another. The Spaniards, who also call it 'contra danza,' entangle it not only with the ordinary waltzes, but with endless varieties of complicated figures, which include the whole set, in such a way, that, from top to bottom, all the party are in motion at once. These bewitching dances form a very delightful species of amusement even to persons long accustomed to them; but to us strangers, jolly young sailors, who found ourselves in their delicious whirl for the first time in our lives, they were really intoxicating.

The news from the interior, as it arrived from day to day, produced a wonderful effect

upon these singular people. The slightest touch of success carried their hopes into the clouds; and then nothing was thought of, or talked of, but the total expulsion of the intruders, and even the invasion of France. On the other hand, the most trivial check or disaster cast every one's spirits down to the ground. It was on the 13th of December that we first heard, at Vigo, of the retreat of the English army. Nothing could exceed the consternation of the inhabitants, except the frantic joy which, ten days afterwards, tossed them up again, when they learned the glad, but false, tidings of mighty victories. I find these things recorded in my letters with all the ardour of the moment, which we caught by an easy infection from the enthusiasm of the company amongst whom we mixed.

Accounts now poured in to Vigo from all quarters, with the happy intelligence of a long series of patriotic successes. The French, it appeared by these statements, had attacked Madrid, but totally failed; this was a clear point—nobody doubted it—and, without

inquiring further, or, perhaps, having the means of making further inquiries, all the world gave themselves up to joy. The real fact, however, was, that on the 4th of December, exactly three weeks before the very time we were rejoicing for victory, Madrid, the capital, though well garrisoned and equipped for an obstinate resistance, had quietly yielded to Napoleon in person!

“By a judicious mixture of force and policy,” says Colonel Napier, “he obliged Madrid to surrender in two days, and thus prevented the enthusiasm which would, doubtless, have arisen if the capital had been defended for any time, and the heart-burnings if it had been stormed.”*

By what process the natives of the Peninsula contrive to transmute the tidings of a disgraceful defeat into those of a brilliant victory, is best known to themselves; but I defy any one who has not had long experience of their address in this political alchemy, to resist the sort of evidence by which

* Napier's History of the Peninsular War, vol. i. p. 508.

they bolster up their mishaps, and affect to turn them to advantages. This, however, is only at a distance; for when the scene of action is close at hand, an opposite practice is followed. Whichever way it was managed, the fact is certain, that on the 24th of December, at Vigo, we were full of rejoicing in consequence of the great doings at Madrid. The very manner in which the devoted citizens had defended themselves was described in letters written from the capital. Before the French entered the town, on the day of the attack, the inhabitants, it was stated, had thrown every article in their houses out of the windows—sofas and pianofortes, pictures, kettles, and guitars—in short, every movable thing belonging to them. By means of this shower of furniture and utensils, the streets, which are said to be very narrow, were so completely barricaded, that the great Napoleon and his hitherto invincible legions, according to these veracious Spanish accounts, were, at last, fairly brought to a stand-still by this exquisite stratagem. The doors of the houses being.

locked, of course, the fierce invaders were at their wits' end what to do with this ocean of pots and pans, or how to discover a passage through the forest of beds and band-boxes which rose upon their view at every corner. The whole mass of the population, it was added, from the highest to the lowest, were engaged in defending the city. Women and children took a very active part, particularly the women, who were described, in several of the letters which I saw, as having fought with incredible valour and rage!

Not only was the whole of this story false, but there was not even the shadow of a shade of any circumstance to give the lie a complexion. But the result of the wonderful battle was stated circumstantially in these letters at eighteen thousand French slain in the grand square, or plaza, to which they had penetrated by climbing along the summit of the ridge formed by the chairs and tables piled in the streets. The first accounts stated the slaughter on this spot at thirty-two thousand French—not thirty, in round numbers, but exactly thirty-two thou-

sand. The more recent statements, however, brought the slain down to the reasonable compass of eighteen thousand. This took place, it was said, in the city of Madrid itself. The remaining fourteen thousand were described as having made good their retreat beyond the walls, where they were speedily surrounded by the patriots, who had twice refused to allow their enemy to capitulate, and were preparing to sacrifice them all when the accounts came away.

At this distance of time, when the wild enthusiasm of the moment has evaporated, I can scarcely understand how I could have written down and believed such preposterous absurdities. Indeed, if I had not possession of these statements, in my own hand-writing, taken, verbatim, from the statements of the Spaniards who read me their letters from Madrid, I should not have ventured to trust my recollection. It is evident, also, from the context, that in transmitting all this to England as good news and true, nothing was farther from my thoughts than any jest. The whole of the Spanish reports of that

period turned out so entirely imaginary, that the only wonder is how their allies could get on at all, when the chief sources of information were rendered so completely turbid, that no experience could possibly see much beyond the surface.

An equal liberty was taken with truth in all the Spanish reports of the operations of the English army; for I find it set forth, in my letters from Vigo to England, written on the faith of official despatches received by the authorities at Vigo, that Sir John Moore had unexpectedly fallen upon a body of twelve thousand French cavalry—a small detachment, it was called, from the grand army, sent in pursuit of the central junta, which had fled from Madrid before the grand day of the upholstery manœuvre above described. Of course, in the Spanish accounts, these French troops were all demolished, as may be supposed, to Bonaparte's great surprise.

I cannot say that we were altogether such geese as to swallow every thing told us by the Dons with such exquisite gravity; but certainly we were so much borne along with

the stream, that we began to lose our high opinion of the French as military men, and to consider the Spaniards as the greatest warriors, the most persevering patriots, and the least jealous allies, that ever foreigners cooperated with. Alas, how soon our admiration of every thing Spanish—save the black eyes of the women, and the bright sky of their atmosphere, and the delightful sound of their language, the witchery of their dances, and the tinkling of their guitars—was doomed to fade away, and how speedily the prowess of their invaders re-assumed its formidable and almost matchless ascendancy!

Still, still, in spite of all this folly, vain glory, and jealousy of the Spaniards, there hangs a fascination about their country, which, after a little time, is sure to surmount every cause of annoyance, or doubt; and however crushed our hopes may at one time be, the natives never fail to re-establish themselves in our regard, if they do not always secure our respect. There is a grave stateliness even about their very falsehoods

which is not undignified ; and if good fortune puts them behind a wall, they will even extort your admiration, in spite of a thousand previous failures. The Spaniards do nothing by halves ;—they will either fight almost till the last man is dead—as in Saragossa, for instance—or they will turn tail at the first shot, and move off in a mass : they will either tell you the whole truth, or they will rig you up such a gigantic and circumstantial fabric of lies, that you generally forget its deceit in its matchless boldness. Add to which, they are the best-bred people alive—the pleasantest folks in the world to mix with on familiar terms ; for they seldom either take or give offence ; and in modern days, whatever it may have been of old, they are apparently as free from jealousy in their domestic habits, as if such a thing as an intrigue had never been heard of between Cadiz and Corunna ! It must be confessed, they are not the most energetic or punctual men of business one could wish to have dealings with ; and their disposition to put off things till to-morrow is perhaps

the most characteristic and universal feature in their national disposition. Yet, for all these, and a hundred other faults, it is quite impossible not to like them; and I have seldom, if ever, met any one who had been much in Spain who did not express, more or less, a similar sentiment.

Our captain, who was a long-sighted, experienced, and clear-headed officer, was not taken in by all this enthusiasm at Vigo, by which the heads of his more juvenile and mercurial officers were so completely turned. He made it his business to learn each morning exactly what information had been received, weighed it carefully, and drawing his own conclusions, kept them to himself. Many a time I have wondered how it was possible for him to resist the fervent impulse of the moment; but he saw through it all, and after giving directions how we were to proceed in the event of any sudden emergency, and appointing a signal to be made for him if his presence should be required on board, he set off with his gun and brace of dogs to shoot amongst the hills, only

taking care to keep the mast-heads of his ship always in sight. To us, however, no spot on earth, nor any kind of sport, could have attractions superior to those by which we were drawn on shore every day; nor was it till long afterwards that I learned, how much more an officer in command may sometimes contrive to know of the real state of affairs, by keeping out of its immediate influence, than by allowing himself to be whirled round, as we were, in its vortex.

But none of us was allowed to remain long in this blissful state of ignorance of the truth, or to enjoy our dancing and sporting in peace. A few days, indeed, sufficed to let the real matter of fact leak out. The Spaniards, it was certain, had been beaten at every point—Madrid had fallen an easy prey to the mighty conqueror, who was sweeping over the Peninsula like a hurricane—and the British armies, now assembled into one body, but totally unsupported by the people whom they came to assist, were obliged to retreat towards their ships. At that early stage of the Peninsular war, be-

fore the imbecility of the Spanish armies was ascertained, it appears to have formed no part of the plan of government that the English troops should contend single-handed with the French. Having been sent, therefore, to co-operate with the Spaniards, they were, of course, not a little disappointed and irritated at finding themselves deserted by their allies in the very outset of the campaign. This want of support obliged the English to retreat; but previous to the adoption of that very disagreeable measure, though after it had been resolved upon, the intrepid general who commanded them made one important movement in advance, even at the last hour, and when he knew, perfectly well, that eventually—in indeed, almost immediately—a retrograde movement was absolutely indispensable for his safety.

Sir John Moore's object in making this bold march, previous to his retiring, we find admirably explained in Colonel Napier's History. So far from being indiscreet, or hastily resolved upon, at the suggestion of rash counsellors, as many people imagined at the time,

it now appears to have been the result of a sober calculation of all the chances in the extensive game of war then playing in the Peninsula.

The English general felt that, after Madrid had fallen, it was of the utmost importance to divert Napoleon's attention from the native armies in the southern parts of Spain, and he resolved, though at great inconvenience to himself, to attract it towards those of England in the north-western corner of the country. The manœuvre completely succeeded, for Bonaparte's attack was turned, or rather drawn, away from the only portion of Spain in which there existed the smallest hopes that the inhabitants, if time were allowed them, might make any useful resistance. Every thing, indeed, that Sir John Moore could possibly have expected to accomplish by his celebrated advance movement on Sahagun, was fully attained. He gave the patriotic armies, south of Madrid, time to breathe, by turning aside Napoleon's sword, which was just descending upon them. If they did not choose, or

had not capacity and courage enough to profit by the respite thus afforded them, it was not the less honourable or statesman-like in Sir John Moore to give them a chance for their political existence. The daring enterprise alluded to, I mean the march upon Sahagun, as it was above the common run of military incidents, had also for its purpose more extensive national results than belong to ordinary campaigns. Such, at least, we know, is now the opinion of the highest authorities in war, upon this forward movement of the British army, undertaken after a retreat to the coast was decided to be absolutely necessary.

Military as well as naval men, and perhaps all classes of public servants, ought to remember that there can seldom be any merit, on the grand scale, without boldness, and that there is no boldness without risk of some kind. The hazard which Sir John Moore so nobly incurred, and but just evaded, was the total destruction of his army. It might, perhaps, be interesting, as well as instructive, to consider what would have happened

had the same genius which conceived the plan not continued to direct its details. In point of fact, however, the general lost neither his army, nor a tittle of its honour, still less, in the long run, one jot of his own reputation.

That doubts and difficulties should hang for a long period over the explanation of these things, was certainly to be expected, and they ought, I think, to have been met by his friends with more dignified calmness. It was essentially a part of the great risk which Sir John Moore, as a public man, thought it his duty to encounter, that, for a time, and very possibly for ever, his own character as a soldier might suffer eclipse. With his eyes open to the whole of this great danger, he placed his army in the most perilous predicament, and along with it, in a considerable degree, the military renown of the country, and, perhaps, also, the ultimate fate of the whole war. Assuredly, when the general fairly and gallantly looked these chances in the face, and, in spite of their threatening aspect, resolved to stand the hazard of the

die, he must have been perfectly well aware that, even if he succeeded in his main object, it must necessarily be at the expense of considerable sacrifices. The value of such sacrifices, in the eyes of his countrymen at a distance, he must also have well known would be estimated, at least in the first instance, not by the intrinsic sagacity of the measures which led to these inevitable losses, but by their eventual, and possibly long delayed, benefits.

If Sir John Moore himself viewed matters in this way, as he no doubt must have done — for he possessed, in a most eminent degree, the genuine spirit of a public man — he must also have contemplated, almost as a necessary consequence, the probability of his military and political character suffering, for a time, in general estimation. If this be so, it appears evident that his defenders would be more likely to win our patient attention, and thus to regain a larger share of the public favour for this great officer's memory, by taking these allowances into account, than by omitting them.

Sir John Moore's friends, also, while they give way to their feelings of indignation, and complain of the injustice done to the general by the imputations cast on his military and political skill, should, for his sake, be more cautious in distrusting not only the capacity, but the motives of those persons who stood opposed to him. It must be admitted, that both at home and in the Peninsula, there were to be found men in high official stations, who appear to have understood neither the man nor his measures; yet it is by no means either fair or politic to stigmatise the hostility of these distinguished persons as personally vindictive, or, in fact, to insinuate that their opposition could have arisen from any thing but a mistaken sense of public duty. Sir John Moore himself, at the moment of highest excitement, never could have suspected that such men as Mr. Canning or Mr. Frere could have any object in view but the service of their country.

The fact is now notorious, that the Spaniards did not avail themselves of the golden

opportunity afforded them, to the extent, at least, that Sir John Moore was led to believe they might have done. And consequently, it was unreasonable to hope that the people of England could at once enter into the intricacies of such a discussion; and by eliminating, as the mathematicians call it, all the erroneous views, and leaving only those which were correct, arrive at once at a conclusion favourable to the general. He was, therefore, in the mean time, held responsible for the disasters of the retreat, albeit he wound it up by a splendid battle.

Sir John Moore has at length found, in Colonel Napier, an eloquent historian, and one capable of doing his memory justice; first, by pointing out the political and military motives which led to the measures so vehemently criticised; and secondly, by shewing in what manner good results did, at last, spring out of those very measures, so much reprobated; and how far the ultimate fate of the Peninsula, and of Europe in general, was modified by the circumstance of Bonaparte being arrested, in the very middle of

his career of Spanish conquest, by Sir John Moore's very masterly stratagem.

But the accomplished historian who has done this service to the cause of truth and military science, and thus placed the memory of a great officer on a station where it will flourish for ever, ought to consider, that, antecedent to his own luminous exposition, not only of what was known, and required merely to be well combined, but also of much that was concealed from public view, the world had no adequate means of judging fairly of the case. The prejudices, therefore, which long opposed the entire re-establishment of Sir John Moore's public character were so natural, that they might, perhaps, have been more completely and more readily effaced by explanations directed exclusively to that object, without including, as a part of the defence, that his accusers and other critics were influenced by any unworthy motive.

Before returning from this discussion to the narrative of some of the events to which it has reference, it may not be useless to take

the opportunity of adverting to a most important principle in public life, which is often forgotten, at the right moments, by men who, knowing its truth, ought to bear it always in mind, as one to which there are very few exceptions. I feel the more anxious to put this matter in, what I think, its proper light, because there are many young and zealous officers extremely anxious to perform whatever they distinctly know to be their duty; yet who, from ignorance of the rule alluded to, often go astray, and sacrifice the public interest to unworthy and selfish considerations. What makes this a subject of more regret, is the certainty, that if the sources of their real duty—which, in the long run, will always turn out to be those of their own true interest—had been properly established in their minds, they would no more have flinched from discharging it correctly, through any fear of the consequences, than they would have hesitated to engage an enemy, whom it was right they should bring to action, merely because in the conflict they might lose their ships or their lives.

Every public servant, when called upon to act on any unforeseen emergency, or when he is thrown into situations left unprovided for by the instructions of his employers, ought to make up his mind to have his conduct judged, not always according to the aspect which things bore, in his eyes, at the moment when he was called upon to decide, but rather according to the situation which affairs seem to his employers to be in, at the moment when his conduct is brought under review. It may be said, with great truth, that in many cases this rule will press hard upon a man who has acted for the best, and who, indeed, under all the circumstances, might perhaps have behaved improperly had he adopted any other course than that for which he is eventually censured. Yet every officer who is worth his salt, as we say, will, at such periods of doubt, keep but one object in view—namely, the public service—and will never admit into his calculations, for a single instant, the probable effect which his measures may have upon himself. An officer's duty, in fact, like his allegiance, is one

and indivisible—it admits of no splitting or qualification; and he who allows his public conduct to be influenced in the slightest degree by its possible influence on his own fortunes, or even on his good name,—acts nearly as mischievous a part, though perhaps not so guilty a one, as he who deserts his colours for those of the enemy.

What is more common, however, than to hear officers holding petulant discussions with their official employers upon the merits of operations of which those superiors, from being themselves responsible to the country at large, are the only proper judges? Men of this litigious, self-sufficient temper, should make one of two resolutions;—either not to take employment at all, or, if they do accept a command, to acknowledge, without reserve, the full authority of their superiors. A thorough-bred, right-minded officer, indeed—that is, one whose whole heart is in his profession—will see no humiliation, but, on the contrary, the truest honour and public spirit, in being the first not only to acknowledge, but to feel, that he has been wrong, whenever

such shall be the decision of the responsible and qualified authorities under whom he is placed, and to whose judgment he shall have submitted all the circumstances of the case.

This unworthy and mistaken itch for justification perverts many otherwise noble spirits, often mars some of their brightest prospects, essentially retards the public service, irritates their superiors, and in nothing benefits the inferiors; who, the more they labour to make out a case, generally sink only the lower in public opinion.

Innumerable officers, indeed, who admit, in theory, the necessity and great advantages of subordination, and of hearty as well as respectful acquiescence in the wishes of their superiors in professional rank, cannot bear the smallest touch of censure, and seem never to dream of the possibility of their being themselves in the wrong. They conveniently cease to recollect, on these particular occasions, all their fine admissions about the value of due subordination, and quite forget that it is not their duty, but that of their official employers, to say what

is right and what is wrong. The moment they are visited by the slightest reprimand, or that they fail to gain all the applause they fancy they deserve, the interests of the service, at all other times deemed paramount, appear to fade before their eyes, and to become insignificant, in comparison with the mighty question, forsooth, of their being in error or not in error. This, and this alone, is what they struggle and fight for; and such is the pertinacity of your finished self-justifier, that he will weary out the patience of any superior but those of the most resolute and stern natures. It will, of course, not infrequently happen, that these justifiers have reason on their side, and that the censure of which they complain is really misapplied. What then?—Is the public service to stand still till every private affair of every ‘pelting petty officer’ is redressed? Is the whole fabric of public discipline to be made rickety because some of its higher members happen to be over rigid, or some of its inferior ones over sensitive? Surely not; and therefore every good officer, when his report has once been made, ought to be

prepared to take the consequences, manfully, whatever they be, without entering into justifications, and without supposing it possible his motives can be questioned.

These remarks, which apply chiefly to the lower departments of the service, and to the ordinary details of duty, require considerable modification when they are brought to bear on such stupendous responsibilities as that of Sir John Moore, or any other commander-in-chief, to whom a certain latitude of free action must in all cases be given. It may, indeed, often become a General's or an Admiral's duty to the country to justify the course of his proceedings, by collecting into one statement the scattered motives of a thousand measures, which conducted him to his final determination; and there can hardly be any question, that if Sir John Moore had lived, he would most promptly have done that for himself, which it has cost—perhaps necessarily—upwards of twenty years' time, and much anxious diligence on the part of his friends, to bring about—triumphantly it is true, but tardily, and in the teeth of much prejudice, and no small quantity of positive

error as to many material facts, and of ignorance as to many others.

Had this consummation, however, not been accomplished, and had Sir John Moore's memory, in consequence, gone down to posterity with its lustre dimmed by a misapprehension of the merits of his last campaign, and the want of a contemporary and well-qualified chronicler of its objects, conduct, and final results,—still, no right-minded officer, however well he might be aware of this signal act of injustice, ought ever to think of drawing from it any discouragement against the boldness of his own behaviour when called upon to act in similar circumstances. It is a hard position to be placed in, certainly; but, as I have repeated more than once, a public-spirited officer must be willing, at all times, to place, not only his life, but also his professional character, at hazard. If he be of a different stamp of mind, and do not choose to run such fearful risk, he may be a very good, conscientious, and diligent person, in his way,—but he will certainly never become a great commander.

There is a still farther and very delicate refinement wanting to complete this negative part in the definition of a perfect officer, which consists in his being ready to place even his private character in jeopardy, and sometimes to expose it almost to the certainty of misrepresentation, when the public service appears to demand so formidable a sacrifice. An honest man, on all such occasions, will ask himself but one question,—What is most advantageous for the country? and he will then follow the course directed by his best judgment, without reference to any personal consequences, good or bad, to which his measures may possibly lead.

It may be added, that in moments of severe trial, men are too apt to lose sight of the vital distinction between the imputation of dishonour and its reality. But in all such cases of doubt and difficulty, the only safe rule is, to remember, that the interests of the public service, any more than those of private life, can never be advanced by the least real sacrifice of principle.

CHAPTER XIII.

BATTLE OF CORUNNA.

As soon as Sir John Moore heard of Napoleon's march from Madrid, in the direction of Galicia, to which quarter it had been the General's sole object to allure his enemy, he gave orders for the retreat to commence. This was at the beginning of the last week in December, 1808; and as it was then proposed, that the troops should fall back upon Vigo, the transports were sent to that port from Corunna, as I have before mentioned. The convoy were afterwards joined at Vigo by a squadron of line-of-battle ships, under Sir Samuel Hood, to render the embarkation more secure.

On the 5th of January, 1809, however, Sir John Moore, who was then at Herrerias,

received from his engineers such reports of the unfitness of Vigo as a place of embarkation, that he changed his line of retreat, and directed his march upon Corunna. Orders to this effect were sent ahead to Sir David Baird, the second in command, from Sir John Moore, who, it appears, "constantly directed the movements of the rear-guard himself."* These orders, after reaching Sir David, were forwarded by the hands of a private dragoon, who got drunk, and lost them on their way to General Fraser, who had already proceeded for some distance on the road to Vigo. This trivial incident cost many lives, and was the cause of much delay.† I know not who had charge of the original despatches sent to the Admiral at Vigo, but they never came to hand. Several precious days were thus lost before we knew the ships would be again required at Corunna. At length, on the 9th of January, a memorandum from the commander-in-chief—a duplicate or triplicate it might be,

* Napier, vol. i. p. 478.

† Ibid. p. 479.

for aught we knew—written on a drum-head, apparently in the rain, but clear, soldier-like, and to the purpose, was put into Sir Samuel Hood's hands by an officer, half dead with fatigue and anxiety, who had found his way, on horseback, from the British head-quarters to Vigo, across the wild mountains of Galicia.

The wind blew dead in from the south, and so hard, that not one of the transports could be moved. The brief despatch from the army, however, was scarcely half read through, before the signal 'to weigh' was made from the Barfleur, and in less than half an hour the men-of-war were under sail, and working out to sea, under close-reefed top-sails and courses. I think they all got out; and when once round the point, the wind being fair to Corunna, away they spanked, with a flowing sheet, to tell we were coming after them as fast as we could, with our flock of three hundred transports.

On the 11th of January, the wind lulled a little, and, by dint of whip and spur, we got our immense fleet fairly under weigh.

By good fortune, too, we were enabled to work out of the Bay of Vigo, and afterwards to carry the wind with us all the way to Corunna, where we arrived on the morning of the 15th of January, surrounded by upwards of two hundred and fifty sail of ships. On the previous evening, the 14th of January, many of the fastest-sailing vessels of the convoy had entered the harbour of Corunna, where the squadron of men-of-war under Sir Samuel Hood had already arrived. The dismounted cavalry, the sick, some of the horses, and fifty-two pieces of artillery, were embarked during the night.

I have often since heard officers who were then with the army, in position along the ridge, just above where the battle was fought, describe the feelings with which they turned round to look at the ships crowding into the harbour, under all sail, right before the wind. The sight gave fresh spirits and confidence to the soldiers, of which, poor fellows, they stood in some need; for on their first arrival at Corunna, on the 11th of January, not a single ship had made her appearance.

“As the troops approached Corunna,” says Colonel Napier, “the General’s looks were directed towards the harbour;—an open expanse of water painfully convinced him that to fortune at least he was no way beholden. Contrary winds detained the fleet at Vigo; and the last consuming exertion made by the army was thus rendered fruitless!

“The men,” he continues, “were now put into quarters, and their leader awaited the progress of events. Three divisions occupied the town and suburbs; the reserve was posted with its left at El Burgo, and its right on the road of St. Jago de Compostella. For twelve days these hardy soldiers had covered the retreat, during which time they had traversed eighty miles of road in two marches, passed several nights under arms in the snow of the mountains, were seven times engaged with the enemy, and they now assembled at the outposts, having fewer men missing from their ranks (including those who had fallen in battle) than any other division in the army;—an ad-

mirable instance of the value of good discipline, and a manifest proof of the malignant injustice with which Sir John Moore has been accused of precipitating his retreat beyond the measure of human strength.”*

In the mean time, the enemy, treading closely on the heels of the English army, though not much less grievously fatigued, came gradually up, and, on the very day we arrived in the bay, “occupied the great ridge enclosing the British position, placing their right on the intersection of the roads leading from St. Jago and Betanzos, and their left upon a rocky eminence, which overlooked both lines.” †

Had the transports arrived a few days sooner, the whole army might have been embarked with perfect ease and safety, and thus all the objects of Sir John Moore’s operations would have been accomplished. His force was decidedly too small—considering the ruined state of the Spanish troops, and other circumstances in the political his-

* Napier, vol. i. p. 488.

† Ibid. p. 492.

tory of the country—to hold out any reasonable hope of coping with the grand army of Napoleon, now directed expressly against the British. Had the Admiral at Vigo received Sir John Moore's first despatch, in proper time, the transports and the line-of-battle ships might undoubtedly have reached Corunna soon enough to have taken the troops on board without the loss of a single man. With a force thus unbroken, a series of ulterior operations contemplated by Sir John Moore, might then have been put in execution.

“The English General,” says Col. Napier, “had hoped that by a quick retreat he might reach his ships unmolested, embark, and carrying his army from the narrow corner in which it was cooped, to the southern provinces, establish there a good base of operations, and renew the war under favourable circumstances. It was by this combination of a fleet and army that the greatest assistance could be given to Spain, and the strength of England become most formidable. A few days of sailing might carry the troops to

Cadiz; but six weeks' constant marching would not bring the French army from Galicia to that neighbourhood. The southern provinces had scarcely seen an enemy: they were rich and fertile; and there also, was the seat of government. Sir John Moore reckoned thus, and resolved to fall down to the coast and embark, with as little loss or delay as might be."*

It affords a mortifying, but an instructive lesson to recollect, that this plan, so admirable in itself, and so very nearly being accomplished, was in all probability frustrated, not by any great political or military event, but by the accidental interruption of the messengers sent across the country. If the General's despatches about the removal of the fleet had arrived a few days sooner, the lives of so many brave men who died at Corunna, including their great chief, might all have been spared, while their strength and valour might afterwards have been employed on more substantial objects than

* Napier, vol. i. p. 475.

fighting for the mere maintenance of the ground on which they stood.

In consequence of this delay, a battle appears to have become indispensable, or nearly so, to the safety of the army. "The late arrival of the transports, the increasing force of the enemy, and the disadvantageous nature of the ground, augmented the difficulty and danger of the embarkation so much, that several general officers proposed to the commander-in-chief that he should negotiate for leave to retire to the ships upon terms. There was little chance of such a proposal being agreed to by the enemy, and there was no reason to try. The army had suffered—but not from defeat; its situation was dangerous, but far from desperate; and the General would not consent to remove the stamp of energy and prudence which marked his retreat by a negotiation, which would have given an appearance of timidity and indecision to his previous operations, as opposite to their real character as light is to darkness. His high spirit and clear judgment revolted at the idea, and he re-

jected the degrading advice without hesitation."*

As we sailed into the harbour of Corunna on the morning of the 15th of January, we could distinctly make out with our glasses the two lines of troops; for although the ridge upon which the English were posted lay nearer to the sea, it was of such inconsiderable height compared with that occupied by the French, that we could discover the army of the enemy, mustering thick along the sky-line, and overlooking ours in a very ominous and threatening manner. Towards evening there was some skirmishing of a trivial nature on the right of our line, part of which we could distinguish from the mast-heads of the frigate.

Several horsemen were seen galloping up the bank which faced us till they reached the crown of the ridge, and then darting out of sight on the other side, where, from the quick firing of artillery, there appeared to be some smart work going on. By and by, also,

* Napier, vol. i. p. 492.

we discovered a cloud of smoke curling high into the air above both ranges of hills, just beyond the spot where the cavalry had been lost sight of. Of course, we busied ourselves in vain surmises as to what was passing in the valley beyond the ridge, for we naturally expected, that a general action would spring out of this brush. To our great disappointment, however, the firing gradually subsided; and our only chance, as we then believed, of seeing a land fight was gone.

These were the first shots we had heard fired in anger, as it is technically called, during the campaign; but the scene had also another, and very strong interest for us, from its being placed in such contrast with all we had been seeing and hearing for the two previous months. Here, at Corunna, instead of listening to a set of boasting Spaniards, fighting with the air, and vapouring from morning to night about their own prowess, we beheld the actual tug of war between Greek and Greek. The master spirits of the earth were at last met, hand to hand, to fight it out. Nor could I help

looking back to the solitude and tranquillity of the ground before me when I last had seen it. Now it was covered thick with armed men ; but only a few weeks before, I had rambled over these ridges, accompanied by a single Spanish peasant, whose whole conversation turned on the facility with which his countrymen could thrust all these French out of the country. During the whole morning we met only half a dozen people ; and I then little expected to see the time when an army of some twenty thousand British troops, should hardly be able to hold their own, against these very invaders, whom it was the fashion to hold so cheap.

When the night fell, a double row of fires along the summits of the two hills pointed out, in a very striking manner, the position of the rival hosts ; and although the distance was too great for us actually to hear the ' hum of either army,' the imagination was set finely to work to conjecture what thoughts were passing in the breast of each. The night was very dark ; and, as fresh fuel was piled on the fires, they were darkened

for a moment, or tossed into sudden blaze by being stirred up by the groups of soldiers, whom we saw, or fancied we saw, standing between us and the light. These figures were probably the men stationed to feed the flames; for we may well suppose that the great body of the troops on both sides were too glad to have a full night's repose. Our soldiers, indeed, had been amply supplied since reaching the coast with new shoes, great coats, and many other articles of dress, from the stores at Corunna; and were thus in a better condition than their enemies to profit by this interval of rest—to so many on both sides, the last they enjoyed on earth. Some of these exhausted warriors, we may suppose, dreamed of the next day's battle; for it was probably apparent to the officers, and to the experienced amongst the men, that Soult, with whom they had already joined in many a severe fight, would never allow his old antagonists to embark in peace and quiet. It is said that people, on the eve of an action, generally dream they are killed. I have no experience to offer on the point;

for though I witnessed the furious contest of next day, I had no expectation at that time of being able to leave the ship. In fact, I did not sleep at all, being employed nearly the whole night in the ship's boats embarking what are called the encumbrances of the army, consisting of the remainder of the baggage which the retreat had left them—some wounded and sick men, and a few guns and horses. In this curious assembly I observed several women, who, strange to say, had gone through the whole campaign, unbroken in spirit, and apparently not much fatigued. They even talked as if they had done no great things. We were much amused, likewise, by seeing an officer's servant with a huge violoncello under his charge, which he told us had accompanied his master all through the country from Lisbon.

It will easily be supposed that our curiosity to have a sight of the ground, and to talk with the soldiers on the field, was very great. We had small hopes, however, of being allowed to leave the ship at such a time; and I can never cease to feel grateful for

the kindness of the captain who allowed Mr. Oughton, the purser, and myself, to go on shore. Being personally acquainted with several of the officers in the army, we hoped to be able to find them out on the ground; but could scarcely give credit to the reality of our good fortune till we had left the boat, pushed our way through the town—which was in a shocking state of disorder—and found ourselves fairly on the great Madrid road, which cut across the positions of both armies nearly at right angles.

As the morning was fine, the scene looked highly picturesque, and, though painful in many respects, it possessed an uncommon degree of interest. I need hardly mention, that there was none of the show and flourish of a review to be seen here; for the soldiers lay scattered about wearied and dispirited, ragged in their dress, and many of them sickly, or rather broken down in appearance, by the fatigues of this celebrated retreat. Most of their chins had been untouched by a razor for some days, perhaps weeks, while their hands and faces being rather less fami-

liar with soap and water than with the smoke of their muskets, and the charcoal of their cooking fires, gave evidence enough of the want of comforts to which the army had been so long exposed. The muskets of the troops were piled in pyramids along the ridge amongst the men who were stretched on the ground fast asleep—not in any very precise order, but still within a few yards on either side of the summit line of the ridge. I observed many of these hardy fellows lying on their backs, with their hands under their heads, and faces half covered by what remained of a hat, becoming still more deeply tanned in the sun. Many, however, were sitting on the grass, or on the loose blocks of granite which covered the ground, and looking in silence with very wistful eyes towards the ships.

Along the whole line of troops, however, I observed only one or two of the officers asleep. Generally speaking, they were collected into little knots, looking about them, but seldom speaking. In fact, one of the things which struck me most, was the pro-

found, almost melancholy silence, which prevailed amongst so many thousands of men. As our spirits were not weighed down by any of the depressing causes which affected these gentlemen, we talked away merrily to the officers; but, in most cases, were disappointed to find so little animation amongst them. We forgot how differently from our own their lives had lately been spent. We had been amusing ourselves in ease and in comfort, and doing every thing we could to fill our imaginations with visions of Spanish patriotism, national sacrifices, and individual exertion, without having actually seen or heard any thing to shew how frothy all this was. The army, on the other hand, had been marching, fighting, and starving, almost without intermission, since the day on which we landed them two months before. The Spaniards, their nominal allies, had gone off to the right about at the first charge of French bayonets. The whole country through which the English troops had to retreat proved the very reverse of friendly; the season also was rigorous, and, consequently,

the labours of the soldiers became hopeless, severe, and incessant. Was it, therefore, surprising that what is called enthusiasm was an article hardly to be found in the camp?

We began our morning's excursion nearly at the left of the British position, in the midst of Sir John Hope's division; and then, turning to the right hand, threaded our way amongst the sleeping soldiers, piled muskets, and camp equipage, along the whole line, till the ridge upon which the army was in position lost itself in the valley, just opposite to the high rocky knoll, forming the extreme left of the ground occupied by the French. The 95th, the well-known Rifle corps, were stationed hereabouts; and I was happy to find an old friend alive and merry amongst the officers of this regiment. These gentlemen were in greater spirits than most of the others whom we had conversed with. We were surprised, indeed, to find them laughing heartily, and, upon asking the cause of their mirth, were shewn a good-sized pig the regimental cooks were cutting up for a din-

ner which they said would be ready in a few minutes. It seems this unfortunate grunter had been disturbed by the French pickets near the village of Elvina, just in front of the spot where the 95th were stationed. He had made good his retreat, as he thought, but fell right upon our friends the sharpshooters, who in a trice charged and despatched him with their swords and bayonets. These merry soldiers, delighted with their good luck, pressed us much to stay and partake of their windfall; but we wished to retrace our steps along a part of the line, so as to gain the road to Corunna, and return on board before sunset, as we had been ordered.

On asking them what chance there was of our seeing a battle, the officers shrugged their shoulders, and said they had already had quite enough of that work. There was no earthly advantage to be gained, they said, even by victory, while a reverse would now be a very serious, perhaps desperate, affair; and therefore, they had but one wish, which was, to get snugly on board the ships and be

off from such a rascally country, and such a dastardly, procrastinating, pompous set of useless allies, as the Spaniards.

“Nevertheless,” we remarked, “you would, no doubt, make a good figure still if you were put to it?”

“I don’t know that,” one of them said; “look at the men—they are all worn out, and disheartened—if they are not sleeping, or eating whatever they can get hold of, they are looking at the vessels, and thinking only of home. Like us, indeed, they are wishing for any thing but an attack from those confounded fellows over the way.”

Upon this we parted — they to their welcome dinner, while we retraced our steps amongst the weary soldiers, who certainly did look in such a miserable plight, that it seemed as if the enemy would have little more to do than gallop across the valley and catch them all napping.

Colonel Napier remarks, however, cleverly enough, in his account of this campaign, that, “although a British army may be gleaned in a retreat, it cannot be reaped:” and of

this we had abundant proofs within a few minutes after the wretched appearance of the troops had drawn from us such disparaging reflections. I had but just asked the commanding officer of one of the regiments—I forget which, near the top of the position—whether he thought any thing could possibly rouse the men up? In reply, he said, with a very expressive smile, and a slight nod of his head, implying that even then he suspected what was about to take place, “You’ll see by and by, sir, if the French there choose to come over.”

These words were hardly uttered when a movement along the whole enemy’s line became apparent even to our inexperienced eyes. Almost at the instant when this stir was observed, a furious cannonading was opened from a battery mounting eleven guns—eight and twelve pounders—of the existence of which, I believe, no person on our side had previously the smallest suspicion, for up to this moment it had been completely masked. This formidable battery, which overhung the right of our position, was so

placed that it raked nearly the half of the British line, and, of course, the fire from it galled the troops excessively. Had we remained to share the picknick with our friends of the 95th, we must have partaken likewise of the first salvo from these French guns, and, in all probability, this story of the action might never have fallen into naval hands.

The effect of these characteristic preparatory notes of war, was extremely curious. At the first discharge from the French battery, the whole body of the British troops, from one end of the line to the other, started on their feet, snatched up their arms, and formed themselves with as much regularity and apparent coolness as if they had been exercising on the parade in Hyde Park. I really could scarcely believe my eyes when I saw these men spring from the ground as if touched by a magic wand, all full of life and vigour, though but one minute before they had been stretched out listlessly in the sun. I have already noticed the silence which reigned over the field — now, how-

ever, there was a loud hum, and occasionally a shout, and many a burst of laughter, along a distance of nearly a mile—in the midst of which sound the peculiar sharp click-click of fixing bayonets fell distinctly on the ear.

Many thousand stand of new arms had been issued to the troops from the stores at Corunna; and I could observe the men rapping the flints, tightening the screws, and tossing about their firelocks, with the air of veteran sportsmen eager for a shot to try their new pieces. The officers, up to this moment so languid, were seen every where brushing along the line, speaking to the sergeants, and making arrangements, which we did not pretend to understand. Aides-de-camp galloped past us, dropping their orders into the ears of the commanding officers of the different corps as they moved swiftly along the position. Not a single face was now turned towards the ships, and we could scarcely get a soul to answer one of our questions. All was animation and cheerfulness over minds from which, but a short

time before, it seemed as if every particle of spirit had fled. There appeared to be much conversation going on, and not a little jesting amongst the men, while they were bracing themselves up, buckling on their knapsacks, and making various other arrangements, preparatory to the hard work they foresaw they would have to perform before the night fell. Their kits, or stock of clothes, none of which were very large, were soon placed on their shoulders; and in a very few minutes the army was perfectly ready to meet that of the enemy, who by this time was pelting rapidly down the side of the opposite heights, in three immense close columns.

I have no precise notion how many men might be in each of these square, solid masses — I think I have heard it stated at six or seven thousand. They kept steadily together, looked as dark as the blackest thunder cloud I ever saw; and, I must say, their appearance was the most imposing and formidable thing I recollect to have seen, either before or since.

On the English side there were only about

a dozen small guns, which made but a feeble return to the fierce attack of the enemy's great raking battery, which continued tearing open the English ranks in dreadful style, until the two armies became so completely intermixed in personal conflict, that the enemy's shot could no longer be directed with certainty against their antagonists, without an equal chance of hitting their friends.

When it was found, at the commencement of the action, that the English guns could make no serious impression on the heavy artillery of the battery, they had been turned upon the huge French columns, which, by this time, had reached the level space, less than a mile in width, lying between the bases of the two ranges of hills. The round and grape with which the enemy's columns were saluted as they came across the valley, in some degree avenged the havoc wrought on the right, and part of the centre of our line, by the raking broadsides of the battery so often alluded to.

Mr. Oughton and I were near the centre of the line when the battle commenced; but

as the ground thereabouts was rather flat, we found it difficult to see well into the valley, and, therefore, climbed an abrupt rising ground on the left of the English position, on which two or three regiments were posted, as we thought, in reserve. I see no mention, however, of these corps in the accounts of the battle, and I presume they must have belonged to the main line. About half way up this rising ground, but rather lower than the spot where these troops were stationed, three English field-pieces were placed. The guns had been working away briskly at the French columns ever since the enemy came within range of shot, and they were still firing at the rear of the three great masses, the heads of which were, by this time, actually mingled in the plain with the British troops, in and round the village of Elvina.

The intermixture of the combatants on this day was probably rendered greater than usual, in consequence of the peculiar nature of the ground. It could hardly be called a plain, for it was crossed in all directions by roads cut into the earth like deep trenches,

eight or ten feet below the surface; while on the ground above there was spread a complete net-work of walls, hedges, and rows of trees, of such intricacy that, I should imagine, it was nearly impossible to form fifty men abreast any where. Thus, each corn-field, or little patch of garden ground, became the scene of a separate fight.

We were quite near enough to see the soldiers scrambling over the walls, and meeting one another in these open spaces, or amongst the trees, while the smoke and the flashes of musketry from the hollow roads shewed that a subterranean sort of warfare was going on at the same time. To us the field of battle certainly looked as complete a scene of confusion as any thing could possibly be, and I suppose it must have presented nearly a similar aspect even to the more practised observation of the commander of the destructive French battery on our right; for, about the period I speak of, he ceased firing at the troops, and turned all his attention towards the few English field-pieces which I have already spoken of.

Heretofore we had been viewing the fray from a gentle slope, several hundred yards in front of these English guns, but so considerably below them in level, that their shot passed far over our heads. When this great flanking battery, however, set seriously about silencing the fire of our artillery, which, as I have mentioned before, were playing away upon those parts of the French columns not yet mingled with their antagonists, our position, as mere spectators, became rather an unpleasant one. The small six-pound shot of the English field-pieces had whistled over us merrily enough; but when the heavy metal of the enemy came spinning and screaming about our ears, the story told quite differently. Some of these balls went completely over the English guns, grazed the crest of the ridge, and, falling on the high road, rolled down the other side of the hill half-way to Corunna. Several hit our guns, and made a fine scatter amongst the artillery men; while every shot that fell short came plump into the little hollow space where we nautical men had established ourselves, and

from which we had proposed to view the battle at our ease—as if it had merely been a panoramic representation of war, instead of one of the severest struggles in which two angry nations had ever been engaged.

The purser and I now held a council of war, and the proverbial result of such deliberations followed. We agreed, unanimously, that, under existing circumstances, a retreat was the proper measure. The French gunners, as if to quicken our prudent resolution, just at that moment pitched a shot so critically, that it fell between the two amateurs, and threw the dirt and stones quite over us. The feeling produced on both our minds by this broad hint was, that the shot must have been aimed expressly at us; but although this was probably not the case, we took the warning in good part, and moved off towards a rising ground still farther to the left, and two or three hundred yards out of the direct line of fire.

Here we had the great advantage of making acquaintance with the colonel and the other officers of one of the regiments of the line.

The colonel, whose name I do not recollect, had a pocket spy-glass in his hand, and very kindly described to us the nature of the different movements as they took place. By this time the centre, and a portion of the left of the English line, were gradually becoming engaged in the valley; but the severest fighting appeared to be still at the village of Elvina, which we could easily distinguish was sometimes in possession of one party, sometimes of the other. The uncertainty, indeed, of what was going on was greatly augmented by the broken nature of the ground, which, I suppose, prevented any manœuvre on the grand scale; but this circumstance may probably have taken nothing from the fierceness of those mortal struggles, which we could discover, from time to time, in the open spaces, when a puff of wind blew the smoke on one side.

The road leading into Corunna, and lying between us and the severest part of the action, was at no great distance. It was soon covered along its whole length with wounded men—some walking alone—some supported

—and a good many were laid in carts. We observed Sir David Baird led or carried off the field: we could not exactly make out which, but I think he was walking. Shortly afterwards another and a larger group passed, bearing along a wounded officer. It was evident, from the appearance which this party presented, that some person of consequence was under their charge, and while we were trying to discover who it could possibly be that engaged so much attention, an officer rode up the hill. After he had delivered his message, he pointed to the party which had just gone by, and told us, that in the centre was carried along their brave commander-in-chief, Sir John Moore, who, a few minutes before, had been struck off his horse by a cannon-shot.

The command now devolved upon Sir John Hope, whom we could readily distinguish from his being surrounded not only by his own staff, but by the aides-de-camp of his two wounded senior officers.

I shall not seek to describe how greatly the interest of this scene, so new to us in all

its parts, and so remarkable in itself, was heightened by these proofs of the serious nature of the conflict. The colonel of the regiment along with which we had taken up our station, was just saying to us,—“ Well, gentlemen, I don't know how you get on at sea—but I certainly never saw on land a hotter fire than this ”—when a second breathless messenger came galloping up, and ordered him to carry his brigade as smartly as he could down to the right, to support some regiments which were severely pressed in that quarter. In a very few minutes, accordingly, we were left quite alone, on the summit of the ridge, watching with a painful degree of interest the movements of our newly made and newly lost acquaintances, who went trotting off, at double quick time, right down the hill, and ere long were lost sight of in the thick of the action. So completely, indeed, were they enveloped in smoke and dust, that we could only distinguish their presence by the movement in advance of the British line, which took place on the right almost immediately after their arrival.

The battle, which had commenced nearly at the foot of the English hill, had gradually, though not without several fluctuations, moved itself forward towards the French side of the valley; and the much-contested village of Elvina remained finally in our possession.

I believe I am not strictly correct in saying that this village was opposite to the right of the British army, though it was not far from that portion of the position, which rested on the elevated ground. We could observe some smart fighting still farther to the right beyond the termination of the ridge between the English reserve and the French cavalry. But of this I can record nothing with confidence, because the scene of action was too far off for us to see distinctly, or even to guess what they were about. I remember, however, hearing one of the officers of the regiment we were conversing with say, that the British troops would be in rather an awkward scrape if the enemy succeeded in turning our right, and afterwards pushed themselves down the valley, so as to

take up a position between Corunna and the army. Instead of this happening, the left of the French was fortunately repulsed, and even driven considerably back, though, I believe, never fairly turned.

As the battle did not commence till between two and three o'clock in the afternoon, and was very obstinately contested on both sides, no great time was allowed, before the night set in, for those important manœuvres which form so much of the interest of battles. All was sheer hard fighting. The eventual advantage, however, was manifestly on the side of the English, for it was easy to distinguish that the struggle was carried on towards the end of the day at a position removed considerably in advance of that on which the English had stood when they were first attacked. What might have been the result if the ground had been clear of hedges, ditches, walls, and deep roads, I cannot pretend to say; but it struck me at the time, when looking down, with a sort of bird's eye view on the battle, that, cut up as the ground was, there could be little communi-

cation to the right and left between the different bodies of fighting men, and consequently, that each regiment or mass must have acted very much for itself—somewhat in the way ships of war do in a general action. Cavalry, I imagine, could not have been brought into play on such ground; and indeed, there were no horses in the battle—on our side, at least—except those of the field-officers and their aides-de-camp.

What I regretted most was not seeing the French battery taken; and, from Colonel Napier's account, it appears, that if General Fraser's division had been brought into action along with the reserve at the close of the day, this might have been accomplished, after which the enemy could hardly have escaped a signal overthrow.*

It must have cost Sir John Hope a great effort of military self-denial to have resisted such a temptation; "but, on the other hand," observes the judicious historian, "to continue the action in the dark was to tempt

* Napier, vol. i. p. 498.

fortune, for the enemy were still the most numerous, and their ground was strong. The disorder the French were in offered such a favourable opportunity to get on board the ships, that Sir John Hope, upon whom the command of the army had devolved, satisfied with having repulsed the attack, judged it more prudent to pursue the original plan of embarking during the night; and this operation was effected without delay, the arrangements being so complete that neither confusion nor difficulty occurred.”*

* Napier, vol. i. p. 498.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE EVENING AFTER THE BATTLE.

UNFORTUNATELY, we could not remain till the very last upon our elevated look-out station, from whence we had commanded so complete a view of this hard-fought field, but were obliged to come down shortly after sunset, that we might get on board, if possible, before dark. We took the shortest way from the top of the hill by a little foot path, leading along a steep bank, till we gained the great Corunna high road. By this time the whole space between the field of battle and the town was pretty well crowded with wounded men, and stragglers of all kinds, wending their way, as well as they might, towards the point of embarkation.

The first person we met, on coming to the

road, was an elderly officer, I think of the 50th regiment, supported by a private soldier on one side, and leaning on his sword with the other hand. We helped him to gain a seat near the door of a little cottage, which we could see had been used as a temporary hospital, from the numerous wounded, dead, and dying men stretched all round it. This situation being on the face of the hill next the town, was not liable to be struck by any direct fire from the enemy, and the chance of any stray shots plunging into it, over the top of the ridge, was not great.

The old officer's face was so pale, that a streak of blood along his brow and cheek, though not broader than a thread, was as conspicuous as if it had been a line drawn on a sheet of paper. That he had received a serious wound, was evident; but we had not the least idea he was dying.

"I should like the doctor to look at my head," he said; and in a minute or two the surgeon came from the cottage. He took off the officer's cap, cut away some of the hair, looked closely at the wound, and then paused.

“Well—sir—what—say—you?” asked the wounded man, whose words dropped slowly and laboriously from his lips.

“This is no time to trifle, sir,” replied the surgeon, for whom a dozen miserable sufferers were calling out; “and I am sorry to tell you this wound is mortal. It is my duty to tell you that you have but a short time to live!”

“Indeed, I feared so,” groaned the poor man. “And yet,” he sighed, “I should like very much to live a little longer—if it were possible.”

He spoke no more, but laid his sword on a large stone by his side, as gently as if its steel had been turned to glass, and that he was fearful of breaking it. What he meant by this action, we knew not; for he sunk dead on the grass almost immediately afterwards.

On regaining the road, we were loudly appealed to by so many voices of men suffering from their wounds, and in despair of ever reaching the boats, that we knew not which way to turn, or what to do. At first

we gave our arms to those nearest us who could walk; but on these wretched men failing, and others struggling to gain our assistance, it became quite evident that we should never reach the shore if we did not close our ears to these supplications. In fact, we were just resolving — hard-hearted as it may seem—to walk along as fast as we could without heeding the wounded and dying, when a number of artillery waggons, sent from the city, came galloping along, with orders to glean up all the sufferers who could not readily find their way alone.

As we came nearer to Corunna, we found this precaution had already been taken, so that such of the wounded people as we now fell in with on foot—and these were many hundreds—were trudging on, I can hardly call it merrily, but certainly with a degree of animation, which, considering the frightful predicament of many of them, was truly wonderful. Generally speaking, indeed, the soldiers displayed a great degree of fortitude. We passed one cart filled with men, none of whom uttered a complaint, though I could

observe more than one stream of blood trickling on the road, through the openings between the planks.

There was hardly any twilight left when we entered the town, but, in consequence of orders given to illuminate the houses in the streets leading to the places of embarkation, no difficulty arose in marching the troops to the boats; an operation which, for obvious reasons, was purposely delayed till it was quite dark.

When the action was ended, and the army withdrawn to the position they had occupied in the morning, every demonstration was made of an intention to retain possession of the ground. In this view, large fires were kindled along the line, and these being kept up during the whole night, effectually deceived the enemy, and gave time for the different corps not only to retire at leisure in good order, but to embark almost as regularly as if nothing had happened. Such is the effect of discipline well understood.

These troops, apparently broken down in spirits, and well nigh worn out with bodily

fatigue and numberless privations, were called upon suddenly, to mix in hot fight with a powerful enemy; and then, at the close of the day, after repulsing their assailants, instead of being allowed to repose, were required to march at once to the beach for embarkation. Yet this service was executed in as regular order as if the men had been filing off a parade.

Each soldier took his place in the boats, and was rowed on board the particular ship destined to receive him. It may not be uninteresting to mention, that, on visiting the field before the battle, we found the officers of each regiment in possession of tickets, specifying the name and number of the transport in which their corps was to be embarked. Accordingly, when the troops marched into Corunna in the middle of the night, they proceeded, without any halt, straight to the shore, where they found the men-of-war's barges and launches, and the flat-bottomed boats of the transports, all ranged in order ready to receive them. As soon as it was known what regiment was

approaching, a certain number of the boats were brought to the edge of the beach—no noise or confusion took place—the soldiers stepped in—the word was given to shove off, and in half an hour the empty boats were on their way back again to the point of embarkation, having deposited these gallant freights in their respective vessels—and happy enough, we may well believe, they must have been to find rest for their feet at last.

The loss of our great commander-in-chief, however, added much to the gloom which, in spite of the success attending the contest of the day, hung on every one's mind. A retreat, and a night embarkation, are unpleasant circumstances at any time; but I must say, that nothing during the whole of these memorable scenes excited my admiration more than the cheerfulness with which the harassed soldiers bore so many inevitable, but trying humiliations. Their gallant bearing in the morning, when assailed by the formidable columns of the enemy, was certainly very brilliant; and still more ad-

mirable did their courage appear, when standing inactive, to have their ranks ploughed up by the French battery so often mentioned. Although nothing could well be more striking than their unflinching steadiness under such trials, I am not sure if their genuine stamina, and merit as soldiers, were not fully as much evinced in their subsequent orderly demeanour, when the excitement of action was past, and when the darkness rendered it easy for any man to straggle, without the possibility of detection. The true spirit of discipline, which teaches men to do right because it is right, then came into useful play. Each man knew his duty, and wished to perform it, consequently the whole body—some fifteen or twenty thousand in number—marched from the field to the boats almost with the regularity of a corporal's guard going its rounds. Who shall say, that a retreat, which left the troops in condition to fight such a battle, and to preserve such order afterwards, was not a successful military operation?

The details of Sir John Moore's death are

now well known, and need not, therefore, be repeated here; but at the time I am speaking of, they were new to every one, and were well calculated to produce a great effect. During the whole night after the battle, while the troops were embarking, and in the early part of which their late commander's body was consigned to its truly military grave, his dying remark, that he had always wished to end his days thus—his exultation at the success of his last engagement,—and his satisfaction at the conduct of the soldiers,—were passed eagerly from mouth to mouth, and appeared to be considered by the army as an ample recompense for all the hardships they had endured on the retreat, so mournfully, but, at the same time, so gloriously ended.

The embarkation of the troops was not entirely finished when the day broke on the morning of the 17th of January; and had not Corunna been a fortified place, the enemy might have rushed on, and greatly harassed, if not cut off the rear. As it was, the pickets and other detachments from the different

corps, left to keep the fires lighted, had to scamper for it briskly enough; for the French cavalry were pushed forward at the first peep of dawn, to ascertain what was the situation of affairs. The bird was flown, however—the camp empty—and only a long line of well-heaped fires remained to shew the diligence of the last lingerers on the field. The enemy put spurs to their horses as soon as they made out that the troops were gone. Having galloped briskly over the ridge, they had the mortification to see the last of the retiring pickets crowding into the gates of Corunna under cover of the guns of the fort, which were manned partly by the rear-guard of the British army, and partly by the Spaniards, who behaved, upon this occasion, with a degree of steadiness in the cause of their allies, which deserves particular mention, as it was almost the only instance in which the English forces had been effectually seconded by the people they came to assist. The baffled troopers of the French pulled up their horses, on coming within range of the grape and canister shot

from the works; and thus terminated the second campaign of the great Peninsular war.

Shortly afterwards, we could see from the boats, as we passed to and from the shore to the transports, the heads of the enemy's columns shewing themselves, one by one, over the tops of the ridge on which the English had been posted, and presently the whole of that part of the ground which faced the harbour was speckled with French troops. In the course of the day, also, we could distinctly hear the drums of the different regiments as they came down the hill; and this reminds me, that during the whole morning of the previous day, before the battle, we heard the enemy's bands of music playing at different places along the top of their position, which, as I have said before, overlooked the comparatively low ground where the British army were posted.

Our army was not in so showy a condition; for I almost question if there could have been found a clarinet or a bassoon in the whole line. There were plenty of newly-

supplied drums, indeed, whose clean parchment heads, and shining sides, made the tattered dresses and chafed accoutrements of the soldiers, in every other department of their equipment, only the more conspicuous. I well remember, also, the animating rattle made by some forty or fifty of these drums stationed along the British line, when the fierce and reiterated salvos of the French battery first roused up the troops, and made them stand to their arms. There was something uncommonly striking in listening at such a moment to sounds which we had been accustomed, time out of mind, to associate with mere reviews and parades, but which were now addressed to men engaged in real service—perhaps for the last time.

These, and many other similar reflections, crowded fast upon our thoughts, and fixed themselves indelibly in our minds. It is a great mistake to suppose that, on occasions of such high excitement, we are not in a mood, or have not leisure to moralize; on the contrary, I believe it is precisely at such periods that the imagination has most power,

and its combinations are the most numerous and impressive. Shakspeare appears to have well understood this principle of our nature : and those critics who object to some speeches of Lady Constance, and others of his characters, on the score of their indulging, out of season, in fantastic similes to express highly-excited passion, can hardly have had the means of judging, from actual experience, of what strange and apparently incongruous materials our feelings are made up. . . .

The French, as they approached Corunna, were not slack in bringing up those heavy guns which had harassed our position in such style the day before, and trying their efficacy on the ships. It was playing at long bowls, indeed, for the point to which the guns were brought must have been more than a mile off, and, being much elevated above the sea, the balls were plunged at random amongst the fleet of transports. Had the battery been low down on the beach, so that the shot had been made to boom along the surface of the water, they might perhaps have done some real mischief. As it was, however, they only excited a bustle

amongst the merchant ships, many of which cut their cables, and, as the wind was fair, they drifted out of the harbour in groups of eight or ten in a body. I need not explain, I suppose, that transports are merely trading vessels, hired by government for the exclusive purpose of carrying troops; and as they are neither armed, nor commanded by officers, they are not calculated for any warlike purposes. Consequently, when they found the shot dropping amongst them, they considered themselves quite out of place, and scrambled off as fast as they could. There was something rather indecent, it is true, in the hurry of these pacific gentlemen, and something comical also. I was rowing past one transport, when the boat was hailed by a military officer. We lay upon our oars to hear what he had to say.

“ I wish you would give us some help here,” he cried; “ we are all soldiers on board, and don’t know how to get the anchor up, or how to set the sails.”

“ Where’s the master and his crew ?” we asked.

“ O,” replied the soldier, laughing, “ the

scamps took to their boat upon a shot passing between the masts; and here we are, a parcel of land lubbers, as you see, willing enough to work, shot or no shot, if you will be good enough to put us in the way."

As the ship by which we had been hailed was already full of troops, I put a midshipman and a couple of the boat's crew on board, and then proceeded with the fifty men we were embarking. Presently I saw my friends—the soldier-sailors—heaving up their anchor, and making sail in perfectly good style. The raggamuffin of a skipper joined his vessel off the port, and the midshipman returned with many thanks from the troops, who had been so unhandsomely deserted.

Another transport, however, lying considerably in shore of the one which we relieved, and, consequently, all the nearer to the battery, got under weigh in the most deliberate style imaginable, made sail regularly, and, having accidentally cast the wrong way on tripping her anchor, did not wear-round with her head off shore, but filled upon the larboard tack, and stood on,

nearing the guns more and more every minute, and drawing all their fire upon her. After a time she tacked, and sailed leisurely out to sea, actually delaying to make all sail till she was beyond the reach of shot.

This well-managed and very creditable little incident restored the good humour of the whole fleet, as well as that of the troops, justly irritated at the pusillanimity of some of their unwarlike countrymen. There was afterwards much laughing at each ineffectual discharge of the distant guns on the heights.

Meanwhile, three, if not four, of the transports, which lay nearest to the town of Corunna, managed matters so ill, that on cutting their cables, without first having their sails properly set, they could not clear the point, and so went plump ashore, just inside a small rocky island, on which the castle of San Antonio is built, at the distance of two or three hundred yards from the walls at the north-western angle of the city. The hard granite on which Corunna stands being an overmatch for the ribs of these vessels, very soon pierced their sides, and laid them on

their beam ends. It cost a dozen boats a full hour's labour to remove the troops to other transports. But even these provoking shipwrecks proved, as will be seen presently, highly useful to the purpose then in hand—the orderly embarkation of the rear guard—and the other remaining troops, consisting of several thousand chosen men, who still kept the enemy at bay, while their comrades were passing from the shore to the fleet.

A midshipman, I believe of the *Ville de Paris*, had been sent with a message to Sir Samuel Hood, who superintended the embarkation of the army. On his way to the landing-place, he observed the transports alluded to bilged and deserted, and having done his errand, and being in no great hurry to return, he pulled between the castle of San Antonio and the sally-port which opens from the salient angle of the bastion, forming the extreme point of the principal works in that quarter of the citadel.

“It would be a great shame,” quoth the middy, “if these vessels, wrecked though they be, should fall into the hands of the

French ; so I shall go on board and set fire to them."

This was accordingly done ; but although there rose a considerable smoke from the wrecks during the afternoon, the flames did not burst out till about an hour or two after sunset, almost at the moment named for assembling the launches and barges of the fleet to embark the rear-guard. Every thing was so well arranged, and the discipline of the troops so admirable, that, although the night was exceedingly dark, we might probably have got all the men on board before morning, without any serious difficulty or disorder. But by means of the splendid illumination, caused by these burning ships, stranded within less than a hundred yards of the sally-port, the soldiers were enabled to march down to the boats in companies, and embark with as much ease and celerity as if it had been noonday. The whole operation was thus accomplished, not only without the loss of a man, or the occurrence of a single accident, but in about one quarter of the time it must have taken in the dark. This

was on the evening of the 17th of January, 1809, the day after the battle; and, before breakfast-time next morning, the whole fleet of men-of-war and transports were standing out to sea.

As we in the *Endymion* had the exclusive charge of the convoy of transports, we remained to the very last, to assist the ships with provisions, and otherwise to regulate the movements of the stragglers. Whilst we were thus engaged, and lying to, with our main-topsail to the mast, a small Spanish boat came alongside, with two or three British officers in her. On these gentlemen being invited to step up, and say what they wanted, one of them begged we would inform him where the transport No. 139 was to be found?

“How can we possibly tell you that?” said the officer of the watch. “Don’t you see the ships are scattered as far as the horizon in every direction? You had much better come on board this ship in the mean time.”

“No, sir, no,” cried the officers; “we

have received directions to go on board the transport 139, and her we must find."

"What is all this about?" inquired the captain of the *Endymion*; and being told of the scruples of the strangers, insisted upon their coming up. He very soon explained to them the utter impossibility, at such a moment, of finding out any particular transport amongst between three and four hundred ships, every one of which was following her own way. We found out afterwards that they only were apprehensive of having it imagined they had designedly come to the frigate for better quarters. Nothing, of course, was farther from our thoughts; indeed, it was evidently the result of accident. So we sent away their little boat, and just at that moment the gun-room steward announced breakfast. We invited our new friends down, and gave them a hearty meal in peace and comfort—a luxury they had not enjoyed for many a long and rugged day.

Our next care was to afford our tired warriors the much-required comforts of a razor and clean linen. We divided the party

amongst us; and I was so much taken with one of these officers, that I urged him to accept such accommodation as my cabin and wardrobe afforded. He had come to us without one stitch of clothes beyond what he then wore, and these, to say the truth, were not in the best condition, at the elbows and other angular points of his frame. Let that pass,—he was as fine a fellow as ever stepped; and I had much pride and pleasure in taking care of him during the passage.

We soon became great friends; but on reaching England we parted, and I never saw him more. Of course he soon lost sight of me; but his fame rose high, and, as I often read his name in the Gazettes during the subsequent campaigns in the Peninsula, I looked forward with a gradually increasing anxiety to the renewal of an acquaintance begun so auspiciously. At last I was gratified by a bright flash of hope in this matter, which went out, alas, as speedily as it came.

Not quite six years after these events, I came home from India, in command of a sloop of war. Before entering the channel,

we fell in with a ship which gave us the first news of the battle of Waterloo, and spared us a precious copy of the Duke of Wellington's despatch; and within five minutes after landing at Portsmouth, I met a near relation of my own. This seemed a fortunate rencontre, for I had not received a letter from home for nearly a year—and I eagerly asked him,—

“What news of all friends?”

“I suppose,” he said, “you know of your sister's marriage?”

“No, indeed! I do not!—which sister?”

He told me.

“But to whom is she married?” I cried out with intense impatience, and wondering greatly that he had not told me this at once.

“Sir William de Lancey was the person,” he answered. But he spoke not in the joyous tone that befits such communications.

“God bless me!” I exclaimed. “I am delighted to hear that. I know him well—

we picked him up in a boat, at sea, after the battle of Corunna, and I brought him home in my cabin in the *Endymion*. I see by the despatch, giving an account of the late victory, that he was badly wounded—How is he now?—I observe by the postscript to the Duke's letter, that strong hopes are entertained of his recovery."

"Yes," said my friend, "that was reported, but could hardly have been believed. Sir William was mortally wounded, and lived not quite a week after the action. The only comfort about this sad matter is, that his poor wife, being near the field at the time, joined him immediately after the battle, and had the melancholy satisfaction of attending her husband to the last!"

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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