THE VESSEL WAS A TOTAL WRECK. THE SANDS TORN UP.

THE

WRECKING OF THE SAMPHIRE

A Tale of Adventure.

BY

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"THE QUEEN'S [illegible]," "THE SEARCH FOR THE TALISMAN," ETC.

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PREFACE.

A VERY few lines of introduction will serve for this tale; but there is one portion of it, or rather one incident in it, —the discovery of the well which gave admittance to the Smugglers' Cave,– which I must acknowledge as a fact. Such a well and such a cave exist in Kent. To a kind neighbour I am indebted for their description, which in a great measure influenced me to write this story. Under these circumstances, I venture to dedicate the tale to my friend, MRS. WALKER, who supplied the details, and I trust she will accept this acknowledgment of her kindness and of the trouble taken on my behalf.

H. F.

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THE WRECKING OF THE SAMPHIRE.

CHAPTER I.

THE WHY AND THE WHEREFORE.

The reader will first require to be informed how it happened that Percy Cornish and his sister Kate were left alone, and so unprotected, under the care of such an unscrupulous person as Mr. Hewson, the lawyer.

To this very natural desire I will respond in this first chapter, and also explain some other circumstances which will have a bearing upon many events which will be narrated. By the little peep behind the scenes you will be enabled to judge of the action

of the drama which will be enacted in the succeeding chapters. So I (the writer) will explain.

In the first place, then, I, the writer, am not the hero of this story nor of its many adventures. Where you read *I* it will not be my *I* or *mi-hi*. When you read of my 'uncle' or guardian, he is not mine; and when you read of sister Katie, she was not mine; not my *sister*, that is; for she was 'my Katie'—my wife—Percy's sister—Katie Cornish; and Percy is the hero.

Then who am I? It does not matter much. You will find I am in the story as writer—as the penman; but Percy is the narrator. My name you will learn in good time. Cornish is the hero, and Katie the heroine—if she can be called so.

Mr. Cornish, his wife, and two children, lived near when I was studying for the navy at the residence of a more or less private tutor. The place was called Castle Field. In the neighbourhood resided many nice people who asked me out to little parties, and I with the two other students went as frequently as possible.

At some of these parties we met Percy and his sister. He was a little older than I. We soon made friends, and I was often asked to the Cornishes' house. Under such auspices as these time passed very pleasantly. We rode, and, when we could, walked in the grounds. My studies progressed nevertheless. I grew greatly attached to little Katie, and when Mr. Hewson, a lawyer who managed some of Mr. Cornish's business with that of others, asked Katie and Percy to visit him and his son Guy, the solicitor solicited my company for the holidays too.

Bliss! It is all in that word—supreme bliss. Miss Cornish became 'Katie,' her brother 'Percy.' I was called

by my Christian name also, and we four young people—including Guy, who, as a lad, was very attentive to Katie—rambled, sat on the cliffs, watched for the smugglers,—for those were the days of contraband,—sailed, studied the coast, and strolled at low water on the great sandbank on which the Beacon was moored, and afterwards removed from because of 'the Haunted Wreck,' of which more anon.

We were recalled from the delights of Stromsea by the terrible news of Mr. Cornish's sudden death—killed by a fall from his gig. He was an agent for some properties, and one night while driving leisurely along the well-known road his horse stumbled; the rein being held loosely, Mr. Cornish was thrown out headlong, and broke his neck.

Mr. Hewson was extremely kind in his sympathy, and very considerate, we thought. He hurried the children home, took care of them himself. We were all grieved. I need not dwell upon this melancholy time. Poor Mrs. Cornish was greatly unhinged. Katie and I met more often, and discovered that we were childishly fond of each other. Then I was made a 'middy,' and had to leave England for three years. When I returned, I passed, became a mate, and soon expected to be a lieutenant.

I found Katie more beautiful than ever,—I leave her description to Percy,—but I perceived immediately after my return that Mr. Hewson, who was Mrs. Cornish's *factotum*, was not pleased with my friendship for Kate. By degrees—for I stayed a week in the house—I managed to ascertain that Captain Burley, an old friend of Cornish's, a commander of a trading barque, or other vessel according to his 'owner's wishes,' was co-trustee and guardian, with Mr. Hewson, for Kate and Percy. But while Mrs. Cornish lived there was, of course, no need for them to interfere.

Again I went to sea without any definite understanding with Katie, for I had little but my pay, and she was very young. Still I quite understood her, and she knew I loved her. But when on the North American station I got transferred to the Pacific; and many a month rolled on without my seeing Castle Field or its neighbourhood.

I received letters, though, occasionally. From these I learned that Mr. Hewson had quitted Castle Field, and had gone to live somewhere 'near Stromsea,' perhaps at another house. This intelligence pleased me, for I had begun to distrust him and his son, who had *not* improved with age, as his father's wine had.

Then the correspondence ceased. I got my promotion, and was hurried off again to cruise away in distant latitudes, and round Cape Horn with Captain Beechey in the *Blossom* to meet Captain Franklin, who never turned up We waited in Kotzebue Sound as long as possible, and then sailed to Petropaulovsk. In 1827 we again ran to the Sound, but did not meet Franklin. Then I was obliged to return home, invalided; but, as my health was re-established by the time I reached the squadron, I was put in charge of a 'bathing-machine,' as the ten-gun brigs were called, and sent home. I was at once drafted into a Revenue cruiser to serve my time.

But all this time I had heard nothing of the Cornishes. My duties in the *Spindrift* kept me on the alert between Deal and the Boston Deeps. At intervals I went ashore and tried to trap the smugglers, and on one of these trips, when I landed at Lowestoft, I heard a strange story from an old pilot who lived up Cromer way.

This man's name was Thorpe—David Thorpe; a fine old

fellow, who had served his Majesty afloat, and had come to river-piloting and so on. He said, in reply to my inquiries, that there was a 'lot of smugglin'' about—and worse. What! 'hadn't I heard that?' No. Then he'd tell me about the stranding of the *Samphire*. 'Wreckin', I calls it,' whispered the pilot; 'nothin' more nor less. Now, sir, I puts it to you,' said he; 'is it likely that in a smooth sea, on a not over dark night, with beacon lighted,—is it natural for a barque not to know her way along this coast?'

'Well,' I replied, 'the rocks and skerries are a bit dangerous; there are banks, too, up by Stromsea Head. That's a bad bight—shifting sands'—

'Ay, sir, that's true; but pilots should know it, shouldn't they? And then what's become of the captain? Where is the pilot and the chief mate? The crew has—or, at least, most of them has—been neither found nor drowned. The smugglers pounced on the cargo afore daylight. Is that natural?'

'For smugglers, yes, Thorpe.'

'That's what I says. For wreckers and smugglers, and *them as employs 'em!*'

'Those who employ them; what do you mean?'

'Them as employs 'em—that's it! Hist, sir! did ye ever hear of Mister Hewson hereabouts?'

'Yes,' I replied, pricking up my ears. 'Is he alive still?'

'He is, and has plenty of money—keeps two nice shops goin' in Lynn Regis, they say. Sells tea and 'bacey, silks and satins, ribbons and laces—ay, he do, sir. He invests money—where I don't say.'

'In a bank, perhaps,' I ventured.

'Bank! In a *sand-bank!* Why did he purchase'—

'Oh, never mind him!' I interrupted. 'You can give me any information you like about the smugglers, but this old lawyer is no use to me except for his knowledge of some friends of mine.'

At that moment I was interrupted by my junior, who came to call me on board, as there was a cruiser signalling in the offing, and we had to run down. Bidding the pilot good-bye, I hastened away, and postponed my inquiries concerning the Cornishes and their mother, who was, I believed, still alive.

That Mr. Hewson was a sly old fox I could well understand, but he would scarcely, I thought, be in league with wreckers and smugglers; or, if he were, the secret would be too well kept, even for the pilot to discover. Meanwhile I determined I would inquire concerning the wrecking of the *Samphire*, and endeavour to ascertain where her cargo had been stowed—if, indeed, old Davy had not confused the smugglers with his namesake Davy Jones, Mariner, whose capacious locker is so often quoted by those of the seafaring persuasion.

So the *Spindrift*, Revenue cutter, cruised away to the northward in obedience to orders, and left Lowestoft, Gorleston, Yarmouth, and Cromer to the coastguard, who were vigilant, but, as a rule, not equal in sagacity to the smugglers. Perhaps they were bribed! Well, such things *have* been known!

I was not then aware that Katie and her brother had been living for more than a year with Mr. Hewson. I had been absent three years; Katie then was nineteen or twenty. I had loved her when she was quite a child; as a young girl she had liked me. When should we meet again, and what would be the result of our meeting?

Such was the state of affairs, and I will now leave Percy Cornish to tell his own tale. He was in his uncle's house, where there had been a terrible scene the very day after my visit to Lowestoft, and my interview with Davy Thorpe, the 'Mud Pilot.'

Reader, attention for Percy Cornish, his narrative, please.

CHAPTER II.

OUR GUARDIAN'S CRUELTY.

'Look here, Katie, I can't stand this kind of thing any longer; I shall leave here at once.'

'Oh, Percy,' said my sister, 'you will not really go away? What *shall* I do without you?'

'I'm very sorry, Kitty; but I *must* go. This so-called "uncle," our guardian, is getting more and more cruel and insolent every day. He *wants* to make me savage, I can see that, so that he may have an excuse for turning me out penniless.'

'Oh, Percy!' said my sister again, not knowing how to combat my reasoning.

'It is quite true; so I'll be off. There is something not right about this Mr. Hewson. What has become of our money, which he has in trust? Why has our pocket-money been reduced? Why have you no maid-servant now? Ah, wait until Captain Burley returns; he will make old Hewson pay up. But I'm off all the same.'

'*Must* you go away, Percy?' cried Katie, as she wound her arms around my neck, and looked with her deep brown eyes into mine. 'Oh, what *shall* I do?'

'Do! Of course *you* are all right. You have your companions here, and "uncle" does not ill-treat or sneer at *you*. But he is always at me. He is trying to drive me away, and he will succeed. Kitty, I *hate* him.'

'Oh, Percy! you shouldn't say such things.'

'Of course not. No one ever hates any one—oh no! —only dislikes. But I *do* hate old Hewson, and I'll find out all about him. He is a lawyer too; but I am sure he is a thief, a swindler, a hypocrite, a *beast*, a'—

A scream from Katie interrupted the torrent of my elegant denunciations of our guardian. I turned and perceived Mr. Hewson's sardonic face grinning through the aperture between the ill-fitting hinges and the frame of the 'study' door.

'Go on, Master Percy Cornish; do not let me interrupt you,' he said, as he entered. Kitty clung to me, as if to shield me from violence, at which movement our guardian smiled. Mr. Hewson was the last man in the world to commit himself by any overt act.

'So I am a—let me see—a swindler, a thief, a beast, and a hypocrite, am I?' he said. 'Ah, one lives and

learns. So that is your unbiassed opinion, Master Cornish, is it? Indeed, not flattering.'

'Listeners never hear any good of themselves,' I retorted boldly. 'I had intended to tell you that I would not remain here any longer; but since you have heard, I need not repeat my words.'

'Our feelings happen to agree upon this point,' sneered my guardian. 'I am *in loco parentis*, and will never harbour a rebellious son. You can leave here whenever you feel disposed; but you will hardly go without your deserts.'

'Money, you mean, uncle,' said Katie.

'No, miss, I mean a *sound thrashing*,' replied our pleasant guardian. 'Ay, you needn't wince. I am empowered by law to thrash you, and I'll do it, or have it done. Guy will assist me.'

Guy Hewson, this man's son, was, if possible, more repulsive than his father. He was particularly loathsome to Kitty, inasmuch as he feigned affection for her. He might have had some feeling for her, some low sort of admiration for her beauty. For my Katie was bright, frank, and possessed of more than the ordinary share of good looks. A shapely figure, beautiful hands, a pure white creamy skin, with teeth to match, a rosy colour, red lips, dark hair and brows, and deep brown eyes, a pleasant, somewhat careless manner, slightly indolent, but altogether winning. Such was my sister Katie in those days, when she was a few months past nineteen, and I was somewhat more than two years younger.

In those days—many years ago—in the late 'twenties' of the nineteenth century. Ah me! I am an old man now, and whether my friend will ever let this narrative

see the light I cannot tell. But, long ago as it all happened, my beautiful Katie remains in my heart enshrined, as good, as pure, as true as ever she was; better and purer now, if possible, for she is in heaven!

You may imagine how my blood boiled at the suggestion that Guy Hewson should thrash me. I drew myself up, and said boldly,—

'Mr. Hewson, if your son attempts to touch me, I will kick his brains out, or shoot him, if I can.'

'Hullo! hullo! This is terrible language. Shooting, kicking! Dear me! Ellis, Guy, come here quickly!'

In half a moment, Ellis, the clerk, and Guy, the intending partner, hurried in from the office, a dingy, half-shuttered, wholly gloomy, cupboarded room on the ground floor.

'What is the matter, father?' exclaimed Guy, with a contemptuous look at me, and a glance of admiration at my sister, who turned away in disdain.

'Matter enough, indeed!' cried his father, in assumed terror. 'Here's this young ward of mine threatening to kill or shoot you or me. We must take steps to make him keep the peace.'

'You need not fear—neither you nor your worthy son there. One can't touch pitch without being defiled,' I cried passionately.

'There, Ellis, isn't it shameful?' continued my guardian. 'Not content with calling me a thief, and a swindler, and —let me see—a *beast*,—yes, a BEAST,—he threatens to kill my son.'

'He should be locked up, sir,' said Ellis, with a glance at Katie, who turned and faced him indignantly.

'Locked up! Do not dare to suggest such a thing!' she said. 'Uncle, I appeal to you!'

'My dear Katherine, my clerk does not mean incarcerated in a madhouse; he only means secured, so as to prevent violence.'

'A madhouse would be safer,' said Guy, with a nod to his father.

'There will be no need to lock me up,' I said. 'I only

object to be flogged. My intention is to go away at once. And,' I continued, turning to my detested guardian, 'a day of reckoning will come with you, depend upon it. When my other guardian, Captain Burley, returns, he and I will demand a settlement in full.'

'We can give you something on account now,' said my guardian, and 'uncle' by courtesy. 'Guy, you can manage; Ellis, come.'

Scarcely had the words escaped him, when the cruel brute rushed at me and pinioned my arms. Guy assisted. Ellis tied them with his handkerchief. In vain I screamed, kicked, and struggled. I was virtually powerless. Katie's cries for assistance were unheeded, and I was carried, head first, up-stairs, face downwards, a mode of progression subsequently adopted by the London police, and popularly known as the 'frog's march.'

My cries and struggles were alike useless. In those days flogging, even cruel punishment, was common, and no one interfered. A brutal parent (alas! there are such), or a guardian, or any senior who had what is called a spite against one, could cane them within an inch of their lives. Schools were often hot-beds of tyranny; hence the revolts and 'barrings out,' of which the period furnished so many examples.

Tied up and 'horsed' by Ellis, who in a whisper told me to be patient, for he would help me if he could, I was soundly caned by young Guy, who was past nineteen, and laid on the strokes with vigour. I never uttered a sound, though I nearly bit my lips and tongue through in my endeavours to keep silent. At length the young brute was tired, and had to stop. I was permitted to fall on the floor, and Ellis untied my numbed arms and legs.

He then helped me up, while Hewson and Guy looked on in alarm. Was I going to faint?

No, I was passive. Ellis put my coat on over my bruised and bleeding back, for my shirt was stained and sticking to my flesh. The cane was on the bed near the door, where the exultant Guy had thrown it; and I was between my torturers and the door.

A sudden desire for revenge—for cruel, brutal, animal revenge—surged up in my mind. I was weak, but the rush of blood to my heart, the angry flush over brow and cheek, was not all weakness. I think my guardian and his son were a little alarmed at first, but they speedily recovered themselves.

'That is a lesson you will remember,' said Hewson. 'You will remain here until I can make arrangements for your future. Such a murderous-minded lad must be dealt with severely. A few months at sea will tame you.'

I made no answer; I was collecting myself.

'Sulky, eh?' continued my guardian. 'Well, we shall see. The navy is a good school. We can see about it. You can go, Ellis.'

Ellis, to my great joy, departed at once.

'Hold up your head, sulky,' cried Guy, chucking me roughly under the chin, and making me bite my tongue again severely. 'Hold up your head.'

I said nothing yet; not even under that cowardly attack did I reply. I only retreated nearer to the bed, and waited.

'You will remain here, Master Cornish, and your meals will be sent up to you.'

'I want to see Kate,' I said. 'Let her come.'

'By no means,' replied Guy. 'Miss Katie will keep me company below.'

'Mr. Hewson,' I said, trying to keep my temper, 'let my sister come up to me. I wish to speak to her.'

'Hum, no,' he replied, after a pause. 'One rebel is enough in the house. Kate shall remain down-stairs.'

'Good-bye, sulky,' cried Guy, as he passed me. 'I will entertain your sister; sweet Kitty and I quite understand each other.'

'She knows you for a low, cowardly hound!' I cried. 'She understands you so far.'

A back-handed blow was levelled at me for this rejoinder, but whether it reached me or not I could not even then tell. This spark of assault lighted the train of my revenge, and the mine of anger exploded. I suddenly seized Guy by the collar, pulled his head back, and smote him two blows in the face with all my might. He fell. Then I seized the cane, and, slashing him over the eyes, attacked my guardian like a fury. He ran screaming for assistance down the stairs; and then!—

Ah, then!— Am I wicked to still cherish the recollection of the castigation I bestowed upon the man who had insulted my sister many a time, and also had lately flogged me so spitefully? Well, we will not discuss that question. The fact remains that, notwithstanding my enemy was at my feet writhing, and afterwards rushing at me savagely, I delivered blow after blow until the cane broke, and we came to fisticuffs.

In this encounter we were interrupted. Hewson, Ellis, and a man, rushed in, and separated us. My sister had hurried up too, and stood pale and trembling with the female servants on the threshold. In another moment

we were parted; but oh, such a spectacle as we presented! My wounded back, Guy's battered face, his eyes closed, his nose cut, a great bruise of the cane across his cheek, a livid weal which would 'spoil his beauty' for a while. And I had not come off scathless, but my injuries in the face were trivial compared with his. At the moment of our struggle I believe I could have killed him!

He was led down-stairs. My guardian never said a word. The servants were frightened, my sister horrified at my appearance. She at once procured warm water and bathed my wounded shoulders; sent for some lint, and made me as comfortable as possible, condoling with me all the time, and kissing my injured face.

'You must leave here at once, Percy,' she said, after a pause. 'Mr. Hewson and his wretch of a son will never forgive you.'

'They will have me pressed for sea,' I muttered, 'and my wounds will be put down to my having resisted the gang.'

'Did they say so?' inquired Katie anxiously.

'Yes,' I replied doggedly; 'and I don't care. I am perfectly reckless. I shall murder that brute Guy some day!'

'Dearest Percy, do not talk so wildly. They are cruel guardians indeed, and have treated you shamefully; but'—

'Treated *us* shamefully, you mean. Do you know this dear uncle's plan?'

'No,' she replied, seating herself by my side, and putting my head on her shoulder, as she used to do when we were first left motherless. 'Tell me what you fear, Percy.'

'Old Hewson will make you marry Guy!'

'What!' exclaimed Katie, pushing me back in her horror and dismay. 'Marry *him!*'

'Yes,' I replied. 'Can't you see this. Bah! *I* can. This hypocrite has been using our money, no doubt; and if his son marries you, or you are compelled to marry him, there will be no fuss.'

'Oh, it is monstrous!—impossible!' cried Kate.

'It *is* monstrous, but not impossible. The game is old enough, and has succeeded. I know it. I've read about such things. I am sent away, and you are in the cage! Yes, I see it now!'

'Never!' exclaimed Kate. 'It shall never be! No, Percy; I would rather beg my bread than marry such a man as Guy Hewson. I would rather die!'

'If only Captain Burley were back!' I said; 'or Harry. Perhaps he will soon be here. He has been away for three years now, hasn't he?'

Katie reddened, and replied caressingly, 'He cannot know our circumstances and our new life, Percy. Never mind Harry, dear; we must do what we can. You are no doubt right, Percy. These horrible people will stick at nothing. I *did* think Mr. Ellis was different!'

'I don't think he means badly. He gave me a hint just now, and his eyes seemed kind. He could not quite help himself, Katie.'

'Perhaps if I could see him he would help you. The servants cannot do anything, can they?'

'Yes, they can bring me some supper, for I am terribly hungry; and you can find out from Ellis how things are, if you don't mind.'

'Mind! Why should I mind Mr. Ellis? He is

always very kind and polite. Besides, for you, dear, I do not mind anything. He *is* kind, I think.'

'Yes; he admires you, Kittums,' I replied.

'My dear Percy, how silly you are! Do you imagine every man who sees me admires me? You are a silly brother after all!'

'And you are a darling sister. Of course the fellows admire you. You are extremely pretty, Katie, and yet not a bit conceited, I do believe.'

'I didn't make myself,' she answered. 'So I am quite content as I am.'

This was said with one of those pretty little half-unconscious, coquettish turns of the head which was one of Katie's characteristics.

'So you ought to be! Well, look here, Katie; no more nonsense! Run down and get me some supper. Take the key out, and I will bolt the door. Come back as soon as you can with some news.'

Kate hurried away, and I fastened the door behind her.

I was in a pretty pickle now. My temper had got the better of me, for which I was sorry when I considered the facts, but had I not had great provocation? I made up my mind then and there to keep my temper in future, and not to let my passion over-ride my reason any more.

While I was reflecting upon the past, and speculating upon the future, a knock at the door aroused me. 'Who's there?' I cried.

'Ellis,' came a whispered reply. 'May I come in?'

'What do you want? Are you alone?' I asked.

'Yes. I am here for your good. I have seen Miss Cornish, and she sent me up.'

'I'll let you in,' I said. 'Wait a minute.'

CHAPTER III.

THE ARREST.

'Come in,' I said, opening the door cautiously.

Ellis entered very quietly, and closed the door behind him.

'You are in a nice mess, Percy Cornish,' he said, after looking at me for a moment.

'If that's all you came for you might as well have remained outside,' I replied. 'Why did you go against me?'

'I couldn't help it! But I found that I could help *you* a little by siding with the master yonder. What a brute he is!'

'Yes, there are no two opinions concerning *him*. But you said you had seen my sister?'

'I did, and I am here to assist you. Old Deed-Box is dead against you. So's Guy!'

I assented, with a remark which was directed against Guy's future happiness under any conditions.

'They have arranged to have you kidnapped by a press-gang!'

'I believe so! Perhaps they won't find me here!'

'That's the point. Now I can help you to cut away. But what about Miss Cornish?'

'She is in no danger,' I replied. I did not want Ellis to bring her into this, or to bring her and him into it together.

'Well, not of the press-gang. But have I your leave to look after her in case of necessity?'

'I cannot discuss that, Ellis. Leave my sister out of all this; she is old enough to look after herself. I am sure you will do all you can for us both.'

'Indeed I will,' he replied. 'Well, now, old Hewson has no hold on me—my articles are nearly out, you see. So I can defy him! To-night he intends to send a message to the coastguard that a runaway lad is concealed here.'

'The old fiend!' I exclaimed.

'Yes, he is bitter as gall against you for some reason or other. I can't quite see why—*yet*. But I will find out. However, I will carry the message!'

'Thank you,' I replied ironically. 'You are very kind.'

'Wait a moment. When I go out I will find means to release you. The journey to Stromsea is not far; you can manage that. You know old Davy Thorpe the pilot—the "Mud Pilot" we call him?'

'Yes; well?'

'Well,' retorted Ellis, 'you can go there and stay as long as you like. He can conceal you, and you will be able to see Miss Cornish occasionally. It's only seven miles, and we'll take the ponies.'

'Mine and Katie's, you mean?'

'Yours and Miss Katie's,' replied Ellis, permitting himself a taste of her Christian name shyly. 'Old Deeds will never know where you are; and between you and me, Percy Cornish, I think we may punish that old file!'

'Why? Has he done anything bad?'

'I suspect he has, but I am not certain. I can't do anything until I am free. But it's my opinion that he is in league with'—

'Open the door please, Percy,' cried my sister; and Ellis's sentence remained unfinished.

Katie came in, carrying a substantial supper and some ale, which was all very acceptable. We then told her our plans. How Ellis would assist me to run away that very evening; how I was to accompany him to Stromsea on the coast, where old Thorpe would shelter me. As I was not by any means bound to my guardian, he could not reclaim me,—at any rate not without exposure,—and would probably be only too glad to get rid of me.

'But the coastguard? They will hunt you up,' said Katie. 'You must take care.'

'No, they won't; I have a puzzle for them,' replied Ellis confidently. 'Your brother and I will ride over at dusk, Miss Cornish, and you may trust me in this or any other matter.'

'I am sure I can, Mr. Ellis. There is my hand on it!' she said quietly.

'Then our friendship is sealed?' he said, retaining it.

'Our friendship is sealed,' she repeated. 'I believe in you.' Then, withdrawing her hand, she said quickly,—

'Now to business. I am dreadfully unpractical, Mr. Ellis. Will you say what is to be done?'

'Pack a few things in a valise, only what he can easily carry; and leave the rest to me.'

I was terribly stiff and sore, so did not attempt to do anything. Indeed, I dreaded the ride, for my back was raw and painful, and my face felt as if it had gold-beater's skin over it, so puckered was the skin in places.

When Ellis had selected what he thought necessary, he went down-stairs to see about the ponies, and also to find out how the land lay as regarded Mr. Hewson. His visit to the stables alarmed him. Mr. Hewson's mare was not in her stall.

'Where is Penelope?' he asked the lad, who was rubbing a bit in his hands.

'Out wi' master, Master Ellis.'

'With Mr. Hewson? Where has he gone so late?'

'Dunno for sartin, sir; Bill, he has gone wi' 'im tew. Likely to Stromsea village.'

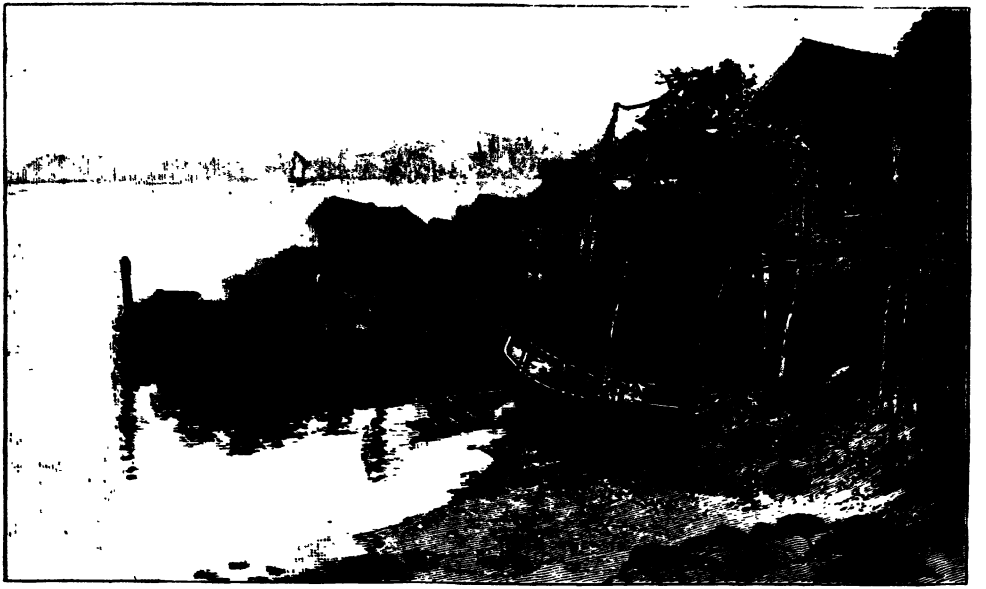
'To Stromsea! Why do you think that?'

'A-cause Bill, he says to master, "Best by 'arf take the lower road," he says.'

'The lower road! He'll surely meet the smugglers there, if any are out to-night!'

'Ees! He don't mind! But it's the coastguard he wants. Heard 'im say as they wanted a runaway.'

'Saddle Dido and Priam at once,' said Ellis,



STROMSEA VILLAGE.

indicating the ponies which rejoiced in those classical names. All the stable was classical. The cart-horses were named Hercules and Ulysses. We had a wall-eyed hack which was called Cyclops. Guy's special hunters were named Mercury and Apollo; while the old animal that helped in the road-mending was called Sisyphus, as he was generally pulling stones uphill.

While the boy was saddling the ponies, Ellis rushed into the house, and made no scruple of coming to my room instantly. He was admitted. We were astonished at his sudden appearance.

'We must be off, Percy. Old Deeds *has gone to the coastguard himself!* He is a spiteful old fellow. We must cut and run! There is no use in wasting time. Good-bye, Miss Cornish.'

'Good-bye,' said my sister. Then Ellis went out to see after the ponies, and Kate was left with me alone.

'Whatever happens mind you tell me,' she said, 'and I will keep you fully informed. We can trust Mr. Ellis.'

'Yes,' I said, 'we may. Good-bye, darling. It is a sad ending to all our hopes for the summer, but I *could* not have remained. I must go now. Remember old Davy Thorpe. He lives by the cliff just out of the village on the left. You know?'

'I shall find him out, and you too. But we must be cautious. Here are the ponies. Good-bye!'

A kiss; a fond embrace; one firm clasp of the hand, and we parted. I met Ellis on the stairs.

'That stupid boy had put Dido's side-saddle on, so I had to change it. He has disappeared too. I am afraid we are watched. Come.'

'Hush!' I said, as we reached the door at the back of the house. 'Don't you hear something?'

'Listen!' whispered Ellis. 'I believe there are the men coming. I can distinctly hear the trampling of feet.'

The night was calm and still. An ominous silence like a spell hung around us. It may have been the precursor of the storm. The air was heavy and gloomy, but clear. Lights were visible at a long distance, and as we remained watching the road we perceived the twinkling of lanterns.

'Come in,' I whispered to Ellis. 'Let us hide.'

'Certainly not in the house,' he said. 'Why, Cornish, we should be captured to a certainty. No, let us hide in the shrubbery here until the coastguard have gone, then we can laugh at them!'

Ellis prevailed. I was nervous about Katie, but did not say so. We had no time to do more than bind our horses to the trees out of sight and blindfold them, when the lanterns came swinging in at the gate.

Ellis and I chuckled when we pictured their disappointment. They would find that the birds had flown!

The men were disposed round the house. Any escape would have been impossible had we been within. The time had arrived. We came close as possible and listened intently.

Eliza opened the door cautiously.

'Who is there?' she cried.

'In the king's name!' replied the captain of the coastguard. 'I come with authority from Mr. Hewson and a warrant of search.'

'Of search for what, a' God's name?' asked Eliza.

'A deserter. He is here—a young man you have here. Open, or deny me at your peril!'

Eliza opened the door, and we perceived the men outside were armed with cutlasses and pistols. They took lights from the servants, and we from outside could trace their progress by the windows as they proceeded through the rooms.

'Is that Katie?' I whispered, as I caught sight of a graceful shadow on the curtain. 'I believe it is! She is following them into my room. They knew where to go, apparently!'

'Depend upon it old Deeds told them. But they are defeated this time. See, they are coming down-stairs and into the other rooms. It is a regular search.'

Suddenly we heard cries and screaming; a tumult ensued. We could perceive a scuffle. The shadows of men passed and repassed upon the blinds. Something curious, not to say exciting, was happening; and we were condemned to wait in the shrubbery inactive. Suppose the men were ill-treating Katie, or interfering with the office, or the servants!

'I cannot remain here, Ellis,' I said. 'I must go and see what is the matter!'

'No, stay where you are! There, it is all over. The lights are coming our way. Watch closely now. If Miss Cornish is arrested'—

'Arrested! Katie arrested! For what reason?' I exclaimed. 'Ellis, don't hold me. Let me go, I tell you!'

'Wait,' hissed Ellis in my ears. 'You will be heard. I promise you if Miss Cornish is in any danger I will shoot her captors; I am armed—see! I am your friend

to death—and hers. There they are. No, she is not there.'

'Thank heaven!' I said fervently, as I withdrew my hands from Ellis's grasp. 'But what is the matter? Oh, this is splendid!'

'The biter bitten,' whispered my companion. 'Oh, beautiful! It's perfectly delicious! Could anything have turned out better! Your sister deserves the war medal for this, Cornish.'

'She does indeed. Brave Katie!' I exclaimed. 'And old Hewson,—won't he swear when he returns and finds his delightful Guy gone. He has fallen beautifully into his own trap!'

'Hush!' whispered Ellis. 'Wait and see the end.'

We waited, and by the lantern light perceived my late adversary, Guy Hewson, in the grip of two sailors, who shoved him along very unceremoniously. His disfigured countenance and bandaged head prevented any recognition. He was half conscious only, for an opiate had been administered to him, and he had scarcely slept ere he was roughly awakened, amid the feeble protests of the servants, who detested him, and the secret encouragement of Katie, who rather fanned the flame of the deserter's doom.

'We've got to take him, miss,' said the leader, 'and with your leave. If not, without it. Here's the order and the information.'

Katie recognised Mr. Hewson's instructions to arrest the runaway—a young man, who had been wounded, name unknown. As we had escaped, she had no fear for us.

'This is him, miss—young man injured in the struggle. Yes. There's no other?' asked the man.

'There's no other young man in the house,' replied Katie. 'My brother and Mr. Hewson's clerk are out.'

'Oh, this is him right enough, miss! Now, Johnny, bundle up! We's come to take you home. Service on the hulks it is now. You can have your choice. Hulks is better than some ships, I can tell you. But we'll send you to the cruiser first.'

The miserable, half stupid Guy was rudely dragged from his bed, while Katie beat a retreat. The servants did not dare to interfere. The groom was away, and the boy was in the stable or outside. So in ten minutes Guy Hewson was dressed and carried off.

It was then we saw him from our secure corner of the shrubbery; bound and gagged, led away between two armed sailors; the lanterns swinging through the darkness along the road.

'Won't old Hewson tear his hair in the morning!' whispered Ellis. 'Now let us be off, for if we follow the coastguard we shall do well. We need not fear the smugglers this evening.'

'No,' said I; 'let us push on. What a very lucky escape I have had!'

'And it serves the old flint right,' said Ellis. 'I will keep your secret, and defend your sister if necessary until you can return.'

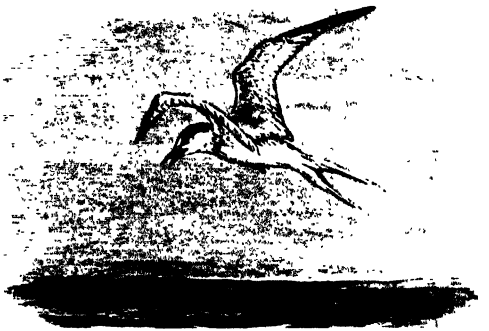
'I depend upon you, Ellis,' I said. 'Now, let us be off. We have a good many miles to ride. I am stiff already. Come along. What a regular turning of the tables this has been! Shall you *ever* forget Guy looking like his ancient namesake Fawkes when caught in the cellar?'

Then we started gently along the lower road to Stromsea Head, a bold promontory which jutted out into the

sea, with a somewhat eastern aspect of the ocean. Our way lay for some distance along the king's highway, which was shaded with bent and stunted trees, indicating the prevailing direction of the winds there. After a while the road divided. The left pathway, a horse-path, skirted the sea, the other passed the downs inland. We chose the former.

I was very much inclined to go back and reassure Katie concerning our safety; but, as Ellis wisely argued, such a course would only lead to complications; and, should Hewson return meanwhile, the danger would be imminent. Under the circumstances, therefore, we determined to proceed direct to Stromsea; and a very nice little adventure we had.

But the circumstances connected with our night ride, and the adventures which grew from it, deserve a new chapter at the outset. So, if you please, we will begin on a fresh page.



CHAPTER IV.

THE HAUNTED WRECK.

THE lower road which we were traversing led close under the cliffs, between the summit and the sea. It was, as already remarked, little more than a footpath, and was chiefly used, if report might be credited, by smugglers and wreckers. I am sorry to say the latter fraternity were by no means unrepresented in Stromsea and the neighbourhood in those days.

Stromsea faced nearly due east. On the left or north side of the village—now a considerable place, then a mere hamlet—was the headland, a rugged, rocky promontory seaward, but covered with trees inland. The village was in the chine or glen, down which in ancient times no doubt a river ran, or at any rate a stream. Now the upper portion of the glen is covered with houses, and when we were last there a railway was contemplated. The cliffs have since been adorned with a lighthouse—a picturesque object enough upon the rolling downs, where in our youth Katie and I used to sit with Harry, in com-

pany with the pilot and his cheerful spouse, and chat about the patterns of the waves upon the sands, the birds, the ships, and the subterranean passage, which Thorpe declared used to lead from some place inland to the sands, on which a beacon light was nightly displayed.

These were in our youthful days. But as time went on, and I grew up, strong and muscular, to near sixteen, the beacon light got moved farther away, as the sea receded, or left the nearer sands dry at low water neap tides. The 'lace patterns' of the waves got less and less upon the cliff sands, but 'always were different,' as Katie said. Smuggling went on just the same, but the little wrecking in which some choice spirits had indulged lapsed, happily, by degrees. So Stromsea grew and prospered, and in time the subterranean passage and the legends of our youth seemed fictions.

Nevertheless, they were no fictions, as the pilot could tell us now, were he alive. Who but he could describe the single file of ponies laden with costly packages and kegs which filed on moonless nights adown the winding, steep, and in places rocky path 'twixt Stromsea Bill and the hamlet? Who but he so well describe the commotion in the village and the glen when swift steeds and careful carriers were waiting armed to meet the file of ponies as they came along the beach and up the gully? He would be astonished now to see the road as I did, not so very long ago, lined with lively excursionists tripping to the sands or the hotel to lunch, or wandering on the cliffs, where others sat in our old places hand-in-hand, or gazed upon the flinty-looking church and open shops, where nought but church and sand and dusty highway had in former days existed.

You can imagine the scene then. The sea in front, the rolling downs and woods inland, the ancient little church (the modern pier now), the gully, the fishing-boats, the beach, the path, the beacon, and a 'new' wreck lying in the inner channel near shore, — a goodly barque still, as far as hull and cabin went, but half-full of sand and shingle at low water; full of fish at high water, and barnacles, limpets, and such-like creatures at all times and for quite two months past.

It was no man's wreck at first in those days. The fishermen could make more by fishing or in smuggling than by breaking-up, and so they left the solid timbers to decay and rot, biding their time, hoping Neptune would unloose the bolts and seams, and send the timber shorewards,—till Mr. Hewson bought the hull and spars.

You will hear more about this desolate and haunted wreck. The story went that the pilot or the captain, who ran her ashore outside, still walked the deck at midnight, telescope in hand, as he did in life. Strange noises, too, were heard from out the vessel,—cries and groans and shrieks for aid, as the spirits of the castaways uprose to condemn the cunning miscreant who had carried his vessel to destruction on the sands of Stromsea *on purpose*—so it was said.

No wonder that the wreck was left apparently untouched! No wonder the sea receded from the place! No wonder the beacon men were moved away and anchored at the other 'spit,' where none could hear the drowning cries and shrieks of despairing ghosts!

Bah! ghosts! We laughed at them many a time as we sat upon the cliffs; but we never ventured on the sands at night, nor did we stay much after dark upon the downs.

Even as Ellis and I rode on that evening after the coastguard along the lower road, we spoke of all these things, and it was with a feeling of relief that we came within the shelter of the Head, and perceived the lights of Stromsea burning in the glen.

'I am not sorry we have cleared the Head, Ellis,' I said. 'If we *had* met a file of horses and their attendants it would have been unpleasant.'

'Doubtless,' he replied dryly. 'But we need not halloo until we have cleared the wood. If my senses do not deceive me, we shall have companions yet.'

'Let us hurry on, then,' I exclaimed. 'Perhaps the coastguard will assist us, and then the whole business concerning Guy Hewson will be exposed.'

'Hush!' he said. 'Can't you hear the tramp of horses' feet? Listen.'

I listened intently. Nothing came to my ears but the monotonous plunge of the waves upon the sands; the rush and rattle of the more distant beach stones occasionally broke the murmur of the waves close by. But that was all, and I said so.

'Then I am much mistaken,' he replied. 'No, our ponies are restless, there are horses coming. Let us retire to the footpath, it mounts a few yards back. We can push up that, muzzle our ponies, and watch the procession.'

There was no other course. We turned with considerable difficulty upon the narrow and treacherous pathway, on which a slip would have almost certainly been fatal. We then led our ponies up a path, which served as a short cut for pedestrians into Stromsea. The only alarm we feared was from our ponies then; if the animals

neighed or whinnied, we should be discovered and shot by the smugglers perhaps, ill-treated in any case.

We took the risk—unarmed as we were, we had no choice—and waited.

The file approached. We heard and could even distinguish voices. One voice in particular we immediately recognised, and Ellis gripped my hand tightly. The same idea struck me. Yes. The leader of the party, or, at any rate, one of the men in authority amongst the smugglers was Mr. Hewson — Jeremiah Hewson the lawyer, the church-goer, the moralist—my guardian! Yes, Hewson himself, on his bay mare Penelope.

The animal became somehow conscious of the proximity of her stable-companions, Dido and Priam, for she whinnied softly. We were terribly afraid that the ponies would reply. We held their mouths tightly with our right hands, while we caressed them and fondled them with the left. They remained silent, although they were restless, and the long file of horses, with tubs slung across their backs, or bales of cloth or tobacco in packs on their shoulders, passed on.

We breathed freely as the sounds of the hoofs died away in the darkness, but our hearts beat fast, and I am sure we were pale; *I felt so*, I know. Remember, I was hardly seventeen then! It was also my first actual encounter with smugglers, and the certainty of old Hewson being mixed up with them was in itself a startling revelation.

'What shall we do now?' I whispered to my companion.

'Go up the path through the village. I have suspected old Deeds for a long while. This business with the

smugglers will account for a good deal. He must be making a fortune, and using a good bit of money too!'

'Yes; mine, I expect, and Katie's. His desire to send the coastguard for me was only to blind them, I daresay.'

'He will find out his mistake when he goes home,' replied Ellis. 'When I get there to-morrow there *will* be some fun! Now, lad, let us hurry up, for it's getting late.'

We urged our ponies up the rugged path. The excitement had kept me up hitherto, but now my spirits began to flag. We loitered, and halted more than once to rest. During these pauses it seemed to me that we were followed, though we could see nobody, and nobody interrupted us. But some person was dogging our steps, we were both assured, for when we reached the door of the old pilot's cottage, where I intended to remain for a while, a man dressed like a fisherman passed us, looked at us for a moment with attention, and vanished into the gloom as the door was opened in response to our former summons.

'Who's that?' I whispered. But Ellis made no answer, for in the doorway of his own cottage stood Davy Thorpe the pilot, shading a candle with his brawny hand, and wondering 'why on the 'varsal earth you young gentlemen 'as come down this time o' night!'

The ''varsal earth' was Davy's mode of expressing unbounded astonishment, and perhaps it was as good an expression as could have been found.

We replied satisfactorily, and requested permission to enter.

'For sartin,' he said. 'In course you comes here for some reason? Have I a bed to spare? Well, ye see, it's rather a spare bed—small, I mean, eh? But why in the 'varsal do ye want my bed?'

DAVY THORPE

Then Ellis took up his parable, and related as much of the circumstances as he deemed right. He dwelt heavily upon the cruelty of my guardian, and wound up with the statement, made in the very strictest confidence, that Mr. Hewson was in league with the smugglers.

'Well, I am fairly took aback,' remarked the pilot, nodding his head several times to express the extent of his astonishment. 'First, what with you two droppin' down from the skies like; and then this business of the lawyer coming out. Why, it beats Revelations, it does; and that's sayin' as much as most people who don't read 'Pocrypha. I've suspected that attorney some time!'

The pilot, I may mention incidentally, was a very diligent reader of Scripture, and was quite sincere in his belief. There was no irreverence intended in his allusions to the Bible; I picture him as he was, faithfully.

'Mr. Cornish will tell you everything,' remarked Ellis at last. 'I must return to my lodging. But how about the ponies?'

'Take them to the "Smacksman,"' said Davy, 'and then come you here, unless you'd liever sleep there. Susan Kedge, she'll make you quite comfortable there o' course. Muster Percy will do here. My missus is away; so ye can lie up here if ye like.'

'No, thank you, Davy. I'll see to the ponies, and turn in at the "Smacksman." Good-night. See you to-morrow, Percy.'

He quitted the little parlour, and in another minute we heard him ride away with the ponies towards the village beer-house, or inn, as the bolder spirits called it, which bore the name of the 'Jolly Smacksman;' though in

general conversation the descriptive adjective was usually omitted.

We heard Ellis ride away, leading one pony. The sound died away. Then a shrill neighing was carried to our ears, and all was silent. The noise we had heard made no impression upon our senses, for Davy was laughing heartily at the Nemesis which had overtaken Guy Hewson.

'Sarve him right, the slimy sarpint! I'm a charitable man in a general way, Muster Percy; and you mustn't suppose not otherwise. Likewise you've knowed me many a year, and when I say that Guy Hewson and his father is two sarpints, you won't think I am in any way carryin' too much sail, or temptin' Providence.'

'No, Davy, I'm sure you are too honest and true—too sincere a man to be uncharitable. You always were.'

'No, sir,' replied Davy, as he placed some supper and spirits and water on the little deal table. 'No, Muster Percy, not always. There was a time—ah! Do you see that there hoyster-shell?'

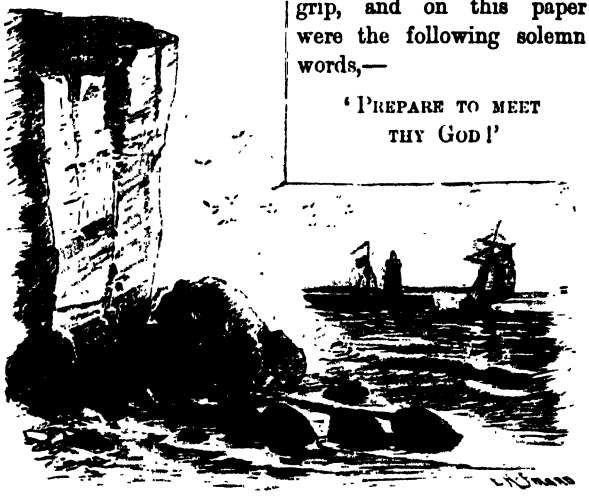
'The shell with the paper hanging on it? Yes.'

'Well, then, that hoyster, it lifted me into a better world, so to say. I was a diver once; and, not to mince-meat matters, was low, very low in my langwidge and in manner, being frequent in drink. Oh, I aren't boastin' of it—don't you think that,' he continued, after a pause to light his pipe. 'No; but will you regard that hoyster, and tell me what you sees with your own eyes, fair and square now?'

I left my chair and approached the fireplace. The mantel was decorated with shell devices and a few rude portraits in black frames, of the silhouette class, with spots of gilding about them. Scriptural subjects adorned

the walls, and various articles which indicated the pilot's (late) calling were dispersed upon the other walls. But the shell of the 'hoyster' held a paper lightly in its grip, and on this paper were the following solemn words,—

'PREPARE TO MEET THY GOD!'



I read them wonderingly, and without making any remark; indeed I scarcely knew what to say, for as a lad I with a kind of reverence shrank from any discussion of religious subjects or texts. But I could not avoid this, and I remarked it was 'very curious.'

'Ay, it is *very* curious, and more,' replied the pilot. 'It changed me. One day I was a-divin', and had been on the drink a good bit. I was all right then, but had been under water, and picked up a purse of a drownded

man. There was things on him as I took for myself, mind you, when I comes across that hoyster holdin' the end of the trac', as you may say. It gave me such a turn when I grabbed it that they pulled me up, thinkin' I had a fit on me. From that day to this I've scarce touched beer and spirits—never in excess. I was a changed man, got steady, sir, went in for pilotin', made some money, married my wife, and there you see the minister still preachin' the sermon as brought me from the depths. That hoyster never leaves me.'

'I've never noticed it before, Davy.'

'No, Muster Cornish, a-cause my missus she will have it in our bedroom. It ain't on show. Only, bein' lonely like, and, excuse me, feeling a little the want of a drop o' rum and water, I carried it in here to remind me not to go to Davy Jones's locker in that way again!'

'It does you the greatest credit, Mr. Thorpe.'

'Davy's my name, sir—David, if you please. Well, I'm glad to see you, and here's "best respects." To-morrow we'll see about them rascal smugglers. I'm a king's man, I am, and has no dealin's with contrabands; contrariwise, serves them out; and I'm afraid your Mr. Hewson's deep in it. He's a rascal, I believe.'

At that moment there came some one to the door. A quick knocking succeeded. Some one was evidently in a tremendous hurry to gain admission. We both started up; I seized my cap, while old Davy hastened to open the door. He threw it wide open. A solitary man was leaning against the doorpost, seemingly exhausted. He could only ejaculate, 'They have stolen the ponies, and half killed me! The smugglers!—look out; mind yourself.'

Davy Thorpe made no remark, unless the mutterings

which he growled beneath his bushy beard could be termed 'remarks.' He carried the exhausted Ellis into the little parlour, and I was about to follow, when some impulse impelled me to advance a few paces along the cliff path to listen to any sounds which might indicate pursuit by the smugglers.

I had not gone three steps from the open door of the pilot's cottage, when I was suddenly seized from behind, gagged by a handkerchief thrust forcibly into my mouth, and, before I could utter a sound, or struggle, I was lifted off my feet and carried away somewhere, whither I could not tell in the whirl and bewilderment of the attack, and in the darkness of the night.

Then my nerves gave way. I felt most terribly frightened, and, as a last resource, I fainted.

CHAPTER V.

FACING DEATH.

Who my assailants were, and why I had been so suddenly captured, I could not form an idea when I was seized; and after I fainted any speculations were impossible until I 'came round' again. But I must have been some time in regaining my rotundity, and my senses, for when I did awake somewhat painfully in the starlight and the darkness, I was alone, unbound as to my hands and feet, but fastened upright to something—a rope or chain; and certainly not on *terra firma*.

As my senses slowly gathered about me, it was as much as I could do to persuade myself that the circumstances were real. It seemed all so impossible and dream-like. But I could see brilliant stars overhead; I was alive—awake, standing upright by no volition of

my own. I felt weak, yet I did not fall; I was limp, but did not collapse; I could hear the challenge of a distant cock, and the reply of some equally pugnacious 'rooster' which would not permit any interference. So I was wide awake and in my right mind, thank heaven!

But where was I? I had heard many tales of the cruel and terrifying punishments adopted by smugglers to warn those who had interfered with them. I remember hearing the coastguard relate how he was once carried away on that very cliff, and suspended over it in the darkness; how he held on as long as he could, thinking every moment he must fall and be dashed to pieces. I recalled his sufferings, his agony when he could hold on no longer, and with a prayer let go his grip upon the grass. He fell—*three feet!* The smugglers had suspended him, pushed him over an old sand-pit, and left him, as he fancied, swinging over the cliff. Poor Tomlinson! his hair got quite grey after that terrible hour, and his wife did not recognise him when he returned home in the dawning of day.

Now the smugglers had perhaps played some such trick upon me. I was tied, not very tightly, with a handkerchief, a scarf round the waist, my feet were on a closed space or in a box, for I could feel the sides with my ankles and legs. I extended my hands, but, with the exception of the rope or cable which suspended me over something, I could touch nothing. It was so pitch dark that I could not ascertain my position whether I was hanging from the cliff or not. In any case my assailants did not want to kill me, I argued, as they had given me a foot-hold and supported my body.

I moved, and leaned over to endeavour to touch

something, and nearly upset myself; I got a terrible fright. My heart beat loudly, and it was some time before I could compose myself sufficiently to stoop down. Then I at once ascertained where I was. The whole situation suddenly flashed upon me. *I was standing in a bucket in a well, tied to the rope!*

Down a well! Yes, it was true. By leaning cautiously over I could touch the damp and stony, rough-cut sides, where the chalk began to show out to my eyes, now getting accustomed to the darkness, or perhaps there was more light—dawn perhaps, or a late moon. There certainly was light, and I could distinguish the sides dimly. They were white all but in one place, which was quite dark on my right-hand side, low down.

But where was I? The well! What well? A cold perspiration suddenly broke out upon my forehead. I felt my flesh tingling; my heart beat again rapidly. The well! Could it be the disused pit in the garden of the old ruined Manor House, whose foundation had been undermined, they said, by the mysterious slipping and sliding of the land? Oh horror! No one could ever find me now—I was left to die!

The more I considered the circumstances the more certain of this I became. Never shall I forget that ten minutes, which seemed ten hours; but the 'Great Bear' still showed a little of his tail, and I knew I had not been long in the pit. Then I thought of Joseph, although I am aware there was little similarity between the cases. But the treatment of that patriarch by his brethren certainly came into my mind as I clung to the rope; and I wondered whether any wanderers would pull me out!

The light gradually increased. I determined to make an effort to escape; I untied the knot which bound me, and then made an attempt to climb up the rope. But the barbarous cruelty of the men who had lowered me into the well became manifest as the day dawned. An ominous rending noise became audible as I made my first efforts to climb up. *The old rope had been partly severed*, and every struggle on my part rendered it less and less trustworthy. In fact, my very attempt to escape would prove my destruction!

There was an amount of malignity about this punishment which reminded me of my enemy, Guy Hewson. I had done the contrabandists no harm; so, unless some of them were animated by personal spite, I could not understand why it was worth any one's while to murder me in this deliberately cruel fashion. I was chilled with fear. I could now distinguish the cold, deep, treacherous water only a couple of inches or so beneath my feet. I was hanging over my grave!

The situation was a terrible one, and the impossibility of escape seemed certain. Every movement was fraught with danger; every moment increased it, and brought me nearer and nearer to death. Is it any wonder that I prayed earnestly, and, young as I was, prepared for the fate which seemed inevitable?

I will not harrow your feelings by dwelling upon the situation longer. Picture me in the deep, cold well-shaft, far from any chance of assistance, where my cries would never be heard, and where, when I was drowned, or starved to death, no one would find me. The intense pain at my heart became almost intolerable. I clutched

the old rope in despair. The unravelled strands were already yielding to my weight.

Casting my eyes round in terror, with a prayer for mercy on my lips, my gaze rested on a dark place in the pit's side ; that I have already mentioned, I think. This place was an aperture—an excavation ! My heart bounded with renewed hope. Perhaps I could obtain a footing in this hole, and manage with my knife to dig some foothold in the chalky sides of the pit.

To reach this standing-place, which was of considerable height, I must swing the bucket to and fro, and clutch the side when the bucket touched it. But if I swung the bucket the rope would probably break ; and the worst would happen. Then in the imperfect light the height of the aperture was somewhat undefined. Suppose I knocked my head and was thrown senseless into the well !

I felt I must wait for daylight ; but meantime—

How I managed to exist sane, through the next few hours, which lagged with the heaviest steps time ever measured, I cannot describe. The welcome daylight came at last. Should I ever see its close ? That was the uppermost thought in my brain. The attempt must be made now or never—for the rope was giving way.

A tearing noise attracted my attention. I was suspended by two slight strands only, and they were breaking ! I watched them with a fascinated gaze—I was paralyzed. I could no more have removed my eyes from that section of rope than I could have leaped out of the well. The time had come ! I ejaculated a prayer for pardon, turned towards the aperture ready to leap. Now ! Ah, the rope breaks !

Plash!

In a second I was plunged into the cold water. A despairing dash at the aperture which I fancied I could clutch and hold to—but no! The floor of the excavation which in the dim light I had fancied was level with the water was beneath the surface.

My hands literally grasped *at a shadow;* the water only met me. I was lost!

No! No resistance. What is this?—I was now *within the wall of chalk.* Overhead was a roofing of chalk. What was underneath?

I let my feet down, still paddling, and at once touched bottom. Thank heaven! I stood firm; the water reached my shoulders and no higher. Hurrah!

I made a few strokes onward, the water got lower and lower. A few paces now, and the water was only up to my knees; a few steps more and I was on dry ground; in the dark, it is true; but alive; and full of hope—at first!

Yes, *at first.* But a few moments' thought again prostrated me. I was in a subterranean passage leading I knew not whither; a step or two farther might precipitate me into some horrible pit. The tunnel was sensibly lower here, too, and might eventually become too small for progress. I was caught in a fearful trap—death either way, I thought. Better have been drowned in the well than be landed in this dismal tunnel, in black darkness, to starve to death unknown to all my friends.

Katie's sweet face haunted me. Then I thought of my dead parents and of my unscrupulous living guardian, and of the absent—perhaps the dead—Captain Burley.

I pictured all kinds of things, and felt dreadfully sorry *for myself!* When I pictured myself lying dying there in agony, I actually *cried for sorrow at my own decease!*—I did indeed!

These tears did me good. They aroused my lapsing sense of manhood. What! was I going to cry like a baby left in the dark! No. My pluck came to my aid. I recalled all the heroes I could think of, and endeavoured to think what Robinson Crusoe would have done in like circumstances. Robinson Crusoe reminded me, by some course of reasoning which I forget, of Davy Thorpe. He, in turn, brought smugglers to my mind—and then the truth suddenly flashed into my soul in the utter darkness of my physical and mental condition.

I was in the old subterranean passage made by the smugglers for traffic and for concealment of their booty! Yes. Thorpe had often mentioned it, but believed it had long ago fallen in.

The question now was, whither did this passage lead? or—and this other question was the more alarming—was the tunnel blocked up?

To go back was impossible; to go forward only a little further removed from impossibility, but it was the only course. Darkness, as black as ever was in Egypt, surrounded me; but, feeling with extended arms and fingers, I advanced.

It is all very well, in Blindman's Buff,—or Hoodman-blind, as it used to be called,—to feel your way about in a lighted room; but when the utter helplessness of my case is considered, when the awful uncertainty of each step, and the more than probability of a fall, are remembered, the situation will be pronounced alarming.

It will serve no purpose to follow my course step by step through that dark passage. As I progressed the air became at one time thick and heavy, but soon cleared. Then a cool wind met me; the sea-breeze was on my face and my bare head. I hurried on faster. There was a curious white patch in front; I could not understand what it meant at first; then I perceived it was light falling on the flooring of the tunnel from a hole in the roof. Hurrah!

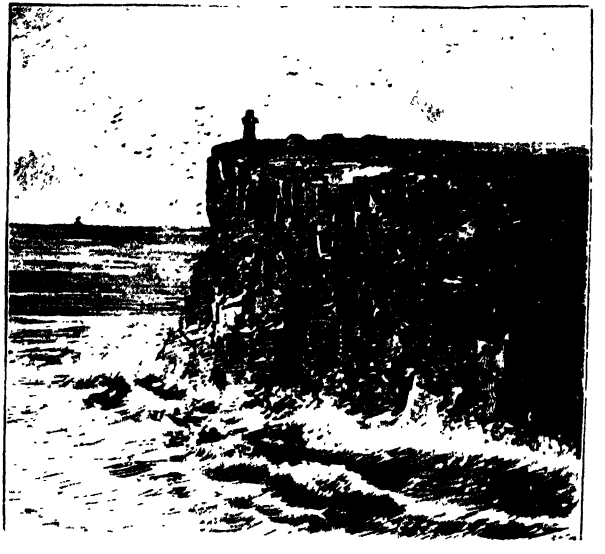
There is an excellent proverb which tells us not to halloo until we are out of the wood; I ought to have remembered it. The top of the tunnel was far beyond my reach; the light streamed in—the bright morning light. I could see the sky, and a gull sailed overhead; a few blades of grass waved at the top of this ventilating hole, as I supposed it was; but I was as far from escape as ever!

By this time I was terribly hungry; but for the little supper at the pilot's cottage I should have been much more hungry, and perhaps faint. Still I was in an unpleasant plight; and the prospect of no release only made matters worse, when release seemed out of reach. The light, however, gave me courage, and showed me the nature of the place in which I was imprisoned. There were bales and small barrels, 'breakers,' and many 'tubs.' There were old packages and mouldy sacks and tarpaulin-covered heaps of stores. Riches incalculable apparently, all contraband, I doubted not. There were boxes of wood and iron, clamped and barred, locked and tied, fastened in every conceivable way, ranged along the sides of the tunnel.

I had discovered the celebrated smuggler's hiding-place;

the treasure-house of the notorious but then happily defunct 'Long Tom' Warrell.

It was like a scene in the 'Arabian Nights' stories; Ali Baba, it was called. There was the robbers' cave, the merchandize, and, I dared say, much gold. To whom did



it belong now? Was it mine by right of discovery, or were the smugglers in the habit of coming here still?

I made my way forward again, in the hope of reaching some aperture by which I could escape. The passage got smaller. There was only room to creep along the tunnel, which was descending. Whither did this path lead? Where was I? The matter was soon decided.

The wind from the sea and the sound of the waves gave me hope, which the daylight confirmed speedily. I hastened on, and in a few minutes emerged up some rough-hewn steps between two great isolated rocks now beaten and drenched by the advancing tide-waves,—two rocks which guarded on the southern side the sand-bank on which lay the celebrated wreck—the Haunted Wreck—which had withstood so many gales and tides and storms. Deeply embedded in the sand, sheltered by the break-water of rock, and further protected by the headland, the hull of the barque had remained the property of Lawyer Hewson by purchase—almost entire, and certainly valuable

At that moment I was too overjoyed to think why he permitted so much iron and timber to remain and rust and rot in the deep sands. The cloud-swept sky, the white-tipped waves, the crisp, salt spray, the strong south-east wind, were enough for me. I was free again; alive; hungry, alas! but full of hope.

I peeped up between the rocks; between me and the beach the deep water rushed and swirled. The tide was running in, so my return, save through the tunnel, was impossible for a while. In front a kind of irregular line of rocks, whose jagged summits now and then showed above the water, denoted the grave danger of the little bay, and intimated that treachery must have been at work, to have stranded the barque *Samphire*, now reported 'Haunted.'

A dash of salt water in my face reminded me that the advancing tide would not respect me, and I must either retreat or swim ashore. The afternoon would be getting on soon; after high water, I could easily escape, unless a storm came on—and the weather did look 'dirty'

to windward; and I knew by experience that the south-easter would drive the tide up on to Stromsea Head, and eddy down upon my more southerly position like a mill-sluice. The new moon, too, would attract the tide; so if a storm came up, it would make things lively.

A pouring of water over my feet and legs then decided me to retire; the waves were becoming boisterous in their play. A considerable-sized 'comber' was at that moment rushing in, with his tossing crest streaming in the eddying breeze, which blew off the cliff side in a little circular storm out there. It was curious to note this wind-eddy, for the breeze was really blowing *on shore*, though the conformation of the hollowed cliff sent a puff or two back to meet the waves, and took the foam from them in long plumes, as from knightly helmets in the olden days.

Dash! swish! boom! came the sea. I turned and fled. Alas for haste! my foot slipped upon the uneven stones, —my ankle gave way, and with a yell of terror and pain I fell forward down the jagged and uneven natural 'steps' of rock into the cave, where I lay bruised, bleeding, and quite unable to move.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SOLITARY.

When I found the water pouring down the rough, rocky steps on which I had slipped, and threatening to drown me as I lay helpless in the cave, I was obliged to crawl painfully out of reach of the waves. My foot was terribly swollen and bruised. I must have fallen on it. The leg also was much 'puffed,' and any chances of escape from the cavern were now cut off, even though the way lay clear.

This was doubly provoking, and very alarming. Alone, without food, or fire, or water to drink, the position was that of a shipwrecked mariner. Even worse, for the ship-

wrecked one generally has, in story-books at any rate, plenty of sustenance, arms, and ammunition; a fertile island, on which animals of all kinds have providentially been acclimatized, and where every prospect pleases.

In my case all the necessaries of life were conspicuously absent. I was within a mile of the shore, but could not reach it. I was near a fine wreck, but she was separated from me by a roaring sea—a coppery-looking streak of water largely adulterated with sand like our local grocer's high-class sugar. Food I had none; 'water everywhere, but not a drop to drink,' more than the Ancient Mariner had. So was it any wonder I groaned and wept in the damp cave which tradition assigned to 'Long Tom' aforementioned?

There I lay, on the dark and damp floor of the cave, all the afternoon, unable to do more than crawl, ready to faint with pain and hunger. At length the ankle and limb got so swollen that the pain partly subsided; and, urged by desperation, I scrambled back to where the light showed me some cases which I trusted contained food, or perhaps spirits.

A stone which I picked up served as a hammer, and I collected my remaining strength for an attack on the boxes. To my astonishment some were marked '*Samphire.*' That was the name of the barque which had been wrecked on the outer rocks, carried off, and stranded nearer land in the sands hard by. That was the 'Haunted Wreck,' from which the cries and groans of the spirits issued on stormy nights. Why not on calm nights too? I did not know why then; I do now, and so will you when you have finished this narrative.

Many a hasp I smashed without obtaining what I

required. There were many things in excellent condition. There was tea; and pepper and coffee in abundance; sugar too in considerable quantity. There were boxes of currants and figs; some of the last mentioned I devoured eagerly. There was tobacco in pounds, dress stuffs, brandy, and gloves in cases. I took out a flask of brandy, and kept it in reserve. Then, with the greatest thankfulness, I came upon a barrel of biscuit—ship's biscuit! I sat down, and for half-an-hour never moved, except to crawl and clutch the brandy-flask.

Don't talk of dinner! Such a meal of figs and biscuits, with a little brandy to keep the cold out, was to me aldermanic! But with strength came the old feeling of desolation. So long as hunger had been paramount, I had almost forgotten the situation; the interest with which I had been, like another Selkirk, examining the stores and smuggled goods, had ousted the sensation of fear which had previously overtaken me. But with new energy came new apprehensions, and the crippled condition in which I remained precluded all ideas of escape, for a while at any rate.

As I sat and munched my biscuits, the pain and fatigue I had endured, and perhaps the modicum of brandy I had swallowed, began to make me feel anxious for rest and sleep. I tried to keep my eyes open, but could not; so at length, finding resistance useless, I abandoned myself to the drowsiness which had mastered me, and, after crawling towards the sea entrance, so as to get out of the darkness and into the fresh air, I crept behind a case of something and fell into a profound sleep!

. . . . . .

It had been broad daylight outside when I went to

sleep; but when I awoke, stiff, and almost unable to move, I perceived a chill air, a roaring sea, and the distant whistling of a rising gale,—sounds which in no measure reassured me, for I was, as it were, between wind and water. They told me there was no hope of rescue that night.

Worse than this, there was the Haunted Wreck of the *Samphire*, concerning which such curious tales had been told. I am thankful to say I was not so silly as to believe in ghosts, and such old nurse's nonsense; but, nevertheless, the near proximity of the wreck, and the recollection of the circumstances under which it had become a wreck, weighed on my spirits.

Darkness and a storm are not pleasant companions, and when one is alone, and alone as I was throughout all that terrible night, the combination becomes too strong. The terrors I endured when the lightning flashed, as it seemed to do, at the very mouth of the cave, I need not depict; nor the feeling of dismay with which I perceived the rising of the spring tide, for I fancied it would drive me far into my cavern, and away from the shelter of the cases and boxes.

As the storm abated I grew calmer, and then began to wonder that no attempt had been made by Ellis or the old pilot to find me. They may have been seeking me. Perhaps Katie had heard I was dead. I pictured her misery at the news, and the very idea of it seemed to give me strength to face the stormy sea, and gain the sands, from which at dead low water I thought I could reach the rocks, and thence, by swimming under the lee of the cliffs in the eddy, make the shore some mile or so higher up.

Full of this idea, I cautiously felt my way again to the aperture of the cave seawards. The roaring of winds and waves was still in my ears, but the thunder had rolled away inland, and only an occasional gleam remained of the terrible flashes which had so alarmed me. The sea had receded considerably, and with joy I perceived that it would not be very difficult to reach the wreck of the *Samphire*, if I did not mind a wetting. Once there, I could easily attract the attention of the coastguard on shore. In the position I then was, it was impossible to count on assistance, for I was hidden in a long-forgotten cavern, to which no one ever penetrated, at a considerable distance from land, and so concealed between the two rocks, that, unless I could climb their slippery and smooth masses to the top, the chances of my being ever discovered were as one hundred to one, unless I was found by the smugglers, who had already delivered me to death.

In this way I reasoned by degrees. This is the result of all the miserable cogitations which occupied me, until I made my way to the mouth of the cavern again, climbed the rough stairway, and peeped out.

The sea was tossing and roaring some way off now. The great sand was evidently hardly covered. Inside the rocks, nearer the shore than I was, extended a deep, rough lake of water of great extent, on which waves were borne by the wind and cast ashore like the orphans they were; for their parent waves had left them to die when the tide slipped back over the sand-bank. There was plenty of light. The heavy clouds had cleared off, and a grey scud was hurrying across the sky, occasionally swooping in a veil of mist or travelling spray across the view eastwards,

rendering sand and waves and wreck all indistinct and weird-like in the pale morning light.

As I stood there, calculating my chances of escape, I thought—nay, I was sure—I perceived a form upon the deck of the stranded vessel!

I rubbed my eyes, and looked again, intently.

Yes; there was some one there, or something! It was moving—then it *was* human; no ghost—even supposing such things exist—would venture out by daylight. If it were human, how came the figure there? Who could have gained the wreck? Some one had been carried there during the storm. Should I go too, or wait?

As I mused, the mist and spray came up in thick clouds; thicker and thicker the fog came on; then it partially cleared; then it lifted. But the figure was no longer visible. Fancy a solitary individual stranded with the vessel,—some poor injured fellow, mayhap, who had escaped from some boat which had gone down in the night! Perhaps a lad, or a girl. I made up my mind to go. The wind was lulling, the tide was low. I might with caution reach the sand and the wreck before the tide came up again. Curiosity, daring, and the daylight all urged me to try it. The weather was improving. I could take biscuit and brandy with me for the sailor on board, and together we could escape!

Having a strong taste for all adventure at that time, I did not stop to calculate chances very much. The fresh air, the rest I had had, the excitement of penetrating the mystery of the *Samphire*, the certainty that I *must* leave the cavern somehow, decided me. I plunged into the water, swam a few yards, limped and paddled a good many; and then down came the fog again, rolling in

from the sea lazily, like cannon smoke, and making the noise of the breakers dull, even as I plashed lamely through their expended waters on the more elevated ridges of the sandbank.

Fortunately I had made a good cast as to direction, for the sweeping, rolling fog at times obscured everything. It eddied about in the bay as in a deep basin, and could not get out. But I made my way through it, and after a struggle perceived the hull of the *Samphire* looming through the fog. A great mass it looked, this *Samphire* barque, much larger than those who had only viewed it with the telescope from the cliffs would have imagined. As I approached the wreck, and read the name of the helpless vessel on the stern, a mild joke of old Thorpe's occurred to me. He said, with grim intention in his speech, when we were discussing the wreck and the suspicious manner in which it had been driven ashore,—

'Ay, ay, young gentlemen; as you grow up, you'll find the *Samphire* on the rocks mayhap. It don't come in, driving on the sand, without a cause; it isn't natural.'

We knew samphire was collected on the cliffs, and the 'dreadful trade' of the gatherer was practised on our coasts.

Here I was, then, in the fog, close to the wreck, which I could perceive was deeply and safely embedded in the sands. Safely, I mean, so far as this, that nothing but a very severe storm, long continued, would be likely to break her up. The waves, except from one quarter, were never 'mountains high,' so really the *Samphire* was not such a bad exchange from the cavern; the stern was high and dry, the bows lower. So to the bows I made my way.

To my surprise I perceived a rope ladder dangling from the bulwark, close by the figurehead, which was a battered female head and shoulders, or rather shoulder, for the right side was considerably damaged. I paused at the sight of the ladder washing about in the pool beneath the vessel's forefoot, although the sand on which I stood was dry, just as the Goodwin Sands are dry at low water.

There was no sign of any creature on board the vessel. Had my senses deceived me? Had my imagination, aided by the swirling fog, presented to me a human form, by mirage or reflection, where none actually existed? Such optical illusions, I knew, were not uncommon. What should I do?

The question was decided for me in a very short space of time. The sea came rolling in again sullenly; quieted, subdued by the fog which had settled down beneath the grey and slowly moving clouds. But for the hoarse murmur of the waves, the silence would have been appalling.

I gained the ladder, which swayed about as I ascended. Slowly I mounted, and with cautious step, scarcely daring to breathe. I put my foot on the deck of the haunted wreck. Nothing happened. Not a sound came from below, no ghost appeared.

After a pause, I advanced past the broken and jagged foremast, a mere stump now, to the mainmast, a taller stump. It was like going up a little hill; and on the slippery and encumbered deck — on which seaweeds, pebbles, and shell-fish, had been strewn by the last tide— it was not such 'plain sailing' as I had expected. All this while the silence and the fog combined made me feel that I must be deaf; for no human tones had I heard for hours, save my own cries for help.

I felt shipwrecked. Fond of adventure, and what we now term 'larks,' as I was then, this expedition was rather a serious one. The sea was advancing; that I did not mind, the vessel was firm; but the fog was puzzling. Cautiously still, I climbed up to the companion hatch, and, holding to the skylight frame and its twisted and broken bars, peeped down.

Something—something in the shape of a man was lying extended on the floor.

I nearly uttered a cry; my heart stood still for a second or two, and I felt as if I must fall. But, drawing a deep breath, I remained motionless, my heart beating fast enough now, I can tell you, and stared at the black figure. It was perfectly still. Then the horrible thought occurred to me—the man is dead—one of the drowned crew.

Well, in that case, what had I to fear? The dead cannot harm us. I had been well taught by a loving mother, and had no superstitious fears concerning the mortal frame untenanted by life. It was daylight, certainly. At night in the fog— But no, I would not think of *that*. My philosophy, I am afraid, was scarcely proof against a night in a haunted ship.

I continued to gaze. The creature never stirred, and I did not dare to move. At length I could bear the suspense no longer. I turned away, forgetting the incline on which I stood. My left foot slipped again,—the ankle was weak,—and I slid quietly enough back amidships to the waist, where I lay uninjured but quaking.

The man in the cabin did not come up, and after a while I rose and dropped down the forecastle into the crew's sleeping-place forward. It was nearly full of sand and shingle. I could find nothing. The waves had

evidently filled the place up, and if any men had remained in their berths they must be lying under the mounds of sand and pebbles, amongst which some small crabs were crawling in a very unpleasantly suggestive manner. Do these crabs eat men? I muttered, as I leaped on deck again, and sat down to think.

I wondered what time it was, and when the day would clear again. I sat and watched the gentle waves rippling and running past with immature crests, in imitation of their elder brethren of the previous night. The swell was

subsiding, but the fog hung all around upon the smoothing water and the invisible land.

Hark! the sound of oars in rowlocks. Yes, I could hear a pair of oars, I was sure; but in what direction the boat was approaching I could not tell. The fog put any such calculation out of the question. That some boat was coming was probable; that any one was approaching the wreck to board it was most improbable. But I looked out, straining my eyes in all directions, till they filled with tears and fog.

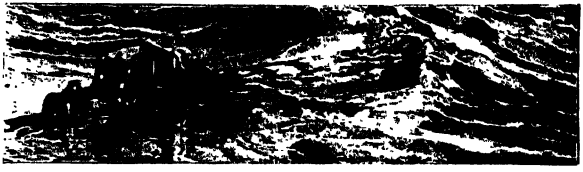
At length the sound became distinctly audible behind

me. I turned and could just distinguish a punt,—a sea-punt,—or dinghy, rather, worked by one man by one small oar in the stern; he was standing up, and cleverly, though scarce in seaman's skilful fashion, propelling his little boat over the leaping ripples. I dived into the forecastle, peeping up from the combings of the hatchway, through the ruined bulwarks of the *Samphire*.

Wet and cold, even hunger and thirst, from which, like any other shipwrecked lad, I was beginning to suffer, were all forgotten in my curiosity to ascertain who this solitary one was, who in fog and in secret came to visit an abandoned barque in such mysterious fashion. A smuggler, no doubt; at any rate I could escape with him, but must not alarm him. So I waited.

He came alongside. My eyes and forehead only were above the hatchway now, but I gazed steadily at him; and then, suppressing a cry, I crouched down on the shingle.

The mysterious sailor was my detested guardian, dressed in fisherman's costume, disguised. Why? What did he here?



CHAPTER VII.

RUN DOWN.

Disguised as a fisherman, or in his true character as a leader of smugglers—which? I had heard some strange stories concerning my precious guardian. Was it possible that *he* had had me captured, and put into the well to die? Most probably.

These ideas hurried through my mind as he very leisurely ascended the side and made fast his dinghy. He was evidently at home. Certainly he had purchased the wreck immediately she had been beached, and he had, if report were true, passed many hours here in the day-time alone. Why? That is what it seemed I was destined to ascertain.

He never perceived me, but proceeded quite bravely to the after-cabins, and, without any hesitation, descended the rickety companion stairs.

Should I follow him? Why not? Should I not rather go off in his boat, and leave him there a prey to the winds and waves till morning. The day was already passing. What should I do? It was rather mean to run away and leave him with the dead. Besides, I wondered what his object was in coming there at all. Taking everything into consideration, I determined to follow him aft.

Again I ascended the sloping deck, and once more paused at the companion hatch

My guardian was in the cabin, and was at that moment addressing the dark figure I had seen. Who was this, then? There was some extraordinary mystery connected with this wrecked and derelict vessel which required explanation. Softly I crept to the skylight and listened.

My guardian was speaking. I heard him say,—

'Now, have not you had enough of this? Why will you not take my advice? Be sensible.'

'Sensible!' muttered the other. 'I should take leave of all sense of honour to do what you require.'

'We needn't mince matters. You are in my power, and I cannot afford to let you go. But suppose, for argument's sake,—suppose I permitted you to depart, if I freed you, if that chain were disconnected'—

'I would go ashore and denounce you for the thief and swindler that you are! You have shamefully robbed those poor children, and, I daresay, misapplied their money.'

'Not so fast! You have no proof. I am sole guardian. The other trustee is abroad. He may be dead, *or dying!*' added Hewson, with meaning.

'He is not dead yet,' exclaimed the other man, rising; and now I perceived he was chained to the deck. Oh, what a dishevelled, unkempt object he was. Yet he could move about, for the long chain and rope which shackled him gave him length enough to move and seat himself, and even to go on deck when so disposed.

'No, he may not be *dead*. But I can declare he *is* dead! All his papers have come into my hands. His vessel was wrecked, and he, with the crew, *must have been*

drowned! Not a single man now survives to question the facts. It is not worth any one's while.'

'Is it not? Do you imagine he will never appear to

confront you—to denounce you? You have defied Providence for many a year, Hewson; but the devil will trip you up at last! I tell you, robber and villain, that you will fall, and fall speedily!'

'You will not live to see it,' retorted the lawyer coldly with a savage gleam in his eyes. 'Of that you may be sure!'

'What! you would murder me? No—you are too great a coward! Bah! I defy you!'

'I would not murder you—you are quite right. No. But do not be deceived; these fogs here mean storm approaching. Last night's burst was a mere teacup commotion to what we may expect. I have not lived here without knowing so much.'

'Well?' said the prisoner.

'Well! The next big gale will loosen the timbers of my property the *Samphire*. She will break up, and be cast ashore! What will become of you in that case?'

'You would not leave me here?' exclaimed the unhappy man. 'Hewson, you *can't* be such a fiend as that!'

'I can't help myself,' replied my guardian. 'You must sign a deed such as I have had prepared, investing all the duties in me. It has been ante-dated. Give me absolute power; swear you will never interfere by word or deed in my business or management of the brats' property, and I will—well'—

He paused for a moment, and concluded,—'I will pay your passage to Australia, and give you two hundred pounds. Come now.'

'Transportation and hush-money!'

'Yes; better that than go out without the money at Government expense. I could have you sent in irons, even if I went in company.'

'And suppose I listen to your proposals, what is to become of the lad and his sister?'

'The lad I can provide for. I thought I had got

him a ship.' (Oh, my guardian!) 'He is dangerous, quarrelsome, and revengeful. My son and he cannot live in the same house. Indeed, the precious young scamp has run away, and I wash my hands of him!'

'Run away! Driven away, more likely.'

'As for his sister,' continued Hewson, without heeding the remark, 'I have made arrangements. She will marry my son Guy, who will make her an excellent husband. But there is no hurry for that.'

'You are even a greater scoundrel than I fancied you were!' said the prisoner, with honest warmth. 'But Providence will frustrate your designs. I would rather die here alone, forgotten, than live in your house, and in the enjoyment of your ill-gotten wealth. Go! leave me to die, if it must be so. You contaminate the place, horrible as it is! Bah! Go!

I could not see the speaker's face, but the contempt and disgust expressed in his voice were sufficient index of his feelings. My dear and worthy guardian seemed struck with the disdain even through his proof-armour of selfishness and cruelty. He would have blushed, no doubt, if he could. As it was, he fidgetted uneasily with his neckerchief, and replied,—

'So you refuse to give me the quittance I demand?'

'Yes; utterly—finally!' replied his victim.

'Then you die—ay, die here by inches by slow starvation. Do you hear? hunger and thirst, storm, salt-water, and tempest shall assail you. Already the storm is brewing. In four-and-twenty hours the wreck may be riven to fragments, and you! Eh! does that make you wince?'

'Not an inch; you will die a worse death.'

'I? Ha! ha! What worse death could there be than such as yours, dying by inches, chained to the riving planks, crushed by the rending timbers, mangled, bruised, disfigured, tortured! What worse than that, eh, captain?'

The fiendish cruelty of this man had never been so fully and treacherously displayed. He gloated over the horrible picture he had conjured up. I stood transfixed with terror and surprise. At last I began to have an inkling of the true state of the case, and determined to checkmate my brutal and treacherous guardian.

'What worse than *that?*' repeated Hewson.

The prisoner leaned forward, thrust his face close to his tormentor's, and hissed out,—

'The gallows!'

'Bah!' retorted Hewson contemptuously, though he blenched. 'The hemp that is to hang me is not yet sown. You will die a lingering death, while I am dancing at my ward's wedding. Nothing can, and nothing *shall*, prevent my plans succeeding. No power in heaven or earth shall thwart me. I swear it!'

I shuddered at this awful defiance; and if I could have believed in the old superstition of an individual selling himself to the powers of darkness bodily, a bargain with Satan had surely been concluded here. There is a stronger than Satan, however, and His instruments prevail.

I perceived that if I wished to punish my unscrupulous guardian, whom I detested and feared more than ever, and save Katie from misery, I must act at once. But I was helpless. Alone here, what *could* I do? To assault and batter my reputed 'uncle' would only make matters worse. Besides, he was armed, else surely the prisoner

would have punished him. What could I do? Reveal myself? No. Oh for assistance! Ha! *the dinghy!*

How stupid of me not to have remembered it before! Of course the boat was there. In it I could escape and bring assistance, release the captain, and punish Hewson! Of course.

In two minutes I had regained the foredeck, and had untied the painter of the dinghy. In another minute I was afloat, and drifting landwards. Then I got out the oar, and, having had some practice, managed to propel the boat, but not rapidly, over the breaking swell which curled ominously in the mist. In a short time I had completely lost sight of the wreck, and was endeavouring to pierce the fog and ascertain where the beach lay.

After a while I ceased sculling and listened. The sound of the breaking swell alone was audible. The fog did not lift; and I began to think I had lost my way! Adrift in a small boat in a thick fog, without food save a few biscuits, and in face of an impending storm, was no joke. I had never doubted that the waves would carry me on shore as they rolled gently in; but I had forgotten that, the wind having been south-east, the billows set north-west with the tide, and I was unconsciously being carried along shore, not into the bay, which formed a deep curve or bow. I was, in fact, drifting to the northern end of the bow along the string, in a bumping, helpless fashion, driving upon Stromsea Head and its high black rocks!

I was then quite unaware of this, and, bewildered by the fog and drizzle, became too violently energetic in my sculling. I made considerable way upon the tide; but, unfortunately, seemed to get no nearer the land. I toiled

until I became nearly done up, and then I did the next worse thing to doing too much—I sat down, and did nothing!

Meanwhile the boat drifted and fell over, lurched and swayed. The waves seemed to be getting larger, the fog, instead of clearing, seemed to be thickening; or was darkness approaching? Was evening coming on? Was it possible that the clouds were coming up, the sun setting, or was either of these contingencies about to occur? I was so entirely bewildered by the events I had witnessed, the trials I had endured, and the all-pervading fog, that I believe for a while my brain was affected.

Then I began again to fancy it all was not real. I was dreaming. No, the water which at times splashed in my face contradicted that delusion. Nevertheless, I could not credit the actuality of the situation, and, while acknowledging the existence of the facts, and my own plight amidst the surroundings, they seemed as unreal as a dream.

'How was it possible to get so far adrift?' you may inquire. If any one feels inclined to ask that question, let him put out from some isolated spot into the surrounding sea in a thick fog, with a running tide, and only one scull in his boat, and try! In addition to the one scull, let him have a head bewildered and a brain exhausted; a body faint, and full of bruises, wet and cold, and hungry; and try it again. Then he will know how I managed to drift out into the tide way.

He will also understand how, after one more futile effort in the smooth-faced but treacherous tide, I let the scull fall, and lay down, careless, reckless, weary, to sleep; and I slept till—

Bang! boom! crash! A tearing and rending! then shouting, yelling, and screaming. A blow across the face; a plunge into the sea; a splash beside me; a grip on my hair which nearly pulled my scalp out; a horrible, sudden roaring in my ears; a bucketful of salt water down my throat, then darkness and — insensibility!

All of which, O reader, being interpreted, means that

I had been run down by a lazy-going coaster in the fog; that a rope had been thrown to me; that a spar had followed for me to catch; that, being scarce awake, I had failed to catch either sheet or spar; that a man had leaped overboard and caught me by the hair; and that I then became insensible. That's all!

When I again opened my eyes to the light it was evidently artificial, and dim withal. I was in a narrow

place—a berth; a ceiling within a few inches of my face, so low it seemed, at any rate. I had been undressed and wrapped in blankets; and something hot, smelling of rum, was at my lips. I drank it; lay down again and went to sleep at once.

'Poor beggar! who is he, Banks?'

Who said that? Who was a 'beggar,' and why mention his poverty in that manner? *I* didn't care. It was nothing to *me*. *I* was not there! Some one else was me. I was some one else—and, listen!

'Feverish decidedly, but he'll do.'

'Near thing, wasn't it?' said the first voice.

'Had too much rum and water,' remarked the quiet man addressed. 'Feverish! Bad remedy.'

'Well, he won't die, I suppose, will he?'

'No, oh no! Live to fight for the king like a true Briton. That's the second addition. We're lucky, I suppose.'

'*I* don't call two such greenhorns and cripples *luck*, Banks,' replied the quick tones. Then they went away, and left me to wonder of whom these men were speaking, and where I was.

When I again regained the full use of my faculties the vessel, for I knew so much now, was pitching about in a very independent fashion, but not moving forward; at least I fancied we were not. I sat up, and knocked my head against a beam. This aroused me thoroughly, and I called out. A man in a sailor's jacket came in hastily and said, with a curious accent,—

'Oh, you've come alive then, youngster?'

I replied that I had, as I believed. But where was I? Would he tell me so much?

'To be sure! Why, where would ye be but on boord his Majesty's cruiser *Schpindhrift*.'

'A Revenue cutter?' I exclaimed.

'Yis; a Rivinue cutther.'

'What's her name, please?'

'Shure, don't I be tellin' ye?—*Schpindhrift*.'

'Is it English or Welsh? I don't understand.'

'Oh, by the piper that played before Moses, ye soon will! Are ye well enough to go to juty?'

'Duty! what duty?'

'What juty! Oh, he's a ravin' luniac, so he is! What juty! why, sailor's juty!'

'But I'm not a sailor.'

'Then ye soon will be, wid God's blessin', and the liftenant's,' he replied piously.

'Who are you, then?' I asked dreamily.

'Who am I? Is it me? Oh, Holy Fly!' he ejaculated, in contempt of my ignorance.

I was quite unacquainted with this insect, and said so. Then I repeated my question gently, because I fancied this queer man was mad, and his accent was as ridiculous as strange. There was a twinkle in his eyes which made me smile.

'Ah, ye're betther, or ye wouldn't be grinnin' like a Cheshire cat that a-way. Git up, will ye? I'm the purrser.'

'Yes, I will get up. But where am I, Mr. Purser?'

'In the Boston Deeps, they call them, and we're rowlin' our hearts out. We shall be sailin' again by'n by. It's the smugglers we're afther.'

May I see the lieutenant, or my doctor?'

'Bedad ye may. Here's wan o' them. Yis, sor, he's awake, but hazy in his intellects; he can't undherstand the king's English!'

I gazed at the surgeon, as I supposed him to be. He felt my pulse and looked at my tongue and eyes. 'All right again?' he asked.

'Much better, thank you. May I get up, doctor?'

'Yes, if you can. But I'm not a "doctor." I'm a mate on board this cutter, that's all. I once studied medicine a little, so I managed to pull you round. I'll tell the lieutenant. He wants to know who you are.'

He quitted the little cabin in which I had been lying so many, many days, as I imagined. I was speculating on how many when the lieutenant appeared.

'Glad we saved you, my lad,' was his greeting, in his quick way. 'Now, who are you? What's your name and station? and how did you go adrift?'

I told him all necessary particulars, adding I had something private to tell him besides.

'Well, let it go. Fire away!' he replied.

Then I mentioned Hewson and the wreck, and my fears for the prisoner. The lieutenant stared at me in blank astonishment. He had heard this before.

'Hewson—Stromsea—*Samphire*—wreck! Why, it's incredible! Let me see—Hewson! Hewson!' (He was thinking.) 'The pilot mentioned him. Hewson! Yes! Send aft that lubber we shipped the other day,' he shouted.

'Ay, ay, sir!' was the answer.

In a few minutes a shuffling figure came in, and, touching his cap, stared at the commander of the *Spindrift* and

me. I stared too with 'all my eyes,' for the 'lubber' was Guy Hewson, my late antagonist!

The lieutenant looked at him, and I heard him mutter,—

'Ridiculous! This is not Guy. Can't be! The whole place is bewitched. Bother the pilot and his yarns! Hewson! Absurd!'

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SMUGGLERS' CAVE.

In speechless astonishment I stared at the man who had so ill-used me, and he at me. Our mutual surprise struck the lieutenant, who demanded sharply of the 'lubber' what he was 'staring at like a stuck pig!'

'Do you know this fellow!' asked the lieutenant, turning to me quickly.

'Yes,' I replied. 'At least I *did*. He is the mean and cowardly son of the old swindler who calls himself my guardian, — the man I told you of—Hewson.'

'So. Very likely; but how came the fellow in the navy?' asked the lieutenant, after he had dismissed Guy contemptuously. 'There is some underhand business here. Get up, dress, and come into my cabin. I think you can give me some information. I used to know old Hewson,' he added, as he left the berth.

The Irishman who acted as purser, and in one or two other capacities as steward and a kind of attendant on the lieutenant ('head cook and bottle-washer,' that officer called him), soon supplied me with the outer forms of respectability in the form of sailor's clothes, in which I presented quite a smart appearance.

In this new rig-out I proceeded slowly to the lieutenant's cabin. He was seated, thinking, with his cap on; the peak shaded his face, but in the full light I could now distinguish his features, and somehow they seemed familiar to me. The beard, moustache, and whiskers, however, concealed a good deal, and I scarcely dared to think of him of whom this young officer reminded me.

'Sit down,' he said; 'you are looking weak and ill. Bring yourself to an anchor. What is your name? Not Cornish, surely?' he said suddenly.

'Yes,' I replied in surprise. 'Do you know me? My name is Percy Cornish. And—you? you are—oh, Harry!'

'Ay, ay, Percy, my lad. I am indeed your old friend, Harry. But how in heaven's name did you come to this part of the world? Where are Katie and your mother?'

He had been shaking my hand and patting my shoulders while he asked these questions. Then, seeing I was distressed, he got me a glass of wine and a biscuit, a very troubled look on his face all the while. He was afraid of my news, I think.

'Is Katie—quite well?' he inquired at length.

'Quite well,' I replied; 'but we are orphans!'

'Poor lad!' said my friend. 'Poor Kate! But now, Percy, sit down again, and tell me all your news. Begin

at the very beginning. Remember I have been away for more than three years. When did you leave the old place?'

I told him all the circumstances connected with our sudden loss and the trusteeship. How 'Captain' Burley had sailed away, and how the old lawyer had brought us to Stromsea, etc.

When I had finished my narrative the lieutenant ordered Guy Hewson to be brought in.

Hewson was very much surprised to see me seated, clothed and in my right mind, chatting familiarly with the commander of the cutter. The lieutenant was very angry. My narrative, the account of the flogging I had had, and the insolence of the 'lawyer's brat' in seeking Katie's love, were all too much for my friend.

'You're a pretty scoundrel!' was the cheerful salutation of the lieutenant. 'You have been brought here as a deserter from the service! Do you know how deserters are treated? Eh! Speak up!'

'Yes, yes, sir,' replied the wretched Guy. 'But I'm not a deserter, indeed I'm not! Master Cornish knows me well.'

'Too well!' I replied,—'only too well!'

'*Mister* Cornish is my guest,' replied the young lieutenant, 'and can have nothing to say to you. Not a deserter indeed! Why, the coastguard put you on board with instructions, on sworn information by a lawyer named Hewson. By the bye, you said your name was Hewson.'

'So it is,' replied Guy faintly. 'There must have been some mistake—sir.'

He was always reluctant about the 'sir;' but deemed

it politic under the circumstances, for he had received a lesson or two in manners already.

'Mistake! Impossible, unless the worthy Mr. Hewson committed wilful and corrupt perjury. If he did, then we will bring him to justice, and *you shall prosecute him!* We'll apply for a court-martial for you.'

'Oh, no, no, sir! The man is my father! He was under a delusion,' exclaimed miserable Guy.

'Indeed?' continued the pitiless lieutenant. 'Then he must go to an asylum. Such delusions are harmful to society. You say you are *not* a deserter?'

'No, sir; I am an articled clerk to my father.'

'The man with delusions, eh? Very well, why did your father choose to swear you were a deserter? Why didn't you interfere?'

'It wasn't about me. It was another person.'

'Who was it then?'

'Master Cornish there,' he replied sulkily.

'But he was never in the navy. He and I were playmates. You must be adding lie to lie. Here, Edwards, call Mr. Banks and Mr. Riley, and tell the acting boatswain we shall require his services.'

Guy turned pale as death.

'You won't flog me?' he screamed. 'Oh, don't flog me! I'd rather die!'

'Well, then, I'll have you hanged at Dover. You can do as you please. Make up your mind. I would not give you the chance, only for my friend here.'

'Percy Cornish,' whined the wretched coward, 'intercede for me; get the punishment altered. I will do anything you like if you will get me off.'

'I have no power in the matter,' I replied. 'Remember

your cruelty to me. But if your commander pleases he can remit your punishment,' I continued, choosing my words; 'I do not wish you flogged.'

'Hanging would suit him better!' said the mate, who had entered with a midshipman while we were conversing.

'Oh, spare me! I am not fit to die!' whined the young sinner.

'I'm certain you're not fit to live,' returned the lieutenant. 'Gentlemen, the deserter shall be spared hanging; what is your verdict?'

'Give him three dozen, sir,' said the mate. 'He deserves six!'

'Three dozen, sir,' said the middy.

'Very well. I am empowered to flog you,' said the lieutenant. 'As a member of my crew, you have refused to do your duty. You are a declared deserter, but I give you the benefit of the doubtful sworn information of your precious father Mr. Riley, pass the word, "Pipe for punishment."'

Two sailors who had, unnoticed by me, been standing at the door now advanced. They were armed with cutlasses and carbines.

The shrill pipe rang through the cutter; and in a moment the crew turned up. They all guessed who the culprit was, and were none of them sorry. Guy had managed to make himself disliked already.

'Hands aft for punishment,' was the order. The grating was rigged, and then Guy was ordered to strip, which he did slowly and nearly fainting with terror. In a moment he was seized up,—man-o'-war fashion,—and the report, 'Seized up, sir,' was made.

The lieutenant then read the articles of war bearing on the circumstances. This ceremony performed, hats were replaced, for the articles of war are always read 'uncovered;' and the boatswain was ordered to begin.

The first lash drew a yell of pain from the unfortunate Guy. Another and another succeeded, until a dozen had been inflicted. Then the culprit fainted.

'That will do,' said the lieutenant. 'He is a cur, but we must be merciful. He will earn the remainder before long, I daresay. Now, as the wind seems freshening, we will run up the coast and see whether we cannot find some of your smuggling friends, Percy.'

'And the wreck of the *Samphire*,' I said. 'I am sure that old Hewson is in some plot, besides his dishonest treatment of us. The cave and its contents and the well should be searched.'

'I wish I had had an idea that you and Katie were in the neighbourhood,' remarked my friend. 'I did write to your old address at Castle Field, but got the letter returned a month after, with "gone away" written across it.'

'Have you been here long, then?' I inquired.

'Just a fortnight, cruising up and down as you see. No luck! These smuggling fellows are as sharp as needles. But we'll catch them yet. Let us see, the day before yesterday we picked you up. This is Friday. We shall have a tussle, I expect, with the fellows, if the wind holds. Now wait and see.'

Darkness fell, and then every precaution was taken to conceal the identity of the smart cutter the *Spindrift*, a name which I could not at first quite catch as the Hibernian pronounced it. The taper topmast was sent

down, the ropes slacked a little, the paint-pot was got out, and her guns were concealed. In fact, she was rendered as unlike a trim 'man-o'-war' cutter as she could be made to look; a streak of bright red paint quite changed her lines, and she was 'made up,' as cleverly as an actor would be, for the stage of her operations.

It was necessary to be cautious, for in those days of the Fourth George smugglers and their adherents abounded. The preventive men did a good deal, but they were not so disciplined as they are now, and besides many were bribed and others unfitted physically for duty. There have been cases in which the Revenue officers were actually in league with smugglers. So the chances of detection were materially lessened. But captures were made, and our cruiser, the *Spindrift*, had already alarmed the contrabandists and their associates.

The coast-line southwards from Cromer round by Kent and Sussex, particularly the first-named county, concealed nests of smugglers. Nearly every sailor, as well as hundreds of tradespeople, were concerned in these ventures. The agricultural population too was in no way behind-hand in sympathy. Farmers winked when their horses were borrowed, or their outhouses utilized. Curious kegs of spirits and packages of tobacco would be found by the 'merest chance' in the barns or kitchens, having come, no one knew whence, of course, in the night. The great country houses also had their hiding-places, and many a fragrant chest of tea and valuable case of brandy were left when certain similar cases and chests were removed to London. The 'fair trade' of that period was smuggling, and it realized enormous profits. One cargo safely 'run' paid handsomely for two others lost, and,

THE BOAT-YARD AT STROMSEA.

with such gains as these, it was no wonder that the smugglers were energetic, and their organizations and alliances so perfect and true.

The commander of the cruiser had kept the smuggling in check, but he had not discovered the well in the old garden; and, even had he done so, it is doubtful whether he would have explored it. This well still exists at the present time of writing, but I am assured by the relatives of the occupiers of the property that the sea entrance is now closed.

Guided by me, the cutter's crew were to make a raid upon this well-devised hiding-place, and also to board the stranded *Samphire*. There was so much mystery connected with this vessel, and I was so anxious to reveal my worthy guardian in his true light, that my friend the lieutenant agreed to send a boat to the wreck as soon as we arrived off the Stromsea headlands.

. . . . . .

We made our way southwards rapidly. The men were all ready for action; a bright look-out was kept. The night threatened to be stormy, and would certainly be very dark. Eight-and-forty hours had elapsed since I had quitted the wreck; the sea had been very rough, and the *Samphire* might have been broken up. We made up our minds, in any case, to break up the smuggling gang; and as darkness came on grog was served out. The men had their suppers; pistols and cutlasses were got ready; the officers girded on their swords, and even I was handed a brace of heavy pistols, which I stuck in my belt, looking therewith almost as nautical as a pirate.

Ten o'clock! Wind rising and blowing on shore. The lieutenant hardly liked to take the cutter in, but he after

a while ran round the headland, and sheltered under the lee of the cliffs about a mile from shore, on the south side. In front was the hill, on our shoreward side was Stromsea, to starboard the ocean extended, and nearly directly astern, as we swung, lay the wreck of the *Samphire*, so far as we could tell, uninjured and untenanted.

'Hush! steady, men! gently there. Mr. Riley, remember my orders. If you hear or perceive any lugger or other suspicious craft running in, burn a blue light in my cabin. Do not flare anything on deck. The tide will turn at midnight, remember. We shall come back as quickly as possible. Keep a good look-out!'

These were the lieutenant's orders to his subordinate, whom he left in charge of the cutter, with three men and the miserable Guy.

Two boats, the oars all muffled, put off in silence. Fortunately our commander knew every inch of the little land-locked bay, so he had no fear even in the pitchy darkness of the night. We had arranged to go to the cavern first. The tide was falling, and we calculated on plenty of time to make our capture and quit the dangerous rocks before the sea lashed round them again. Outside the waves were running pretty high, but in the bay there was no disturbance, a 'biggish ripple' being all we had.

'Here we are. The wreck is to windward. Gently. Oars,' whispered the lieutenant. Mr. Banks in the other boat followed. We were at the base of the big rocks, under their lee, undistinguishable from them in the gloom, and only just afloat. One by one the men stepped from the boats on to the rocky ridges, disdaining the waves. We had calculated that the boats would go aground in about half an hour, and float again

the flood tide. So grapnels were fixed, and a man left with each boat, armed of course.

There was something very exciting to my mind in all this. It partook of real adventure. There was no mere story-book excitement. We were in search of real smugglers, and ready to fight if necessary. I think I did not appreciate the danger, which the men scorned with all their natural recklessness.

We soon found the entrance, and cautiously descended the steps — the rude steps on which I had fallen — into the cavern. A tinder-box gave us a light for the candle lanterns we had brought for the purpose, and we began our search.

The lieutenant was in advance, and I was in the rear of the party, under the care of a sailor. There was no difficulty in our way, and we had just reached the first cases of stores, which the lieutenant proposed to brand with the broad arrow, when a sound of falling stones or gravel startled us all.

The noise, magnified by the echoes of the cave, was rather alarming. The lieutenant at once gave orders to douse the lights and lie down.

'Prime your pistols, men,' he whispered. 'Lie down or conceal yourselves. I suspect the smugglers are here.'

The word was passed on from man to man in a whisper, and at that minute another shower of stones came down. What could it mean? I fancied I knew, and, full of information, I crawled up to where I guessed the lieutenant was, and whispered his name.

'What is it?' he asked.

'There is an aperture communicating with the cliff a little farther in,' I whispered. 'Perhaps the chalk is falling.'

'Very likely,' he replied, in the same cautious way. 'Let us crawl on and find out. Banks, remain here, and mind you do not fire until we rejoin you.'

'Ay, ay, sir!' said Mr. Banks; and he passed the order not to fire until the lieutenant returned.

We crawled on and round a projection. As we peeped round this buttress, formed by some deeply embedded rock, we simultaneously perceived a lighted lantern, which cast a dim light upon the foot of a rope ladder dependent from the side of the roof on the left.

A man was standing by the light, by which his legs, clad in thick boots and overalls, were plainly visible. Another seafaring individual was clinging to the ladder, and we had little doubt but that a number of men were without on the cliff. They had come to remove the smuggled goods.

'Harry,' I whispered, 'why can't we with a few men remain here, while the others go up the cliff? I know the way.'

'Then you can't remain here. But your idea is good,' he replied, thinking, as there was to be an encounter, that I was better outside. 'Yes, a capital plan. Let us return.'

We cautiously retreated. The lieutenant and six men concealed themselves behind a barricade of bales and cases, while Mr. Banks and I, with the remainder of the party, hurried out noiselessly.

CHAPTER IX.

MY GUARDIAN'S FATE.

Once again I experienced the difficulty in endeavouring to find a track in the dark. But we *did* find it. We had to wade cautiously to the ledge of rocks to the south-east, then ascend the steep path which led up to the summit of the cliff. Many of the men were barefooted, and yet they did not seem to mind the pebbles. I consoled myself with the reflection that salt water does not usually give cold, and never realized the actual bodily danger into which I was leading and being led. So I trudged carefully and cautiously along, looking upon the whole affair as rather a 'lark,' so inconsiderate was I.

We had to make a considerable *détour* to the left and sweep up the cliff to the right. The white gleams of the chalk served to indicate the side of our pathway. On the right and then on the left the unprotected path was open to the sea. The darkness was intense, thick, and yet

there was no fog. Steady! Here were we on the summit. Now along the top, bearing north-west by north.

We required no compass. The north star was visible, so was Charles's Wain, so steering was easy. We gained the cliff road, and perceived some dark objects in our front.

Carts, well horsed. Yes, some half dozen carts—ordinary country carts—and a number of horses. The smugglers evidently meant business.

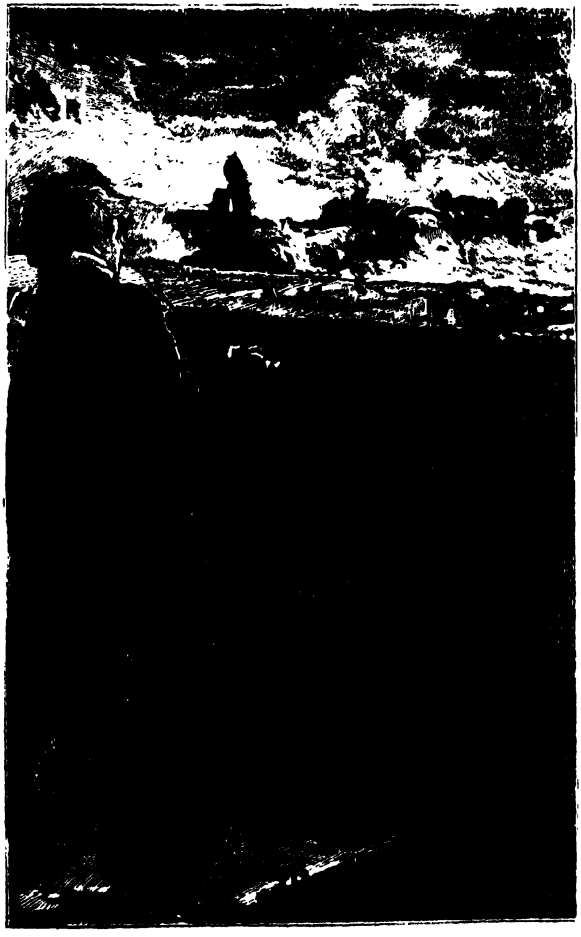
At that moment a shot was heard—a muffled sound which came up through the aperture. We rushed past the line of carts and horses, all tied in a long line together, and made for the secret passage.

We had some difficulty in finding the place, and it was eventually only discovered by reason of one of the sailors nearly tumbling into the hole, which was fringed with grass and weeds, and would have been invisible but for the light which came up into the air; the sound of turmoil beneath also guided us to the place we sought.

Mr. Banks at once descended, his men followed, and I was nervously preparing to go down when a figure rushed out of the gloom towards me. This decided me. It was a case of out of the frying-pan into the fire, I thought. I let go, and slipped down the rope ladder at a very rapid rate into smoke, tumult, and a lurid light, which could only be caused by a fire.

I could hear the clashing of cutlasses and the cries of angry and wounded men; blows and curses were freely exchanged. So, deeming prudence the better part of valour, I crouched behind the projecting rock, and watched the skirmish.

A pistol ball, which flattened beside me into a leaden



'THE STORES HAD CAUGHT FIRE.'

jagged disc, told me to keep down. It was a narrow escape. I turned round, crouched low, and perceived a man in pilot jacket and generally seafaring appearance descend the rope ladder.

I fancied I recognised the form, but I did not stir. Without perceiving me the man drew a cutlass, and rushed into the fray in the next turn of the cavern.

Then came more shouting. A blaze illuminated the walls for a long distance,—a sickly bluish-white flame, then a brilliant light.

The brandy had caught fire; the whole of the spirit and the accumulated stores were burning.

There was no chance for the smugglers now. Hemmed in, assailed in front and rear, they fought well, and three were shot dead. Seven others were wounded, and surrendered; two men did not receive a scratch. The sailors also were roughly handled, but, owing to their barricade of casks, and the surprise of their antagonists, they escaped wonderfully well. Only two men were seriously injured. My friend the lieutenant received a cut on the temple which covered him with blood, but fortunately did not injure the skull.

The smuggling gang was captured. I heard the word passed to retreat. The dead were left where they were. The wounded and prisoners were carried off. As the sailors retired, I made a dash along the wall, and, without any more damage than a singeing, which made me smell like burnt hair for days, I escaped past the burning cases.

The fire was beginning to assume serious proportions, and the cavern was like a furnace. It was pitiable to think of the silk, the tea, the tobacco, and the spirits which were doomed to destruction. But nobody could

quench the flames fanned by the draught. The king's authority had been vindicated; and when we reached the entrance of the underground passage and looked back, the whole vault appeared a mass of fire.

The chalk crumbled and fell in lumps. The heat cracked the limestone and brought it down. One great mass tumbled, then the chalk fell, and in half an hour the passage was blocked. The three dead smugglers remained in the vault, and there they lie buried till the crack of doom.

This fire completely choked the smugglers' cavern, and the entrance from the sea has, my friends assure me, never been excavated since.

It was some time before I could get speech with my friend Harry. He was so busy and attentive to his men that any private interview was impossible. It was about one o'clock in the morning. The tide had turned, and we found our boats afloat, the two sailors reclining in them, but wide awake.

The wounded were all put into one boat and hurried back, under the care of Mr. Banks, who undertook to despatch a message to the nearest surgeon. Then—that is, when the changes were being made—I discovered who the sailor was who had reinforced the Revenue men; the man I had seen upon the ladder was Davy Thorpe, the pilot.

I was burning to question him, and at once inquired concerning Katie and Ellis.

He turned and gripped me; he recognised my voice, I suppose—he could hardly have recognised my appearance, under the circumstances, in the lantern gleam.

'Master Cornish! Lord be praised for His mercies!

Then you are alive? Yes, sir, yes! Miss Katie is well, but sore distressed, and in great trouble. Mister Ellis, he is searching for you. Coastguard and police is out too. Old Fox is missing,—your guardian, I mean; and his precious son is also out of the way. A nice clearance of rubbish—savin' your presence.'

'I quite agree with you, Davy,' I replied; 'and I think I can give you a little information concerning both my guardian and his son. If you will remain with us you shall see something that will surprise you!'

'This is a night of surprises; one extra won't do no harm,' replied Davy quietly.

'Now, Percy,' interrupted the lieutenant, 'if we are to explore this wreck of yours we have no time to lose. Where away is she?'

'To the eastward, sir,' replied the old pilot, touching his hat. 'I know every inch of the sands, and I will take your boats across. The sea is getting up, sir.'

'So I perceive,' replied the lieutenant. 'Who are you?'

'David Thorpe, sir, pilot, at your service.'

'Oh, very well; so long as you are not Davy Jones we will trust you. You *are* to be trusted, I suppose?'

'You may take your Davy of that, sir,' responded the old man, as the lantern flashed upon his honest and weatherbeaten face.

The scene was a very picturesque one, and in these after years, whenever I see a drama or opera in which pirates or sailors are represented on shore at night by the sea, I recall the little group standing on the rocks under the lee of the larger boulders; the glitter of arms and buckles, the 'shine' of the hats, the swinging lanterns, and grim

faces half in shadow; the rushing waves, and the whistling sea-breeze which chilled us; the bloodstains and powder-stains on hands and faces, all come before me as I pause and look back along the vista of memory once again.

No more was said. The lieutenant gave the necessary orders coolly. I was very impatient to return to the wreck, for I was convinced it concealed some terrible secret. Rumour had attributed the stranding of the *Samphire* to something more than weather and accident. 'Wrecking' was not quite out of date. The disappearance of the pilot and the mate, whose bodies were never discovered, who had been seen to quit the barque in a boat when she first grounded—these and other signs and reports had exercised experts in Stromsea many a time. So it was with considerable curiosity and some forebodings that many of us neared the wreck, which still remained in her former position.

No sound came from the *Samphire*—no one was on deck.

We pulled alongside. The old pilot was the first to climb into the entrance-port and board the haunted ship!

The lieutenant, followed by me and two men, then got in too. The pilot and the two sailors carried lanterns, so we had no difficulty in making our way aft though the deck was slippery and wet.

We paused when we reached the cabin. Not a sound broke the stillness. Were the men dead?

My heart thumped loudly. If my guardian were dead, was not I the cause of his death? Had not I taken the dinghy and left him to starve?

There was no time for self-examination. The lieutenant, taking one of the lanterns, descended.

All on deck followed him closely. No one would have remained there alone for a goodly sum of money, I am certain.

'Come here, Jackson; show a light,' said the lieutenant.

The lanterns were all advanced together. We gazed fearfully around the cabin.

Two forms were lying there, locked in each other's arms —motionless. The position was affectionate—the arms of one round the neck of the other, the latter grasping the waist and shoulder of his companion. But it seemed to me a death-struggle!

The two sailors at once endeavoured to separate the men. One, my old guardian, was black in the face—strangled by the thin, nervous, muscular hands that affectionately clasped his neck. He was cold and dead!

The other man was pale and emaciated—motionless; blood from a wound in his chest was visible on his clothing, but the body was not cold.

'This man is alive!' cried the lieutenant. 'Bring him up! Wait; pour some brandy down his throat.'

Our efforts to restore animation were for a long time unsuccessful. The pilot and the men, under Harry's directions, did all they knew to bring the insensible man to life again. At length a faint flutter of the heart was perceptible.

'Bring down three hands from the boat, Percy,' cried the lieutenant. 'Smart!'

I hurried up, called up the three men of the cutter's crew, and returned with them as quickly as possible to the cabin.

'Now, my lads, bear a hand. Hold these two poor fellows. There has been a terrible business here. Why, the man is chained — fettered! Great heaven! what foul deed is this?'

No one answered. All were too busy in separating the living from the dead, in disposing of the lifeless body of my late guardian, who was at once recognised by the pilot and one or two of the sailors.

'He's been up to some villainy,' muttered Thorpe. 'But he's got his deserts at last.'

Meanwhile, the other detachment was engaged in treating the recovering prisoner. Already the rope had been severed, and, though the chain was not filed till later, the weight of it was supported, while the wounded, and, we feared, dying man was placed in a berth.

'Beg your pardon, sir,' said the coxswain of the boat, putting his head down the companion,—'beg your pardon, sir, but the sea's getting nasty, and the wind's backin'. It ain't safe for the pinnace here, sir.'

'Oh, Reeve, very well! Take her back to the cutter, and tell Mr. Banks to run down here as soon as he can. It will be daylight by that time.'

'Ay, ay, sir!' replied the coxswain, retiring without endeavouring to ascertain what was going forward in the cabin. Such was discipline in the *Spindrift*, Revenue cutter, Harry Williams, commander. The boat's crew followed him.

After a while the man we had placed in the berth became conscious, but evinced no surprise at finding himself in the cabin of the *Samphire*. He gazed round, and, as Harry remarked, 'seemed quite at home.'

'What is the matter?' he said at last, in a weak voice.

'You have been as nearly dead as man could be,' replied the lieutenant softly. 'Lie still; you were stabbed.'

'Ay,' replied the man; 'I remember now. That villain — I refused— Ah, some brandy!—quick!'

'We have no more. Here, pilot, look for some.'

'You'll find it yonder—locker,' whispered the injured man. 'Quick!'

The pilot hurried to the locker and found the spirit as indicated. We all were very much surprised. How could a chained prisoner know this? And how came he to be chained at all?

These questions were muttered as the brandy was carefully administered. The injured man then seemed stronger. The bleeding from the wound had ceased, and there were still hopes of recovery, but unless medical aid could be procured quickly we feared the worst.

'Can't we signal the coastguard?' I suggested. 'They will bring off a doctor quicker than we can find one.'

'Well said, Percy!' cried the lieutenant; 'but we must wait for daylight. The lanterns will not serve.'

'We can let them see us, at any rate,' remarked the pilot. 'I can give them a hint, I think, with the lamps, and we can fire the gun too.'

'Good! Do so,' said the lieutenant. 'One of you remain here, and we will manage this. Is there any powder?'

There was none obtainable except from the carbines and pistols; but the little we had was divided into two small charges and rammed down into the small gun on the quarter-deck as tightly as possible to ensure a loud report.

'Fire!' cried the lieutenant.

The cannon boomed out bravely. The sound was carried flat against the cliffs and up to the coastguard houses, which surrounded a flagstaff on the rising ground westward.

Davy, the pilot, had meanwhile been arranging his three lanterns, which he placed triangular fashion, and moved about in a demoniac way as soon as he perceived the lights on the cliff.

'What are you trying to make them understand, pilot?' asked the lieutenant.

'Well, sir, it's just this,' replied the pilot, with an apologetic air; 'when Tom Anderson and me was on the light-ship, and we wanted *drugs*,—or spirits, savin' your presence,—we'd signal them off this way. Now, sir, if Tom has the sense he used to have he'll hear our gun and another in another minute. He'll guess I'm here too, and wantin' "drugs." But distress and "drugs" mean more than spirits, sir; and he'll bring the 'pothecary mayhap. It's a chance, sir!'

'Very ingenious, I must allow,' replied the lieutenant. 'Give them the other gun!'

To our delight it was answered from the offing. We then guessed that the cutter was under weigh and running up to us. Not too soon either.

Not half an hour too soon! The dim dawn to windward showed us a dull heavy grey sky, which mingled in the horizon—a near horizon—with greenish tumbling water driving in, and at times curling over in breaking waves. As the day broke, a red and angry light from the invisible sun was dispersed over the eastern sky and reflected beneath the morning clouds to the zenith. The wind

moaned and whistled through the rigging of the wreck, and the ever increasing waves deluged the forecastle every minute. The water turned from olive-green to dirty brown as the sand was churned up. Then the reddening clouds sent it a temporary glow, which was rudely washed off by a thickening shower. The clouds to windward stooped and stooped till the black masses seemed to rest upon the sea like a pall.

'We are in for it,' muttered Davy. 'I've seen the squalls like that do heavy damage afore now. There's the cutter, sir; she's not quite right, I'm afraid.'

The lieutenant looked, and perceived the well-handled *Spindrift*, with jib and reefed mainsail, plunging her way towards us with the wind on her quarter, heeling over to the squalls; darting like an arrow through the descending seas, and foaming through the rising crests.

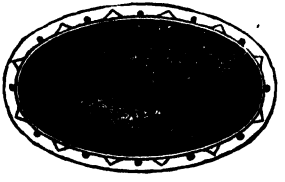
'I don't understand you,' replied the lieutenant. 'The

cutter is right enough. Reeve's got her helm. She's making good weather of it.'

'Ay, sir, but that there "spout" will give her a drenching. See, it's forming to windward, and coming straight for us and her!'

'By Jove, you're right, pilot! She will be swamped. The cutter will not weather it. She's doomed; and here am I, instead of being on her quarter-deck!'

The lieutenant stamped and swore at his ill-luck. His place was on the *Spindrift*. But he could only wait and watch the issue.



CHAPTER X.

HOME AT LAST.

The lieutenant was like a man demented, and in the approaching danger we forgot all else. Our own precarious position even was unconsidered in the shadow of the catastrophe which was threatening the cutter. I believe Harry would have dashed into the water had there been the faintest chance of his gaining his vessel.

I wish I could give anything like an accurate description of the scene which met our terrified gaze that morning. In nearly all books that I have read the hurricane is described as coming at night, with all the horrors of darkness, lightning, and thunder. But we had no thunder, and day was breaking; the wind was rapidly rising with the sun; the sea was already covering us with clouds of spray; the light-ship was at times quite invisible in the offing, and the old headland to the northward was lashed by great waves, which sprang like white wild animals from the sea, and tried in vain to find a footing on the black and polished rocks. The waves fell back in

broken spray and foam; but, undefeated, tried again and again.

The helmsman and the mate of the cutter were in consultation. The waterspout was fast approaching, when suddenly the *Spindrift* was shot up into the wind and lay to, her mainsail flapping and her jib shivering in the wind. Some commotion was visible forward, and then the reason of the manœuvre was apparent.

Mr. Banks had realized our danger as well as his own. He might have escaped by running off a bit and letting the spout pass him. But then it would have spent its fury on the sands, and broken in the shallower water, upon the wreck most likely.

The mate determined to cut the spout, and for this purpose he had hauled the cutter to the wind to get a shot at it. We watched the proceedings with interest and some alarm. We could now perceive the agitation of the sea, which extended some distance around the base of the column of air and water which formed the spout. As we gazed, a gun was discharged. The ball just touched the whirling column, divided it a little way, but it almost immediately reformed and came boiling and hissing towards us.

Another gun! The shot passed unseen, but struck the column fair and true. The cloud above curled up like a sensitive tentacle, and there hung a dark forbidding finger in the air, pointing to the sea. The water foamed; a huge lump, as of some immense cetacean, was visible, rolling like a porpoise in the waves. The commotion came on, reached the cutter, which rose to it, her jibboom pointed high in air. Then the roll threw her to leeward, the wind caught her, and beat her almost into the boiling sea.

'She's gone, by heaven!' cried the pilot.

'No, she rights! Well done, Banks!' cried the lieutenant. 'Brave fellow! he has got her in hand. It was touch and go!'

I had stood with the sailors transfixed, unheeding the storm, the sea, or the approaching wave, which towered high in air.

'Hold on for your lives!' shouted the pilot. 'Hold, men! mind the water!'

The great grey mountain of water rolled heavily along. It reached the outer rim of the sand unbroken, clear greenish grey, a very wall, rounded at the top, and covered with multitudes of little parasite waves which sported on its huge mass.

Then it was checked. It seemed to my intense gaze and excited imagination to be *astonished* that anything should *dare* to impede its course. The surprise did not continue; action swiftly succeeded. With a disdainful curl of its upper lip, the monster bowed its head, and like an infuriated elephant rushed headlong over the sand-bank and at the stranded *Samphire!*

'God help us!' was all I heard. There was no time for much speaking. Each man held on with all his might, and braced himself for the terrible encounter with the awful wave! It came with a thundering rush and roar which none of us will ever forget—indescribably awful in its rush and power, its force tremendous!

In a moment the vessel was actually lifted, the sands torn up. We held on, holding our breath too; a dull, green mass high above our heads in which were many objects, and I daresay stones amongst them. The *Samphire* was uprooted bodily, and carried with a rush into

the deeper water inside the shoal. The wave passed on and left us for a moment floating.

But for a while only. In that short space the pilot rushed below. We were hanging in the balance, as it were, 'twixt life and death. He, with the attendant sailor in the cabin, whose head was cut and bleeding, lifted the wounded man—only for a second. He was dead,—killed by the concussion of the water!

The living rushed up to save themselves.

'Keep close to me, Percy,' whispered Harry, the brave lieutenant. 'You can swim, I daresay. We shall save you. Ha! hurrah, lads, hurrah!

We turned and cheered. Hurrah! A well-manned galley was dashing through the waves. 'The coastguard! The coastguard! Quick!'

The *Samphire* was battered, settling slowly down. Her ballast forward sent her headforemost, but the stern still floated. Again the pilot rushed down-stairs; two men followed him. They all returned safe and sound, carrying the man we had restored to life, only to die in pain and misery. Poor fellow!

The poop-deck was now washed by the sea, but the coastguard had reached us. The living were taken on board. The dead man was lashed upon a spar and towed in. After a while, as we were watching the wreck, a wave came on, greater than its predecessors; when it had passed the *Samphire* was no longer visible. It had sunk with its solitary tenant—my guardian!

The coastguard pulled manfully. Aided by the wind and waves, they flew across the water. The *Spindrift* cruiser, seeing we were safe, tacked and ran for shelter under Stromsea Head in the little 'haven under the hill,'

where a tiny breakwater and a granite pier kept her in safety during that memorable storm.

It *was* a storm! Never, they say, has such a hurricane been known up there as was that one. The sea came in tons over pier and breakwater; great waves lashed the cottages many yards up on the beach, which usually boasted tiny ripples and never a wave. Lightning flashed over the low church spire and smashed the vane, a brazen fowl which had perched there in defiance many years. Trees were uprooted, the coastguard's flag was torn to shreds, the mast sprung. Houses were unroofed, sheep killed, chimneys carried bodily away, and yet not one human life was lost, except an old dame who was lifted up and dashed against the ale-house door, when she died from injuries received.

We were all dreadfully terrified. I thought of Katie, and wondered how she was faring at home.

At home! Alas! we had no home now. We were orphans, guardianless! Our wicked guardian had gone to his account. The other was away at sea.

As soon as the wind abated I hastened home. This was not until next day, though, for the night was so tempestuous no one could safely venture out.

To my surprise that morning a man came up to the pilot's house, where we had again sheltered. (The lieutenant and his men had gone direct to Stromsea and aboard the *Spindrift*, but just in time. She rode the gale in safety, with many sturdy fishing-boats, though with much anxiety and straining cables.) The man who called came from the inn, and wished to see 'the gentleman at Davy's.'

I answered to the description, and, dressed in sailor

costume somewhat worse for wear, demanded the man's business.

'Them two pownies!' he said.

'Two ponies!' I exclaimed.

'Oh, is it you, Mister Cornish? Well, I'm blowed! Why, they're your pownies, sir, which was brought in night afore last all sanded and mudded, with a package on each of them. One carried the 'bacca, and t'other the blue ruin.'

'Smuggled goods, I suppose. How came they there?'

'Which, sir? they pownies? Ah, well, *they* was led in, I expect. Didn't you know you'd missed them?'

'Yes; and I was carried off too.'

'Yew, sir? Ho! ho! 'Scuse me, sir. The Custum 'us fellows is after you!'

'Well, here I am; they can't hurt me.'

'Oh, well, as you pleases! Only, when a gentleman suited in smugglin' clothes, with 'is two pownies loaded with 'bacca and spirits, has been with smugglers, ye know the Custums *do* make it warm!'

'So they do, Sam; but I am quite innocent. Where are the ponies and the packages?'

'The packages is in my loft, the beasts is in my master's stable!'

'A fair division, I daresay. Well, Sam, you and your friends can divide the packages, or their contents. Saddle me one pony, and I will lead the other home with me at once.'

'Very good, sir. Much obliged to you, sir. We'll drink your health, Mister Cornish, and no one will "smoke" them packages!'

'Run away, Sam,' I said to the grinning ostler. 'Smoke the tobacco if you like.'

The smugglers after all had not behaved badly as regarded the ponies: they had restored them and paid in kind for the use of them. So far so good.

I had still a good deal to do, but my first step was to ride over to my late guardian's house, with no more delay than was absolutely necessary. After taking farewell of old Davy, the 'Mud Pilot,' I rode leisurely home, wondering concerning Ellis and Katie.

When I arrived I rode round to the stables, and on my appearance the boy, concluding I was a ghost,—as if those gentry usually came riding on one pony and leading another,—bolted. By the time I had placed the animals in their stalls, the lad came down from the loft, to which he rushed for refuge, and informed me that I was looked upon as defunct.

As he appeared so 'funked' himself, I left him, and, quietly entering the garden, passed up to the house. The drawing-room opened direct from the garden; the French window was open, and I could hear a pleading voice which I thought I recognised. A sound as of kissing then reached my ears. As I walked boldly up the steps, I perceived my sister Katie resting her pretty head on the shoulder of Lieutenant Harry Williams, R.N.

'Well, Harry, I call this cool!' I remarked.

Kate released herself, and immediately performed the same pantomime with me. The other had evidently been a rehearsal. Perhaps Harry was only preparing her for our meeting. Yet— Well, never mind.

'My dearest Percy!' she exclaimed; 'I have been so terribly anxious about you!'

'You didn't seem very nervous about *me* just now, Katie, I remarked. 'In fact'—

'You silly boy! I was *very* anxious until yesterday evening, when Harry came up and told me you were safe.'

'Did he call yesterday in the storm?' I asked.

'Yes; in the evening, and returned with Mr. Ellis, who gave him a lodging, I believe.'

'Oh!' I remarked. 'You were very kind, Harry, very kind—and very considerate for Kate's feelings.'

'Yes, I think I was,' he replied. 'Your sister said as much. We were referring to that subject just now.'

'So I perceived, Harry,' I replied, with a nod. Katie quitted the room, and then Harry said,—

'Percy, your sister and I are engaged at last.'

'My dear Harry, I am delighted! You are the best fellow in the world. Now don't mind me. Call Katie, and let us have a chat.'

Harry was some time calling Katie, but meanwhile I interviewed the servants and Ellis, who told me that every one thought I had been killed. Search had been made, but all traces of me had been lost. My guardian had been seen with two men riding from the direction of the old Manor House late on the evening of my departure, but no one suspected him. So my fate remained a mystery. As Mr. Hewson was seeking his son, no one had remarked upon his absence. 'But he has not yet returned,' said Ellis in conclusion.

Then I related my experiences to Ellis. We agreed to visit the well and the coast, and find what we could on the wreck. But when Harry returned with Katie we told him all, and he promised to release Guy Hewson if

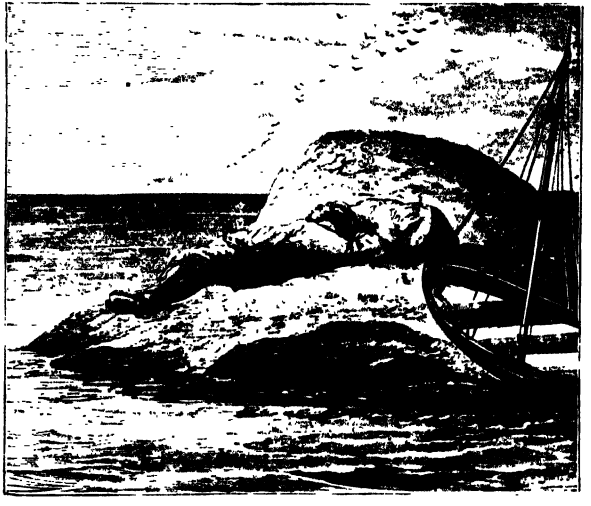
he would tell the truth and all the truth. By his aid we ascertained the manner in which our precious guardian had employed our money in smuggling and other speculations, and the whole course of villainy which he had pursued in that line.

There was more to learn, however; for, when the unfortunate man who had been found alive on the wreck (and who had afterwards died) was recognised, we were shocked to find he was Captain Burley, our other, and our kind, guardian. By degrees the scheme was unravelled. Hewson had embezzled our fortune, and, knowing of Burley's return in the *Samphire*, had bribed a pilot to run his ship to destruction and the mate to iron him down. The horrible plot succeeded only too well. Poor Captain Burley was treated like a felon on board the wreck, occasionally visited by Hewson to enforce his terms if possible. The ill-treated man must have revolted at last and strangled his treacherous enemy. Nor could any one blame him, humanly speaking. Goaded to madness, he had killed his foe; and, as we may almost declare, in self-defence.

After a while our affairs were put into Chancery, but as there were no opponents we soon extricated ourselves. Katie was married when she came of age, with the full sanction of the Lord Chancellor, which was extremely gratifying to her, as she had never seen him. Lieutenant Williams soon after became a commander, and after that a captain; but he was a father before that step came. Katie and he lived very happily, and the writer ought to know this if any one does. She never changed. She remained the same bright, charming little lady she had always been, and when I see her daughter—also a

Kate, by the way—I fancy I can see her dear mother again in her likeness.

Ellis left Stromsea. So did we. Guy improved greatly as he grew older. He eschewed all double dealing, and married the daughter of a prosperous farmer, after he had made to us all the restitution in his power. A great



deal of our capital had been made away with; a good deal had been invested in not good securities. With the assistance of Ellis, who proved a true friend,—and a great admirer of Katie all his life,—we managed to obtain more than we had anticipated. Guy repented, paid us interest on the capital expended, and after a while restored nearly all the principal his father had lost.

Old Davy lived to see Katie married, and was always a good friend to me; indeed, there are many living who remember him well, and whenever I go down to the eastern coast I am sure to find some one who will gladly chat about the 'Mud Pilot' and his wife with kindness and respect.

The body of my treacherous guardian Hewson was never recovered. It lies still beneath the waves, or buried in the sands. Poor Burley was interred in Stromsea churchyard, where he rests in peace, secure in his inheritance.

As for myself, I am old now. To my dear Harry—my boyhood's friend—I dictated this tale which he has written. If all be well we shall again some summer day visit dear old Stromsea, where only last year I spent a pleasant time with those kindly friends to whom my sister Katie and the 'Mud Pilot' are no fictions, but an ever glad remembrance.

P.S.—The wrecking of the *Samphire* was eventually 'brought home' to my guardian; but he had evaded all human laws by that time. Nothing was proved against Guy, nor is there any reason to believe that he was in the secret. Thus the guilty man was caught in his own snare, and never reaped the fruits of his plots and his ill deeds, amongst which his attempt to 'put me out of the way' was, in my mind, much more iniquitous than even [illegible] king of the *Samphire!*

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