

LITTLE JARVIS.

A STORY FOR THE YOUNG FOLKS.

(This story received the first prize of \$500 from the Young People's Contest.)

Jarvis, being only thirteen years old, was the youngest midshipman on board the *Constellation*, but the most troublesome; and although this was a good while ago—in 1800—scapegraces like Jarvis are still common enough on board naval ships to this day. If the officer of the deck were out of sight for five minutes, Jarvis was certain to be turning a double hand-spring, or standing on his head, or engaged in some similar iniquity on the quarter-deck. As for going aloft for punishment, Jarvis spent most of his time on the cross-trees, and was always prepared for it, by carrying a book in one pocket and a piece of hard-tack in the other. When one of the lieutenants would catch Jarvis at his tricks and shout, in a thundering voice,

"Up to the mast head, sir—up, sir—you'll learn some day that the quarter-deck isn't a bear-garden!" Jarvis would go up like a cat and soon be swinging about as merry as a bird on a bough. The officers, though, after giving Jarvis a terrific blowing up, would smile at each other on the sly. The boy was such a merry, active, honest-hearted lad, and his misdoings were so free from anything like meanness, that, although for the sake of discipline they punished him, every one of them liked him. Even Captain Truxtun, who had once come upon Jarvis and his chum, Brookfield, unawares, and had caught Jarvis in the act of saying in the captain's own voice, which was rasping and very much through his nose, "Mr. Brookfield, you young gentlemen in the stowage can make such devilish noises and more of them—" the captain, on hearing this, moved quietly away, laughing to himself—nobody could help laughing at little Jarvis, he was so comical. At first Jarvis stood in holy awe of Captain Truxtun, owing to various blood-curdling tales told him by Brookfield, such as the captain's flogging the whole starboard watch if the ship made less than eleven knots an hour; but in course of time he discovered the imaginative character of these romances. The sailors all approved of Jarvis, after their fashion. Sitting around the fok'sle, Jack Bell, the captain of the maintop, chewing his quid, solemnly remarked to his mates:

"That 'ere little reefer, he ain't afeerd o' nothin'; and as for gittin' into trouble—Lord love you, if he had a chance to git into trouble and didn't do it, 't would break his heart." And so it would.

Jarvis had a mop of tow-colored hair, a wide, roguish, laughing mouth, a snub nose, and a pair of the softest, shyest, gray-blue eyes that could be imagined, with a strange, sweet look of innocence, such as babies sometimes bring from heaven with them, but soon loose in this work-a-day world. However, it invariably turned out that when Jarvis looked most angelic he was sure to be plotting some deed of darkness, and whenever he was caught red-handed in mischief he always wore the look of a seraph rudely awakened.

The *Constellation* was a trim and lively frigate and a perfect beauty of a ship. She was not very big, and carried only thirty-eight guns; but she was one of the cut and come again kind. She could both fight and run away. When she chose to fight, she was a match for any frigate afloat; and when her enemies were too many for her, she could make off from a whole squadron, ripping it so fast that she would be hull down before they had got fairly started in chase. She was a good sailer in a light breeze and a better one in half a gale. She liked a smooth sea,

but she didn't mind a heavy one, and took the water like a cork. She was a lucky ship, too, and such a primo favorite with old Neptune that nothing amiss ever happened to her. She would go through a roaring gale "walking Spanish," as the sailors said, and come out of it with nothing worse than a good wetting. When she lay majestically at anchor, outlined against the clear blue of sea and sky, the broad white ribbon around her hull revealing the beautiful run of her lines, her tall masts and graceful spars dipping slightly and proudly as the waves eagerly caressed her, Jarvis thought her the most beautiful thing in the world. But when she spread all her white wings and rushed before the wind with the bold, free sweep of an ocean bird, dashing the dark and curling water impatiently from her sharp bows, Jarvis wondered how he had thought her beautiful any other way. And Jarvis loved her with all his boyish heart, and thought to be Midshipman Jarvis, of the United States ship *Constellation*, lifted him several pegs above the rest of humanity.

But although Jarvis was always laughing and japing and cutting up, and getting punished for his pranks—which last he seemed to enjoy as much as anything else—he had his troubles. The fact is, he was consumed with envy. He was the only midshipman on board who had never smelt powder; and as the United States was then at war with France, and the *Constellation* had already done glorious things, this was a heavy load for Jarvis to carry. It was nearly a year since the *Constellation* had come across the great French frigate, the *Insurgente*, which was said to be the smartest frigate and to have the finest captain in the French navy; and although the *Insurgente* was bigger and carried sixteen more guns, the *Constellation* had borne down on her and opened fire with that terrible and well-directed broadside for which the American gunners were famous, had outsailed and outfought her, and, in spite of the greatest gallantry and skill on the French ship's part, had made her haul down her colors with her decks strewn with her dead and dying. And Jarvis wasn't even a midshipman then!

To make it worse, Brookfield, who was the tallest, the oldest, and the handsomest midshipman on board, and cock of the walk generally between decks, had been one of the midshipmen sent aboard of the *Insurgente*, who, with only eleven sailors, had kept nearly two hundred of the Frenchmen below the hatches, and, separated by a gale from the *Constellation*, had managed to bring the dismantled and half wrecked *Insurgente* into St. Kitt's, where the victorious *Constellation* awaited her. It made little Jarvis very down-hearted when Brookfield, who gave himself the airs of a lord-high admiral of the seas, would tell of those glorious days. Jarvis, hanging over the rail, as he gazed dolefully at the dancing sunlit water, would wonder if he would ever have any share in such brave doings; and then, cocking his smart gold-trimmed cap rakishly over his left eye, would promise himself that the next brush the *Constellation* had with a Frenchman something would be heard of Jarvis sure.

It was the delight of little Jarvis's heart, when he could spare time from making mischief, to get Jack Bell, the captain of the main-top, to sing him the song of "The *Constellation* and the *Insurgente*." Jack was immensely proud of this performance of his, and would drone away, without moving a muscle of his face and in reckless defiance of time and tune, a wonderful account of the fight, beginning:

"'Twas in the month of February, off Montserrat we lay,

And there we spied the *Insurgente*—"

"But, Bell," said Jarvis, "it was the *Insurgente*—"

"Well, Mr. Jarvis, you may call her the Ann Sargent, if you likes, but

in the fok'sle we calls her the *Insurgente*—and mighty insurgent she looked, let me tell you, sir, when she come bearin' down on us, like she was a goin' to eat the little *Constellation* up, with all them long twenty four pounders pokin' their ugly noses out o' her ports, and her decks just alive with them horsemarine French sailors, that uses their bag'nets for belayin' pins, I reckon. But, Mr. Jarvis, the mouseeers fight like the devil. They can wallop a Portygeo or a Spaniard as easy as winkin'—or drinkin'—that's easier."

"I'm glad of one thing, Bell," said Jarvis, giving his cap an extra twirl and fingering his midshipman's dirk, as he began to strut up and down like a game-cock. "I'm glad the French are such good fighters, because the next fight we have I'd like amazingly to have a regular hand-to-hand tussle with a French officer."

Jack surveyed Jarvis's four feet and a half of boyish figure without smiling in the least, although there was a twinkle in one corner of his eye.

"You're right, Mr. Jarvis," said he, chewing away as solemnly as ever: "but if I was you, sir, I wouldn't bother with none o' them French midshipmen—I'd fall foul of a lieutenant, sir." Here Jack winked to himself.

"May be the first lieutenant, hearin' you was aboard of us, will be a waitin' for you on the quarter-deck when we grapple 'em. 'Taint likely they'd risk their cap'n"—at which Jarvis perceived that Jack Bell was making game of him, and turned scarlet, from his dimpled chin up to his tousled tow head.

While Jarvis was considering whether it comported with his dignity to notice the wink or not, Jack began to sing again in the same curious, cracked voice:

"All hands were called so quarters, as we pursued in chase,
With well primed guns and tompons out,
Well spliced the main brace."

There was one specially realistic verse, though, in which it was represented of the French ship—

"The blood did from their scuppers run,
Their captain cried, 'We are undone!'"

"Bell," asked Jarvis, thoughtfully, "do you really believe the scuppers ran with blood?"

"I dunno, sir," answered Jack, stolidly. "May be they did, and may be they didn't. May be the Frenchmen didn't know what the scuppers was rightly meant for. They're droll sailors, Mr. Jarvis."

"And do you suppose the captain said 'We are undone!'"

"I dunno that neither, cause I don't understand the lingo. But, Lord! them Frenchmen says all sorts o' things when they is at sea. They're that ornamental they'd rather be ashore than afloat any time—even when it's blowin' great guns, and trees is bein' uprooted, and bricks is a-flyin' and roofs is comin' off—instid o' bein' safe in a tight little frigate like this 'ere' with everything snug aloft, and just as safe as a baby in the cradle. Landsmen lead a deal more riskier life nor sailors, Mr. Jarvis. They risks their carcasses on horses that keeps on bowsin', bowsin' at the bowline, and in carriages that only has one man afloat and aloft, and he's got to mind the heilum and be lookout besides. The reason I follows the sea, Mr. Jarvis is 'cause I wants to live out my days, and I knows I ain't safe a minute on shore. (TO BE CONTINUED)

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