

description is unnecessary, except that the entire man—voice, face, manner, and language—was singularly forbidding.

'So, Ned,' said he, after a moment's pause, in which he had stared me full in the face, with a look in which cunning and low brutality seemed combined—'so, this is the young scoundrel, eh? a mutinous dog, I can see. Leave him here, I'll talk to him presently.' And in obedience to his superior, Ned left me with the captain as I suppose the master was by courtesy called.

For several minutes he went on smoking and drinking, without further noticing me, at last he turned fiercely upon me, and addressed me thus;—

'Now, then, young shaver, I guess you don't know who I am.'

'The captain of the ship, sir, aren't you?' I stammered.

'Captain! ay, and a trifle more than captain,' said he. 'I am *master* here, and a regular driver, and no mistake; so I give you notice. If you don't keep a good look-out for'ard I'm down upon you, mind, with such a tremendous smash as a streak of lightning will be a babby to it;' and saying this he took another long deep draught of the glass of liquor.

'And now,' continued he, 'do you know who you are?' and he glared fiercely at me.

'Yes, sir,' I began; but was stopped by a volley of abusive language.

'You do eh? you—(I leave out his wicked expletives)—no, you don't; but I'll tell you who you are. You are a young runaway thief of an apprentice; you have broke your poor mother's heart, you have, by your rioting along with all the riff-raff of Lunnon—and she a poor widdy! And you'd have been had up before His Royal Highness, the Lord Mayor, you would, and been sent to the gallowes, if your good uncle hadn't had marey on you, and paid to have you sent to sea; d'ye hear?'

'Yes, sir,' said I, 'but if anybody ever said anything like that of me—'

'If!' thundered the captain, in a real or pretended passion; 'If!'—and he started to his feet, and laid his hand on a rope.

'I beg your pardon, sir?' I said, shrinking back: 'pray don't strike me, sir. I did not mean to doubt your word, indeed; but they that told you—'

'Yes, yes, I know all about it,' he went on, still in the same passionate tone; but he did not strike me; 'I understand you; I have heard all about it. You'll go to saying next that you have been kidnapped, and all that sort of thing; but I've sent for you to give

you warning in a friendly sort of way, mind, that if you come any of that nonsense, now you're aboard, and spin any of your yarns in the focesell (forecastle) or anywhere else, it'll be the worst thing for your skin and bones as ever you did; and so I tell you.'

I made no reply to this extraordinary speech, for it was evident that the captain of the vessel was acting in concert with my late adversaries in Thieves' Castle, and that any remonstrance would bring upon me only ill usage. In short, I perceived that I was in the power of a man who would not scruple to use it tyrannically, and that my only present resources were patience and God's good providence. I ventured, however, to ask, 'Where are you going to take me, sir; and what are you going to do with me?' He answered more temperately than I might have expected.

'Well, there's no harm in your asking that, I guess,' said he; 'you are going where this craft is going, I reckon, and that's to old War-ginny (Virginia, I presume he meant), where all men are free and equal, young'un. And this here craft is old General Washington, she is; and I'm her skipper, I am, and all you've got to do youngster is to obey orders, and do your dooty like a man, and then you'll fare well enough, but if you don't, you'll fare hard enough, I can tell you. If we pull together, you'll find me a clever fellow; if we don't you'll find me—never you mind what, you'll find out soon enough. So you may tumble upon deck, you may.*'

I was not long in availing myself of this permission, and felt glad to escape. On deck I encountered the dark visaged seaman, with the other portion of the crew, consisting of some half dozen hands. A more unpromising set of men—setting aside those I had met in Thieves' Castle—I think I have never seen, than these sailors, but I will not attempt to describe them, except by saying in general terms, that they were extremely filthy, and that sullen, gloomy, brooding discontent was visible on every countenance.

The appearance of everything, both on and from the deck, was dreary and wretched enough. It was piercingly cold, and a drizzling mist of mingled rain and sleet was falling. The deck

* I have given the above as a feeble sample of the character and conduct of this sea captain—one of a class not yet extinct. Any of my readers who have seen a book called 'Two Years before the Mast,' will perhaps remember a very similar speech made by a skipper of later days, and therein reported.

was dirty and alshy, and the wind rising and failing in fits and starts moaned mournfully in the rigging. A few sails were set, and the men were handling the ropes; but they evidently were not working 'with a will.' In fact, the only pleasant looking countenance I saw, was that of the pilot, under whose charge the vessel was slowly beating down the river; and he looked as though he would be glad when he would be done with so uncomfortable a crew.

The whole scene indeed was dispiriting. On one side, the banks of the river were hidden from sight by the thick mist; and on the other were the low flat Essex marshes, which, even under the most favourable circumstances, are gloomy enough, and at this time they were worse than gloomy. The river itself was not only rough, but dark and muddy. If I had taken this 'ry'go' with my own free will I should have felt my heart heavy; and it will not be wondered that, under the actual circumstances of the case, I was not only heart-laden, but heart-sick.

But not much time was given me for brooding over my private griefs and wrong. I had not been many minutes on deck when the sailor whom I had heard called Ned came up to me, called me a skulking, lazy lubber, struck me across the shoulders with a rope's end and ordered me to get to work. This was my first experience of the hardships of a sailor's life.

The miserable day passed away heavily; but night came at last, and I was permitted to go below—not to my former place of confinement, but to the steerage with the rest of the crew. I believe that the wind had chopped round and was dead against us, so the anchor had to be cast, and all but one of the crew were below; and surely a more wretched night I had never experienced than the first night in a steerage berth. At Whiskers' Rents, in my stable loft, in my prison cell, at Thieves' Castle, and even in the filthy hold of the vessel—in all these places I had had at least the negative blessing of being shut out at night from evil companionships; but now I was exposed to a full and unrestrained stream of blasphemy, impiety, and pollution. I strove in vain to sleep. But, not to dwell on this new and fearful trial, let me hurry on.

The next day and the following one, we were still beating down the river against a contrary wind; but on the third evening a more favourable breeze sprang up, and all sails were set. In the morning the wind again changed; but we were out at sea, and I found that the pilot had left us.