

AN OLD TAR'S YARN.

Some years ago half a dozen friends and myself visited Greenwich Hospital. Our conductor was a weather-beaten middle-aged man, whose burboard glim had been doused in boyhood with the smallpox, and his burboard fin was carried away by a chain shot. By the gold lace which he sported on his chapeau, the sleeves of his coat, &c. he appeared to hold the rank of boatswain in the Navy. He was a communicative old body, and we felt indebted to his civilities; he, however, spurned the idea of being rewarded with money. "No, blow it!" he exclaimed, "not a tissey, not a single brown—but a drop of grog, gemmen, if you please." So saying, he led the way to a neighbouring tavern, and stretched himself in a corner of the parlour, in which he seemed intimately familiar.—I placed myself at his elbow with the intention of drawing from him some favourite yarn. During the first glass he spoke only of the hospital; during the second he advanced to actions and bombardments; but as he finished the third, as if to induce us to call for a fourth, he said—"But it's of no use talking about battles and them sort of things, gemmen, by your leave, I'll tell you a bit of a story—it's a story that has made many a brave fellow waste his salt in water; and, in the way, I may say it's about a countryman of your own, too—for Tom Beaumont was born in Newcastle, and he was boy, man, mate, and master of a Shields collier, many a long day. During our last scuffle with the Yankees, I was master-gunner of as handsome a gun-brig as ever did credit to a dockyard, or dipped a keel in water. Love ye, it would have done your eyes good to have seen us skimming before the wind, and breasting the billows as gently as a boy's fist, which only touches the cheek, and that's all. Then we carried fourteen as pretty guns as ever drove a bullet through a Frenchman's timbers. Old Tom Beaumont (God bless him!) was our commander, and a better soul never cracked a biscuit. He was a hardy seaman, the backbone, an' upright and down-straight for nothing; but the kindest hearted fellow in the world, for all that. Well, gemmen, I'm saying, Tom (we always called him Tom, because we loved him) married young, and for two years he was the happiest dog alive. He had a wife as pretty as an angel,

and as good as himself; and a little rogue their son, the very picture of his own face in a button, who was beginning to climb upon his knee and pull his whiskers. Man alive couldn't desire more: the very scene might make a Dutchman daace, or a Russian happy. After two years fair wind and weather however, in all mortal reckoning it was reasonable to expect squalls. Beaumont had not then joined the navy in a regular way; and at that period he found it necessary to proceed to America, where he had entered into extensive mercantile speculations: finding that he should be compelled to remain there much longer than he dreamed of, he sent for his wife and child. They sailed, but it proved a last voyage to them. However, gemmen, it's a voyage we must all take, from the admiral down to the cabin-boy, that's one comfort; and we may, by the aid of a good chart, steer clear of the enemy's lee-shore and brimstone shoals! Poor Tom's inquiries were fruitless; no one ever heard of the vessel, and no one ever doubted that all hands were as low as Davy Jones. It was like a shot between wind and water to Beaumont; but he bore up after a way, though it had shivered his mainsheet. Well, as I was saying, it was during our last scuffle with the Yankees, more than twenty years after Tom had lost his wife and child, we were returning with the little brig from the West Indies, when I was roused in my hammock by a bustle upon deck, and the cry of 'A Yankee!' I sprang up at the glorious news, and through the clear moonlight perceived an impudent-looking lubber bearing upon us full sail, and displaying American colours. 'Haul to, my lads!' cried old Beaumont; 'let them smell powder for breakfast.' Small time was lost in obeying the order; for we were always in readiness for welcome company. Twice they attempted to board us, but were driven back for their kindness with some score of broken heads, and the loss of some hundred American fingers. After two hours hard peppering Beaumont seizing a lucky moment, ordered us to throw in a broadside. Every shot told; the Yankee began to stagger, and in a few minutes gave evidence that her swimming days were ended. 'Vast firing!' cried Beaumont; 'let us save a brave enemy.' He repeated the word enemy; and I heard him