

another world, as to forget my business here, or press upon Providence impatiently for a more heavenly state of things. People may call me worldly-minded for cherishing such a view of this earth; and perhaps it is very wrong of me. However, I can put up with it, and be in no unkindly haste to say "good-bye" to my neighbors. For, to my mind, such a state of seeking, as many amongst us do even boast of, is, unless in a bad cough or a perilous calenture, a certain proof of curiosity displeasing to our Maker, and I might even say of fickleness degrading to a true Briton.

The sun came down upon my head, so that I thought of bygone days, when I served under Captain Howe, or Sir Edward Hawke, and used to stroll away upon leave, with half a hundred Jacks ashore, at Naples, or in Bermudas, or wherever the luck might happen. Now, however, was no time for me to think of strolling, because I could no longer live at the expense of the Government, which is the highest luck of all, and full of noble dignity. Things were come to such a push that I must either work or starve; and could I but recall the past, I would stroll less in the days gone by. A pension of one and eightpence farthing for the weeks I was alive (being in right of a heavy wound in capture of the Bellona, Frenchman of two-and-thirty guns, by his Majesty's frigate Vesta, under Captain Hood) was all I had to hold on by, in support of myself and Bunny, except the slippery fish that come and go as Providence orders them. She had sailed from Martinique, when luckily we fell in with her; and I never shall forget the fun, and the five hours at close quarters. We could see the powder on the other fellows' faces while they were training their guns at us, and we showed them, with a slap, our noses, which they never contrived to hit. She carried heavier metal than ours, and had sixty more men to work it, and therefore we were obliged to capture her at last by boarding. I, like a fool, was the first that leaped into her mizen-chains, without looking before me, as ought to have been. The Frenchmen came too fast upon me, and gave more than I bargained for.

Thus it happened that I fell off, in the very prime of life and strength, from an able-bodied seaman and captain of the fore-top to a sort of lurcher along shore, and a man who must get his own living with nets and rods and such like. For that very beautiful fight took place in the year 1759, before I was thirty years old, and before his present most gracious Majesty came to the throne of England. And inasmuch as a villainous Frenchman made at me with a cutlash, and a power of blue oaths (taking a nasty advantage of me, while I was yet entangled), and thumped in three of my ribs before a kind Providence enabled me to relieve him of his head at a blow—I was discharged, when we came to Spithead, with an excellent character in a silk bag, and a considerable tightness of breathing, and leave to beg my way home again.

Now I had not the smallest meaning to enter into any of these particulars about myself, especially as my story must be all about other people—beautiful maidens, and fine young men, and several of the prime gentry. But as I have written it, so let it stay; because, perhaps, after all, it is well that people should have some little knowledge of the man they have to deal with, and learn that his character and position are a long way above all attempt at deceit.

To come back once again, if you please, to that very hot day of July, 1782—whence I mean to depart no more until I have fully done with it—both from the state of the moon, I knew, and from the neap when my wife went off, that the top of the spring was likely to be in the dusk of that same evening. At first I had thought of going down straight below us to Newton Bay, and peddling over the Black Rocks towards the Ogmores river, some two miles to the east of us. But the bright sun gave me more enterprise; and remembering how the tide would ebb, also how low my pocket was, I felt myself bound in honor to Bunny to make a real push for it, and thoroughly search the conger-holes and the lobster-ledges, which are the best on all our coast, round about Pool-Tavan, and down below the old house at Sker.