

such unmistakable aversion that the boatswain, who was near at hand, peremptorily ordered him to keep his distance.

When his strength had returned sufficiently to bear questioning he was cross-examined by the captain as to the reason for his strange disappearance, but would give no explanation save that he had wanted to get up into the hills to see "what lived there," had slipped and rolled down from a considerable height, had been stunned and lain helpless on a little valley amongst a quantity of ferns and brushwood. He did not know how long he had been there, but after he had recovered his senses he scrambled back to the town and tried to swim to the ship; he seemed confused and unwilling to speak about the blow on his head, but supposed that he had got it in the fall.

"I suppose that is all we shall make of the matter for the present," said the captain to Lieutenant Breydon, "but I think there is more behind than the boy will tell, and he is not well enough yet to be more stringently examined; but if anything of the kind happens again the offender must be made an example of, and severely punished: it will never do to have the boys taking themselves off in this manner. What sort of boy is this Lewis who appears to know so much of Dove? Is he to be trusted, do you think, or were they in league?"

"I don't think so at all," was the prompt reply, "Lewis is a very intelligent and a very straightforward lad, very superior to the generality of his class. Massey, who took him up to the Grand Curral in search of the absentee, speaks most highly of him and of his strong sense of honour."

"Yes, he appears to me to be intelligent and very smart," said the captain, "but those are the very qualities which, if misapplied, work mischief in a ship."

"If anybody knows anything else of the affair, in my opinion it is Cookson," said the lieutenant, "though he protests he knows nothing of it, and you can't punish him on so vague a suspicion. That fellow has the making of a mutineer in him, and he is a bad example to the whole of the ship's company; he is a coward too, and the

fear of punishment only keeps him up to his work."

Ju was quite as uncommunicative to Martin as to the captain, on the subject of his excursion and accident—in fact, he seemed to dislike to speak on the topic at all; and so, in spite of the affection which still existed strongly between them, a sense of constraint sprang up, and the old free communion of mind to mind and heart to heart was at an end. Not that there was any observable difference to others, but each was conscious of an intangible, but none the less real, barrier which had come between them. Martin had misgivings as to the truth of Ju's story, while the latter felt that he was discredited. One good had come, however, out of the affair—Cookson's influence over Ju was at an end, and he would have as little as possible to do with him and utterly refused to be tempted to any acts of insubordination.

CHAPTER X.

HOME AGAIN.

TIME sped on happily enough as a whole to both of the boys: the *Niobe* cruised hither and thither, and at every new place at which she stopped there was fresh pleasure for Martin, who had a marvellous faculty for acquiring knowledge.

"Lewis is a combination of encyclopædia and gazetteer," said the school-master to the chaplain, when speaking of him. "By the time he has been a few days at a place he knows all about it; where he picks up his knowledge is often a puzzle to me, but it is reliable, nevertheless."

"Yes, he is an intelligent lad, and has high principles, too," responded the chaplain. From the time that the latter had met Martin at Ju's bedside he had felt an interest in a boy who was capable of such depths of feeling and tenderness: he liked to talk to him and to lead the conversation into such channels as would show the bent of his mind; for Martin's early training and his deep love and reverence for his father's memory had not left him, but had ripened and coloured his life. He had high ideas of duty and honour, and a simple love and trust in God, which he was never ashamed to own.