

LITTLE JARVIS.

A STORY FOR THE YOUNG FOLKS.

(CONTINUED.)

Jarvis was right. Before long the *Constellation* was near enough to make out that the stranger was a French war vessel, and there was immediately a prospect of a stubborn and square fight, for the French were not easily beaten at the guns, and fought like good men and true; and this suited the *Constellation's* men exactly. From the captain down to little Jarvis, all were as merry as grigs, and when the orders were given to shorten sail the men sprang into the rigging with a ringing "Ay, ay, sir!" such as sailors only give when there is a prospect of glory and prize-money ahead. And then the *Constellation*, with three ensigns flying, as she hauled by the wind, and stood boldly for the French ship, seemed to be saying, "Do you want to see the ship that whipped the *Insurgente*? Well, here I am. And am I not a beauty? And my brave lovers—see what gallant sailor-men they are, and every one of them would die for me!"

The *Vengeance*, however, did not appear to know half as much about the *Constellation* as the *Constellation* knew about the *Vengeance*; and when she got a good look at the American frigate, she seemed to remember the fate of the *Insurgente*, for she took to her heels, and the *Constellation* had to crowd on sail to overhaul her. And then began a chase in which the *Constellation*, standing up beautifully under a cloud of canvas, went bounding over the sea after the flying frigate. But it was plain, from the start, that the *Vengeance* could not escape; the *Constellation* had "too much foot for her," as Jack Bell dryly remarked. While they were still chasing the French ship, and it was yet an hour before they could get within fighting distance, the lieutenant, who was Jarvis's friend, found him sitting in the gangway, with a piece of paper on his knee and a pencil in his hand. But Jarvis wasn't writing—he was leaning his head on his hands, and the lieutenant suspected that Jarvis was crying.

"What! my man!" he said, kindly, for the boy was so young that the prospect of going into battle might well be terrifying to him; and, besides, the lieutenant knew well enough that brave men, much less brave boys, are sometimes subject to these tremors. Little Jarvis raised his head, and made no pretense of concealing that he had been crying.

"I was thinking, sir," he said, trying to steady his voice and wiping his eyes with his jacket-sleeve, "that—that—maybe I'd never see my mother again, and I'd better write her a letter; and then, when a fellow gets to thinking about his mother—"

Jarvis stopped short.

"That's all right," said the lieutenant, cheerily. "But you won't think about that when the music begins that we are going to make the Frenchmen dance to. And, my lad, don't—don't let your fears get the upper hand—"

"Fears!" answered little Jarvis, in a surprised voice, and opening his round, innocent eyes very wide indeed—for it had never dawned upon him that anybody could think he was scared, "I ain't afraid, sir!"

The lieutenant looked at Jarvis and smiled, the boy's surprise was so genuine, and the idea of fear was so novel to him; and he smiled more than ever when Jarvis, giving his cap a particularly fierce and warlike cock, continued in a tone of savage determination: "And I ain't going to ask for quarter either, sir, not if I see ten Frenchmen coming at me at once when we board 'em—because it says in the regulations, 'If an officer ask for quarter, he shall

suffer death;' and that ain't the way I want to die!"

The lieutenant, still smiling, raised his cap and shook little Jarvis's hand. "I don't think you will die that way," he said, briefly.

But then, seeing they were gaining fast on the *Vengeance*, Captain Truxtun called his officers around him and made them a short speech before they took their stations. Now, Jarvis had known all the time, of course, that his station was in the maintop; but although whenever they went to quarters he found himself aloft, he had always cherished a wild dream that at the actual time of battle, by some sort of hocus-pocus, he would be able to be on deck, cutting down French officers with his midshipman's dirk, or sparing their lives, perhaps, while taking their swords. But all of these splendid visions melted away, when, without any of the startling breaks in the routine that Jarvis fondly hoped would keep him on deck, he had to march off to go aloft. If Jarvis had not been an officer and a gentleman, and if behaving at the moment of going to action had not been decidedly unbecoming, Jarvis would certainly have cried right out at the doleful idea that he wasn't to be in the thick of the fight.

And, to make it worse he heard Captain Truxtun, who was careful of his younger officers, say something to Jack Bell, who was a very steady, reliable old man-of-war's man, about keeping an eye on Mr. Jarvis; and Brookfield, who had a splendid station, grinned at Jarvis and, thrusting out his tongue in a very exasperating manner, remarked that Jarvis would be taken for a fly on the mast. When Jarvis, looking very sulky and disappointed, passed the lieutenant, his face was so dismal that the lieutenant patted him on the back to comfort him and said, kindly: "Never mind, Mr. Jarvis, you won't miss all the fun."

"Yes, I will," answered little Jarvis, almost crying. "I can't do any fighting, and I can't join the boarders; the captain thinks, because I'm such a little fellow, I can't fight, and—and—it's deuced hard, that it is!"

For the first time in his life little Jarvis went aloft very slowly and unwillingly. The man were already in the top, and there was Jack Bell, who was to take care of him as if he were a baby; and this was almost more than poor little Jarvis could stand.

But just before midnight, when the moon shone brilliantly, seeing the *Constellation* was right upon her, the *Vengeance* sullenly hove to and hoisted her ensign. Then the *Constellation* hove to as well, and on both ships the drums beat to quarters at the same moment. On board the *Constellation* the sailors went to their guns dancing, and every gun captain turned a handspring over his gun for good luck. The ship was cleared for action, her decks sanded to prevent their becoming slippery with blood, her battle-lanterns lighted, and Captain Truxtun, standing in the lee-gangway, spoke the *Vengeance* and demanded her surrender to the United States. A fresh breeze blowing, enabling both ships to manoeuvre, and the sea was as light as day. The *Vengeance* came up a little to the wind, and the *Constellation* doubled on her quarter. As the two frigates neared each other, each stripped to her fighting canvas, both crews cheered loudly. The *Constellation* was now close upon the *Vengeance*, and the French ship opened the battle with her heavy stern and quarter-guns. The American gunners, with lighted matches, awaited the order to fire, which seemed long in coming. But Captain Truxtun, paying no more attention to the terrific cannonade than if it had been bird-shot, deliberately ranged up within half a pistol-shot of the *Vengeance*, and, taking up a position on her weather quarter, suddenly burst upon her with the fire of eighteen guns at once. When the first broadside struck the *Vengeance* it

was like the shock of an earthquake. The whole side of the *Constellation* seemed a mass of flame, and the American gunners loaded and fired so fast that the people on the *Vengeance* thought the *Constellation* was afire. The Frenchman answered back, directing his fire towards the spars and rigging of the *Constellation*. Little Jarvis, hanging on to the top, had a queer sensation when the first round-shot passed close to him; but Jack Bell made him laugh by saying, gravely: "Them Frenchmen ain't pertickler where they puts their shot. If that 'ere one had been in the hull now, 'twould have done some good."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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