

the creaming foam pursued by great, green mountains with threatening crests, but calmly gliding towards the golden land, I got the old sailor to unburden his mind to me, and shall now try to give an accurate version of his story, though I cannot follow his exact words.

"'Tis eight years, sir," said he, "since I shipped aboard of the brig *Mermaid*, bound from Liverpool to the west coast of Africa on a palm-oil voyage. She was a poor craft, and we had a bad set on board of her. The skipper spent most of the time he was sober in tormenting the cabin-boy, but, after the poor lad was lost overboard—most of us thought he jumped over to escape his tyrant—the captain was seldom off his sofa, where he lay swigging rum and swearing at the steward. The mate had to navigate the brig, and he was such a stupid, thick-headed fellow, that it was little wonder we ran off our course, and made the African coast a little below Cape Blanco, and far to the northward of where we ought to have been. Our water had fallen very short, and the mate coasted along for some miles till we found a small bay, and, after considerable search, discovered a stream from which we could fill our casks. He brought the brig to an anchor about a mile from the coast—the breeze was very light, and the sea almost calm.

"The next day we were busy getting water, but we made slow work of it, as the small stream was nearly dry. The mate didn't much like stopping where we were, so close to the shore, but he had no choice, for it fell dead calm, and kept so for a whole week. It was on the evening of the third day after anchoring that the captain came on deck and sat down on the break of the poop, smoking his pipe. He was almost sober, and had a quieter way with him than usual, but suddenly he dropped his pipe, and gave two or three wild shrieks, like a frightened woman. The mate ran to him, and asked what was the matter.

"Look there, look there!" he said, pointing to the water, about a boat's-length from the brig.

"I looked at the place, and saw a queer swirl on the surface, and the stain of blood, just as if a whale had been lanced, and sounded.

"There was a big shark there," says the skipper, his eyes staring, and trembling all over—"there was a big shark there, lying quiet on the surface, and suddenly a great pair of jaws opened and seemed to swallow him as you might swallow a shrimp."

"Only another shark falling foul of him, captain," says the mate; "I've often seen them bite each other."

"The skipper called out for rum, and lay down on the deck, shaking as if he had the ague. The mate looked at me, shook his head, and said: 'Gone mad at last,' and I certainly thought that liquor had turned the captain's brain. We soon learned what good reason he had for his terror.

"It was not more than an hour afterwards that he rose alongside, and with his head as high as our mainyard, looked down on the deck, opening and shutting that horrible mouth the skipper had first seen."

"What rose alongside, Jake?" said I.

"The Sea-serpent," said Jake, in the solemn earnest tones he had used when speaking to me first on the subject.

I had the conviction that the man was in earnest. "Well," said I, "tell me all about it; and first, what length and thickness might he have been?"

"Judging by the length of our brig, sir, I think he must have been good two hundred feet, and he looked more like a monstrous conger-eel than anything else I can think of. His body was as thick as a cart-horse, and his head was flat like an eel's, and a couple of fathoms long. He had great gills, too, like an eel. His eyes were very big and bright; and when he lifted his head, opening and shutting those frightful jaws, as he had a habit of doing every few seconds, he was the most awful sight you can fancy. Some of the men said they saw his teeth, and that he had a double row like a shark, but I can't say that I saw them myself. It was his eyes, sir—his eyes I was always looking at, and

always with a fear that I should find them looking right at me. His skin was dark and glossy, like the skin of a whale—I didn't see a hair anywhere about him; and when we afterwards saw him swimming about, he wriggled through the water eel fashion; and you could see that the dark colour of the back got gradually lighter on the sides, and the belly was nearly white. But those matters I noticed afterwards, for at the time I speak of, when he rose alongside, and stared down on our decks, as I've told you, I was sitting on the deck cleaning some brass-work, and when I looked up, and saw that dreadful head, I just sat where I was, and stared at him with my mouth open, till he sank down gently out of sight.

"My head felt dizzy and my eyes dim for half a minute, and then I heard the captain howling, and saw that he was lying on the deck flat on his face. The mate and myself lifted him up, but he kept shrieking, and wouldn't open his eyes; so we carried him below, and laid him on the sofa. On the cabin table was the captain's case bottle of rum, and the mate filled himself a full glass, and drank it off; then he filled a glass for me, but his hand shook so that a good part of it was spilled. When I went on deck again, I found that the men had shut themselves up in the fore-castle, in spite of the heat, and two of them, who had been ill with coast fever for some days, were now quite out of their senses. Well, sir, that night the steward got so frightened by what he had seen, and by the horrible yells of the skipper, that he went forward amongst the men, taking a small keg of rum with him; and the hands were soon all drunk, and fighting among each other like devils. The mate and myself took it in turns to mind the skipper; and about daylight, I was wakened from a short snooze by a sudden quiet coming over the ship, and there was the captain quite dead, his chin fallen, and his eyes wide open. The same afternoon, the two men who had been ill of coast fever died, and there were three others in their berths raving. Twice that day we saw the great snake—once about a mile from us, and the next time some six miles out to seaward, and we hoped he had left us altogether; but on the next day, he rose about two hundred yards from our starboard beam, and moved his head about as he had done at first. Eight times in all we saw him, sir; and once the steward, who was wild with drink, got the captain's gun out, and would have fired at him, but the mate took it out of his hands. On the seventh day from the time we came to anchor, the weather suddenly changed, and a heavy tornado came on, and blew us right out to sea. We had lost most of our spars, being so short-handed; and as soon as the gale moderated, we hove overboard the captain and four of the hands who had died in that bay, but whom we had been afraid to bury before, lest the snake might take a fancy for human flesh. At last, we reached Sierra Leone, nearly dismantled, and with only three hands on board fit for duty. We got help from another vessel before we could bring the ship to anchor; and after that, I remember nothing, till I found myself recovering from fever in the Sierra Leone hospital, my head shaved, and my limbs as weak as a child's.

"The brig had left the port with a new crew, and the few survivors of her former crew had returned to England in another ship. They laughed at me when I told them about what we had seen and gone through; they told me it was only my dreams when I had brain-fever. I wish I could have thought so, sir; for it was all too true—too true."

Again the sharp, sweet sound of the ship's bell, again the hoarse call of the watch, and old Jake the Whaler and I parted company.

Theatre.—The world within four walls.

Amusement.—A help to teach us how to organize labour.

Character.—The only personal property which everybody looks after for you.

Contentment.—Thought reposing on a bed of roses.

CHILDREN.

CHILDREN and childhood have been surrounded with an atmosphere of poetry, and have been invested with all the charms of poetic fancy:—

"Angels are talking to them in their dreams—
Angelic voices whispering sweet and clear."

They are supposed to hold some intercourse with the world of spirits, and their very smiles are interpreted to mean communion with a world unseen. Their gestures, tones, and language are the constant theme of poets, and moralists take them for their text. For ordinary mortals like ourselves they possess a wondrous charm; and they are a relaxation to the man of business or the student, who can unbend to them, when to all the world beside they are unapproachable. The painter makes them his study, and they have been among his most successful works, for infancy appeals and pleads to all alike. When they are tricked out in muslin and silk, and toddle in after dinner, every eye lights up, and they become the centre of all attraction, and later on their lisping and their sayings become household words, and their elders learn to speak a language which they have caught from infant lips. The affection of a little child is almost the only thing which a suspicious nature does not distrust. There is something in the simple, untutored, spontaneous return with which a child meets its overtures that disarms it at once of that reserve with which more or less it surrounds itself in all its intercourse with the world. But there is another side of the question which, in all fairness, ought not to be attributed so much to the children themselves as to those who are their natural guardians. Who does not know what is meant by an *enfant terrible*? and who that has suffered from it can be blamed for railing against children as a nuisance? A child of quick intelligence and much observation, who has a certain faculty of putting one and one together—who hears and listens attentively to all that is passing around, both in the nursery and in the drawing-room—who is suffered to live on too familiar terms with its elders—who has but little tact and less self-control—who blurts out all that comes into its little mind without regard to time or place, and says the most *mal-a-propos* things that can be imagined—whose pert sayings are retailed as cleverness by ill-judging parents and servants in its presence, till it has learnt to value them as having some merit in them—who is allowed to engross all the attention with its stories and its prattle, to the evident annoyance of those who see no charm in it—such a child is indeed one of the greatest pests of society.

But it is, we repeat, more the fault of others than of the child. Amused by the smartness of its sayings, or by the quickness of its perceptions, parents encourage it for their own amusement, and laugh at it, while in the nursery it finds favour, because it is one of the means by which nurses and nursemaids learn what is going on in the drawing-room. But this is a two-edged sword, which cuts both ways, for if it reveals the tactics of the drawing-room, those of the nursery and housekeeper's-room do not escape. With eyes and ears well open, a ready tongue, and a retentive memory, children become dangerous to friend and foe.

No bland amenities can be successful while one of these "sweet little pets" is at hand with its revelations, its explanations, and its glosses, for it is sure to remember how mamma said she was glad to hear that Mrs. So-and-so was going away. An amusing story is told of a lady who once pressed a friend to visit her in the country. On his arrival at —, he was at once shown to his room, the dressing bell, as he was informed, having already rung. On entering the room in which the company assembled before dinner, he found himself alone with a little girl, elegantly dressed, who, as the event proved, was quite up to the occasion. He spoke to her in language which he supposed to be suited to her years, and, for a time, they got on very well together, when she presently bethought herself that she would