

While this little trot was working, in the purest ignorance of father and of mother, yet perhaps in her tiny mind hoping to have pleased them both, back came Mrs. Thomas, bringing all the best she had of comfort and of cheer for us, although not much to speak of.

I took a little holland's hot, on purpose to oblige her, because she had no rum; and the little baby had some milk and rabbit-gravy, being set up in a blanket, and made the most we could make of her. And she ate a truly beautiful sup-

per, sitting gravely on the stool, and putting both hands to her mouth in fear of losing anything. All the boys were gone to bed after a long day's rabbiting, and Evan Black still on the spree; so that I was very pleasant (knowing my boat to be quite safe) toward my ancient sweetheart. And we got upon the old times so much, in a pleasing, innocent, teasing way, that but for fear of that vile black Evan we might have forgotten poor Bardie.

CHAPTER VII.—BOAT VERSUS BARDIE.

Glad as I was, for the poor child's sake, that black Evan happened to be from home, I had perhaps some reason also to rejoice on my own account. For if anything of any kind could ever be foretold about that most uncertain fellow's conduct, it was that when in his cups he would fight—with cause, if he could find any; otherwise, without it.

And in the present case, perhaps, was some little cause for fighting; touching (as he no doubt would think) not only his martial but manorial rights of plunder. Of course, between Moxy and myself all was purely harmless, each being thankful to have no more than a pleasant eye for the other; and of course, in really serious ways, I had done no harm to him; that boat never being his, except by down-right piracy. Nevertheless few men there are who look at things from what I may call a large and open standing-place; and Evan might even go so far as to think that I did him a double wrong, in taking that which was his, the boat, and leaving that which should have been mine—to wit, the little maiden—as a helpless burden upon his hands, without so much as a change of clothes; and all this after a great day's sport among his rocks, without his permission!

Feeling how hopeless it would be to reason these matters out with him, especially as he was sure to be drunk, I was glad enough to say "Good-night" to my new young pet, now fast asleep, and to slip off quietly to sea with my little frigate and its freight, indulging also my natural pride at being, for the first time in my life,

a legitimate ship-owner and independent deep-sea fisherman. By this time the tide was turned, of course, and running strong against me as I laid her head for Newton Bay by the light of the full moon; and proud I was, without mistake, to find how fast I could send my little crank bark against the current, having been a fine oarsman in my day, and always stroke of the captain's gig.

But as one who was well acquainted with the great dearth of honesty (not in our own parish only, but for many miles around), I could not see my way to the public ownership of this boat, without a deal of trouble and vexation. Happening so that I did not buy it, being thoroughly void of money (which was too notorious, especially after two funerals conducted to everybody's satisfaction), big rogues would declare at once, judging me by themselves, perhaps, that I had been and stolen it. And likely enough, to the back of this, they would lay me half-a-dozen murders and a wholesale piracy.

Now I have by nature the very strongest affection for truth that can be reconciled with a good man's love of reason. But sometimes it happens so that we must do violence to ourselves for the sake of our fellow-creatures. If these, upon occasion offered, are only too sure to turn away and reject the truth with a strong disgust, surely it is dead against the high and pure duty we owe them, to saddle them with such a heavy and deep responsibility. And to take still loftier views of the charity and kindness needful towards