

60 THE FIGHT OF THE "ARMSTRONG" PRIVATEER.

And the sword was overbalanced in the sordid scales of
trade ;
There were rebel knaves to swing, there were prisoners to
bring
Home in fetters to old England for the glory of the King !

At the setting of the sun and the ebbing of the tide
Came the great ships, one by one, with their portals opened
wide,
And their cannon frowning down on the castle and the town
And the privateer that lay close inside ;
Came the eighteen-gun Carnation and the Rota, forty-four,
And the triple-decked Plantagenet an admiral's pennon bore ;
And the privateer grew smaller as their topmasts towered
taller,
And she bent her springs, and anchored by the castle on the
shore.

Spake the noble Portuguese to the stranger : " Have no fear ;
They are neutral waters, these, and your ship is sacred here
As if fifty stout armadas stood to shelter you from harm,
For the honor of the Briton will defend you from his arm."
But the privateersman said, " Well we know the Englishmen,
And their faith is written red in the Dartmoor slaughter-pen.
Come what fortune God may send, we will fight them to the
end,
And the mercy of the sharks may spare us then."

" Seize the pirate where she lies ! " cried the English admiral ;
" If the Portuguese protect her, all the worse for Portugal ! "
And four launches at his bidding leaped impatient for the fray.
Speeding shoreward where the Armstrong grim and dark and
ready lay.
Twice she hailed and gave them warning ; but the feeble
menace scorning,