

aloft their ample canvass to catch the rising gale ; whilst the contrast of our own comparatively diminutive bark with the colossal grandeur which surrounded us, gave me to feel my own insignificance, and produced a kind of envy towards the men who strode those lofty decks, from which we were looked down upon as in a cockboat: as though greatness or littleness were conferred upon men by the size of their ships !—I could not but exult in the conscious pride of being a Briton ; and that the magnificent fleet which I then beheld booming over the ocean, as over a domain peculiarly its own,—claiming the homage of the world—was ours,—little thinking how soon the dreadful conflict of the first of June, was to proclaim to all nations the invincible bravery and glorious victory of the British navy over the grand fleet of the French republic.

Within a few days after this gorgeous sight, one of a very different character gradually developed itself from the midst of one of the densest fogs that ever shrouded the sea—sail prognostic of our future woes—It was on a Sunday morning: our ship was standing towards the northward and westward of the islands of Scilly, distant about fifteen leagues. Whilst my father and officers were below at breakfast, the fog in which we were enveloped began to clear up. The man at the helm suddenly called out—“a sail on the weather-bow, sir—a large ship—seems a man-of-war.”—“Oh, no doubt she’s an English frigate,” replied my father, without rising from a chart he was examining—“she’s cruising in the chops of the Channel.” Presently the helmsman’s voice was again heard—“another sail—on the lee-bow, sir—a frigate ;” and in a few moments he called out again—“another sail—on the lee-quarter, sir !”—“Aye, aye ! Three frigates ? ’tis high time to look about us, I think,” said my father ; and, snatching up his spy-glass, he was on deck in an instant, followed by all at breakfast. There we were, sure enough, within the toils of a squadron of men-of-war ! All the three ships we had descried, instantly ran up English colours—and we answered them with ours. The frigate to windward then bore down upon us, and fired a shot to bring us to ! Somewhat alarmed—notwithstanding the show of the British flag—we still kept on our course. I shall never forget the excitement and terrible suspense which I—a lad come to sea for the first time—endured on this occasion. A second and a third gun were fired at us, soon after each other. “Don’t you think, sir, we had better heave to,” enquired the chief mate—“they’ll make us pay for every shot !”* “I’m afraid you are right,” replied my father, much agitated. “I don’t like the appearance of these ships. I can’t think they’re English, for all they’ve hoisted our colours. Neither their hulls, rigging, nor the trim of their sails are British ! It’s all over with us, I’m afraid !” In the midst of this startling colloquy, Providence seemed to fa-

*A custom at sea, when a merchantman is captured, but holds out obstinately.