

## Incidents in the lives of Naval Officers during the Wars of the first Napoleon.

TALE FOR BOYS.

WRITTEN FOR THE "FAMILY FRIEND."

(Concluded from our last.)

The coxswain had conjectured rightly—the brigantine was less protected for boarding on the land side, and all her crew were fiercely engaged in repelling the assault in front. As our boat glided alongside, under cover of the smoke, I felt my left arm suddenly seized in the muscular grasp of the coxswain, who helped me to gain a footing upon deck, and seemed to consider me under his especial protection; the crew rapidly followed. A few feet from me stood, amidst the smoke, the figure of a tall officer hotly engaged in endeavouring to repel the efforts of our men, in front, to gain the deck. He turned quickly around, on hearing behind him the cheers of my boat's crew, as they rushed to the assault from this unexpected quarter. Rapidly giving an order to his men to assist him, he rushed upon the coxswain and endeavoured to cut him down. The latter, however, was an active and expert swordsman, and quickly parried the stroke, and would, probably, have soon ended the combat, had not a heavy stroke with a handspike from a sailor behind him, brought the old officer to his knees. With such rapidity did this occur, that I had hardly time to comprehend the situation, or to think of taking part in the affray. What was I but a boy, scarcely fourteen years of age, armed as a boy, and here mixed up in a death struggle with fierce and powerful men. As the tall officer sunk upon his knees, and the blood ran down his pallid countenance from a cutlass wound on his head, and I saw the blow about to be repeated by the fierce sailor behind, impulsively I rushed forward, exclaiming, "Oh, spare—spare his life!" but almost at the same moment a random bullet, from a volley fired by a part of his own crew in the fore-castle at the attacking party in rear, pierced his heart, and he rolled over on the deck—a corpse. What took place immediately after that I cannot recall to mind—for a few minutes there seemed to be a deadly struggle, a sharp clashing of steel against steel; a subdued and choking, gasping sound, like bull-dogs with their teeth in each other's throats struggling for the mastery; a sharp cry of agony; a groan; a splash; then a ringing cheer, and all was over. For a few seconds there came a pause—men wiped their bloody brows and drew a deep inspiration. But the thrilling sounds of command—"Cut away the moorings, my boys—men to your boats—be quick there—tow her down the stream" awoke me from a momentary trance, as I heard the sharp commanding voice of the officer next in command, and saw him rush by me rapidly giving his orders. In a few moments British discipline soon brought every officer and man, not *hors de combat*, to his place and duty, and already were we moving down the stream, when a faint, but favourable breeze sprung up, clearing off the fog and smoke, and showing us, at the distance of about a quarter of a mile further up the river, the formidable teeth of a fort, which hitherto had been unable to take any part in the action; however, every sail was soon set, and now wind and tide being in our favour, we were soon out of reach of her shot, a few only of which passed through the rigging.

We were soon clear of the intricate navigation of the river, and stood out to join the frigate, in the offing. The decks were quickly cleared of the dead Dutchmen, and the wounded placed under the care of the surgeon and his mate; but the body of the brave old commander, by my brother's order, was not consigned to the deep—he, himself, was lying on the deck with his leg bandaged and looking pale and weak from loss of blood. The old man's body was carefully lifted and laid upon some matting; they placed him as he fell, with his sword still tightly clenched in his right hand, his teeth firmly set, his eyes open and turned upwards towards heaven, and his long gray hair, disheveled and bloody, fell in masses around his neck—he was a noble-looking man, even in death. The flag of his vessel was then thrown over his body.

A brace of pistols was found upon the deck and handed to my brother—they belonged to the dead captain. "William," he said, "come here. I am glad to hear that you have done your duty so well, (in what way I could never understand), and that even in the midst of a deadly conflict you would, if possible, have spared that old man's life; that is, my boy, the true feeling of a man and a British sailor. These pistols, as a trophy

of war, I present to you in remembrance of this, your first action, and never use them, my lad, to take a human life, except in self-defence or in the battles of your country." I remember the tears ran down my cheeks, I leaned over the vessel's bulwark, and sobbed like a child—as I really was—the conflict was over, a reaction of my feelings had set in, which was too great for me to bear out, like men more hardened to such scenes in life. Beside me lay my kind, good mess-mate, poor Jones—dead—gone—in one short hour! and many faces, familiar to me, lay around stiffened in death, no wonder my heart felt sad.

"And those are the pistols," said Bilgewater. "A neat pair, I must say, but rather too much toggery about them for my fancy. Now I tell you what Standard, had that old Dutch captain only used a sensible tool, and not one of those fan-dangles on the table there, I'm blowed if he would not have shown daylight through Sir Sidney's coxswain, have saved his ship besides, and you would not have been here to tell the tale; however, messmate, I am glad he didn't, or we should not be now drinking your port and twisting yarns together. But, pardon me, mate, I have interrupted you in your story."

"What remains to be told," my father replied, "can be said in a few words. It is a sequel to the first part.

"Hardly had we crossed the bar, and got safe to sea, when it was discovered that there was a child locked below out of reach of shot. She was brought on deck in the arms of the mate in an almost senseless state from fright, and the stifling heat and smoke that had found its way below during the engagement.

"She was placed at the side of my brother in a fainting condition, who immediately sent for the surgeon, if he could be spared for a moment. A little crowd gathered round the poor child, who, after some restoratives had been given, and benefiting from fresh air, opened her large light blue eyes, looked wildly around, and essayed to speak; but was yet unable to find her voice. She placed her hands over her face and fell back on the hammock which had been brought up for her to recline upon. Some stimulant was again offered to her, but this was resolutely refused. Suddenly she rose to her feet, her bosom swelled and heaved with some great struggling emotion, and she seemed to gasp for breath—then her voice burst forth, and in a piercing tone of wailing agony, shrieked out in the language of her country, 'Father! father! where is my father? Oh, take me to my father!' I tell you, Bilgewater, many a rough seaman who, but an hour before, would, in the sternness of his character, have dared the D—l in his den—turned round and coughed, or blew his nose; the mate turned up his eyes aloft to hide the unaccustomed fluid that suffused them, and blew up a seaman who was properly doing his duty. As for myself, the sight of anguish and distress in that poor child's fair face, as, with clasped hands and eyes uplifted, but tearless, her flaxen hair fallen in careless ringlets around her shoulders, as she gazed upwards, as if supplicating sympathy from her heavenly Father—often comes across my vision, and perhaps will never be effaced. In less than an hour we reached the frigate. Sir Sidney alone spoke her language. She was conveyed to his cabin, where he tried everything he could, for he was a polished gentleman, to soothe her distress and to break, softly, the melancholy intelligence of her father's death. She was the dead captain's daughter—his only child, and but twelve years of age."

"Next morning Sir Sidney sent for me to his cabin. "Youngster," he said, "I am pleased to hear so good a report of you yesterday, and that in the midst of a deadly struggle for life you forgot not the feelings of humanity. I have informed the young lady that you made an effort to save her father's life, thinking, that as her conductor to the shore, with such a remembrance in her mind the feelings of gratitude will soften the apparent harshness of having to sit by the side of an enemy, who had helped to slay her parent. You will immediately proceed on shore with a flag of truce, and hand this letter to the officer of the garrison of the fort, and deliver over the corpse of the late Capt. Von Jucland—for such was his name—and restore to her countrymen the orphan child."

At noon I left; a flag, half-mast high, was raised, with one of truce above. Mournfully we proceeded up the river; the cottagers again came out wonderingly gazing; not a word had been said by the little girl; she sat in the stern of the boat motionless, with her face buried in her hands, and a shawl thrown over her head. Everything appertaining to her wardrobe, and of value belonging to her father, had been carefully packed up and restored. As we approached the fort, and they recognized the flag of truce, a white flag was also hoisted, and a group of officers and soldiers came down to the wharf to meet us at the landing. Stepping