

desire was to stand beside the great wonder, and he could scarcely control his impatience when he found his father disposed to linger and look around.

"No hurry, Marty boy, no hurry," replied the smith to the boy's entreaties to go on; "we've got our tickets for the steamer, and she won't start for above an hour yet."

But here his mother proved an unexpected ally. It would be better, she thought, to go aboard and secure a comfortable seat. Martin squeezed his mother's hand hard in token of gratitude, and soon they were on board the steamer which was to carry them round the fleet.

It was a great day for Portsmouth. A foreign monarch was to visit the fleet, and in his own yacht sail down the line of war-ships assembled to do him honour. Every train brought its contingent of illustrious persons—royalties from various countries, with their suites, dusky Orientals, glittering with jewels, sturdy Colonials, politicians, soldiers, and sailors jostled one another in the motley crowd on shore, while Spithead was alive with yachts and steamers filled with pleasure-seekers of all classes.

There was much to amuse Martin and his parents

as they watched the crowds pouring on to the various craft waiting to take them off; and then by-and-by a shrill whistle sounded on board their own boat, the gangway was hauled up, the rope cast off, and the passengers could feel the tremor of movement as they steamed away.

In and out among the mighty ironclads they went, admiring and exultant; never a man or woman but felt a throb of pride as they came close to the huge monsters, and felt they were looking upon the strength of their land, "the might of England."

"What was the bit of poetry you recited last year at the school treat, Marty?" queried the smith. "About Britannia's bulwarks, you know."

Martin was gazing in silent astonishment at the enormous bulk of the great ship, but, at his father's request, he repeated the verse from "The Mariners of England," commencing,

"Britannia needs no bulwarks, no towers along the steep."

"Bravo! bravo!" said a hearty voice beside them, as the boy finished. "That's the sort of thing to hear a day like this. Can't you give us a bit more, my little man?"

"Yes, do!" cried a young girl, standing beside her father, who had just spoken. "I'm sure you remember the other verses."

Other of the passengers joined in begging for the rest of the poem; the smith glanced at his wife, and, seeing that she was rather pleased than otherwise, nodded assent. Very red in the face, and rather indistinct as to utterance at first, Martin began to recite the patriotic verses. It was by no means his first appearance in public, for he was a prize boy at the village school, and had on several occasions assisted with recitations at the school treats; but this large and unknown audience, so different from the crowd of well-known and friendly faces at home, seemed to over-



"MARTIN WAS GAZING IN SILENT ASTONISHMENT."