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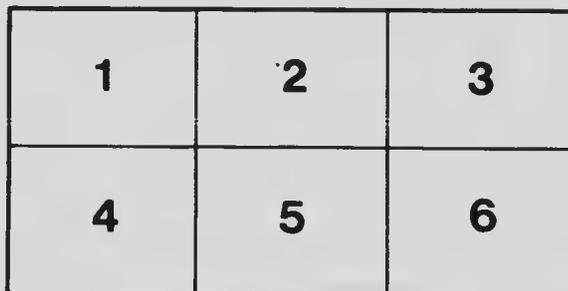
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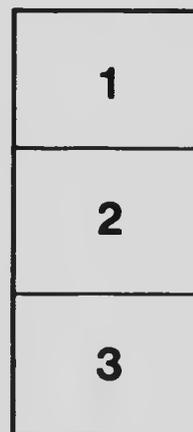
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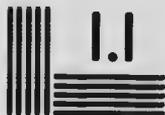
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CHAPTER I

BRISTOL TO LYME

AUGUST, in this fair land of ours, may aptly be likened to a noble dame in the pride of gracious motherhood, the promise of her sweet youth grandly fulfilled, her beauteous children rising up around her and calling her blessed, and her environment a mellowing atmosphere of satisfied, fruitful love. Generous August, serene and stately in all temperate lands, but nowhere to be so enjoyed as in England, and nowhere in England so full of glory as in the brave West Country: Somerset, Dorset, Devon, and Cornwall. Yet August, 1643, was a sad and sere month, Nature had done her part for the submissive and grateful earth, and man, where unmolested by his brother man, had aided according to his light; but war was in the midst of the country, and surely never does man show to less advantage before the celestial intelligences than when at war. Especially so when at war with his own kindred. The wholesale parricide of civil war was in full operation, for the old bulldog breed of British men had found no other way but this to decide whether Britain should advance or recede, should

sink into a mass of soulless slaves at the irresponsible caprice of one man, himself showing signs of being under the dominance of a foreign priest, or should, by fighting to the last gasp, prove that in their estimation liberty was dearer than life, a free death better than an enslaved existence.

So Englishmen had at last flown at each other's throats, bulldog fashion; the modern spirit had risen against the mediæval spirit; shopkeeper, tradesman, and mechanic were in arms against noble and professional soldier. On one side the passionate devotion of feudal times to a great central figure, the King, allied to an intense reverence for externals in religion, with its licence to live as one listed provided due tithe was paid to Mother Church; on the other, a dogged desire to choose for one's self the most desirable form of Government, to pay no impost without knowing why, and to worship as a man would: these gigantic forces arrayed against each other had rent the realm in twain.

Therefore, on the fair August morning with which this chronicle opens, was a little company of horsemen riding slowly along the sweet Somersetshire lanes, bound southward. At first sight one would have called them sad, those stern riders, but on second thought the word would have been altered to solemn. They looked solemn, although it might have been objected that their leader's heavy face was devoid of all expression whatever. His portrait has been handed down to us, an object-lesson on the futility of judging a man by his looks. Fat cheeks, with small eyes, small nose, and

little mouth,—was ever countenance more inexpressive of gallantry, high resolve, unflinching courage, and lovability than that belonging to Robert Blake? The best word that could have been found to describe his face without being unkind was impassive. He alone of that little company riding so steadfastly quiet along the beautiful Somersetshire lane appeared to have no concern with anything external whatever. And yet, if any man had cause to feel downcast, to be filled with gloomy apprehensions for the future, it was Captain Robert Blake. For he, like so many another great man discovered at that time, had emerged from his obscurity as a country gentleman, the head of his house, and had definitely taken his stand on the side of the people against the anointed King and his noble supporters, against the established order of things; and also had drawn with him many, who, unable to choose for themselves, had accepted his guidance. Moreover, that sublime faith in a righteous cause which has bred so many mighty deeds had just received a severe check. The Cavalier had conquered, at fearful cost it is true, but he *had* conquered, and the Queen of the West, Bristol, was in the hands of the Royal forces. Therefore Robert Biake might well have been excused if, for others, he had looked sad and disturbed, and a gloom had overspread his countenance that all the brilliant sunshine of that August morning could not lighten.

But it hath ever been conceded to our race that of all the sons of men none bear defeat better, none are more dangerous, than Englishmen when they

should by all ordinary canons of human conduct be beaten to the earth. And so it was that Robert Blake and his little company looked solemn, but not sad, after the bloody struggle and defeat of Bristol; and if their faith in God as being on their side had suffered weakening, they at least showed no sign thereof on their rugged faces.

Suddenly Blake's lips parted, and, still with the same sphinx-like lack of all expression, he said, "Martin, my man, thine eyes are keen, trot forward a piece to the brow of yon hill and look well to the south and west, for, unless my eyes deceive me, I saw the glint of steel by that coppice that nestleth in the dip yonder," pointing with his sword in its direction.

"Aye, aye, cap'en," cheerily answered the individual spoken to, and touching his horse with the spur, he sped on his errand. Let us accompany him, for he worth making the acquaintance of, a typical Englishman of that day, and one who, though hitherto fameless as well as nameless, had no small part in the making of our history. Like all his companions, he was dressed in pot helmet and cuirass of dingy steel, beneath which could be discerned a serviceable, yet well-worn suit of brown cloth. On his feet were immense jack-boots, with cruel-looking spurs. He was armed with a great cutlass and a pistol of such formidable dimensions that it looked as heavy, and doubtless was almost, as a Martini-Henry rifle. But it was the man, not his panoply, that fixed the eye. A broad, ruddy face, tanned to a rich brownish red by sun and wind,

and framed in closely cropped brown hair all in tiny curls, eyes so keen, quick, and brilliant, that it seemed as if the ardent soul was just upon the point of leaping out of them, and full red lips ever ready to burst into a smile, culminating in a hearty laugh. Remain only his hands, those wonderful indices to character. They were large, yet well-shapen, brown and hard, yet full of artistic suggestion, and the one unoccupied hung down half clenched like a sailor's.

There was the key of the picture. Martin Penfold *was* a sailor, one of the sea-dogs upon whose doings in that far-off time rests our world-wide empire. One of the men who have always been ready to go anywhere and do anything, and who may always be trusted to do it superlatively well. He had a pleasant little habit of talking to himself, as so many sailors have; and being privileged to listen, we may gather from his private conversation some information unobtainable in any other way. But I grieve to say that his soliloquy must be edited, for Martin, although riding in the ranks of those whose practical view of religion made good behaviour and clean speech of the highest necessity, had not as yet been subdued to that mental and moral hue; nay, on occasion he had been known to swear like the veriest malignant, to the great and grave scandal of his godly companions.

"Well, Martin, lad," muttered he, "this be a goodly beginning of things. Seems to me that when I lost the *Rebecca* my troubles were only just getting under way like. When the cap'en saw

me in Bristol town helping to handle the guns—for a fellow must do something, or die of weariness—and asked me if I'd be his man, I thought 'twas a fine chance to quit a business that only means a wet jerkin and an empty belly at the most times, for a dry and profitable employment ashore with a little fighting thrown in nows and thens just to keep a man from getting rusty, you see. But I'm not so sure about it now. Cap'en Blake's a *man*—I don't want any better; but some of his followers are a bit too sour for me—they look as if naught but an easterly wind in the chops of the Channel, and an empty breadlocker when homeward bound, had ever been, or was likely to be, their lot. And we've been properly trounced too. None of Cap'en Blake's fault, I'll swear—no, I mustn't, I forgot; but here we are on pilgrimage to Lyme, not knowing whether we shall have to fight our way, or starve, or what. And after all, what's the odds as long as you're alive, and it's a fine morning like this." And only a sudden recollection of his position restrained Martin from raising a joyous shout. But he did remember himself in time, and from an inner pocket produced with solicitous care a little roll of tobacco leaf, from which he unwound a modicum and stowed it in his left cheek as a substitute for the breakfast that did not seem at all likely to be forthcoming.

By this time he had reached the spot indicated by his captain. He halted, and shading his eyes, peered earnestly in the direction of the gleam spoken of by Captain Blake. Only a minute or two, for

suddenly with a joyful shout he turned his horse and galloped back to his party. Hardly had he sighted them again when he roared, "Glory—it's a convoy of provisions, only a handful of men in charge, and whether they be friend or foe matters little." From Blake's lips came the single word, "Trot," and the whole company swung forward briskly. But a close observer might have seen bearded lips moving, and stern eyes softening with thankfulness. For these men took their life very much in earnest. The God they worshipped was no far-away myth, or Deity hidden behind serried ranks of divinely ordained intermediaries. He was personally interested in every action of theirs, no matter how trivial to them it might appear, and loved to be consulted or thanked as the case might be for every need or any blessing. Of course it is indisputable that this primitive creed bred in some a narrow purblind bigotry, an intolerance totally foreign to the gentle teaching of the Prince of Peace. But it is equally indisputable that this endurance of hardships, as seeing Him who is invisible, and with a complete belief that they were doing Him service, did give England a stiffening of the finest men she has ever had.

It was no easy task, though, for a man like Martin to accommodate himself to such company as this, having been brought up in a school where a man's words or the cut of his clothes mattered very little as long as his deeds showed that the inner man of him was striving, with all the powers granted him by God, to do his duty. And so it was little wonder

if his lip curled a little as he noted the universal expression on his comrades' faces. "Seems as if with all their holiness they need some meat to wash it down," he muttered; "but all the same, there's some of 'em 'at's only lip-thankful, or I'm no true man, judging by their faces."

Here his muttered words came to an abrupt end, for the troop had reached the convoy, to find that it was one of the Royalists' provision companies which had lost its way. Only four fighting men were in charge, and they, sensible fellows, saw no use in throwing their lives away to no purpose. Indeed, they were not men of *views* at all. They were loyally earning their pay in the cause that had enlisted them as professional soldiers, and consequently were quite untroubled by the ethics of the cause at issue. It seems like a platitude to say that men like these can never conquer in the long run when opposed to fighters who are morally convinced of the justice of their cause. Even apparent victory often means real defeat; and when we say that man dies but God lives, we mean that their own blood shed by men in a really righteous cause can never fail of its due and Divine effect upon the world for its ultimate up-lifting and eternal benefit.

How inopportune such reflections must seem at the present juncture. For really the sole problem that now confronted these warriors was an elementary one: they needed food and rest, they had suddenly come across means of satisfying both needs, and all other or higher considerations simply receded into mistiness. They had overtaken the heavily laden

waggon at a junction of roads with an unusually wide triangle of turf, such as may be seen in thousands of places to-day all over the land, and immediately that fair bit of common was filled with boisterous life. Busy hands unpacked the wains, others loosed the horses to graze, for Britons were ever mindful of the noble animal's wants, and a perfect hubbub of cries and counter-cries broke the sweet quiet of that morning and sent the birds at topmost speed far away, their little brains seething with fright at this clamorous invasion.

A very short time had elapsed before all were seated on the thick, rich grass, munching steadily at sea bread and boiled salt beef, washed down with strong ale. For all England then was at any time ready not merely to subsist upon, but to be thankful for, such food as sailors of to-day never cease to grumble about. Bread and beef and pulse, and that of the coarsest, was the staple food, and happy he who could get enough of these, with a jack of home-brewed ale, however sour, to wash it down. Mind, I do not suggest that this was good food, or that it is in any way to be desired for our seamen or warriors; but when all has been said, the facts remain that plain food is the best, that most people eat too much, and that the cult of epicurean cooking—that is, the continual tempting of the jaded appetite and worn-out stomach all unused to honest methods of digestion—is a crime, and only worthy of a degenerate people accustomed to wallow in luxury while their poor eat vermin and weeds. Though I firmly believe this, I do also most firmly believe

in good cookery—not, however, to make eating one of the chief, if not *the* chief, end of existence; but that the plainest food, which is also the best, shall be rendered palatable and not nauseating, shall be fully utilised and not in large part wasted, as it is under careless, dirty, or ignorant manipulation by so-called cooks.

Captain Blake and his followers, however, had no misgivings or predilections on the score of cookery. They had the wherewithal to distend their craving stomachs, and of far better quality than they had been used to of late, since the long siege had driven them to some strange devices for food. So it came to pass that, as they ate, their present condition came to appear less gloomy, hope flourished afresh, and grim, stern faces lost some of their harsh outlines, while set lips here and there trembled at the conclusion of the meal as if ready to burst into song. Martin positively beamed with delight. Besides appearing to be everywhere at once during the preparation of the meal, he had abundantly proved to his fighting associates the oft-demonstrated truth that there is no training like that of the sea to fit a man for all-round service in any capacity whatever. There was even the suspicion of a gleam in the eyes of their impassive commander as he watched the deft movements of his man. But never a word did he speak in praise or blame, until a man with a long lean-jawed face, thin lips, and eyes that looked almost like slits in his countenance, suddenly lifted up his voice in a long quavering nasal psalm-tune, being joined after the first word or two by

nearly all the company. They had barely finished the first verse when Blake's voice rose up in an astonishing volume of sound. "Silence! Sing psalms at proper seasons, and only then with my permission."

"Gramercy, captain," said the long-faced man, with a curious feline expression in his eyes, "may we not praise the Lord in season and out of season, according to His blessed Word? What else do we fight for? Why are we here?"

"Master Elias Pentreath," answered Blake, with just a glance in his direction, "bear you in mind that I command you, and obey me unquestioningly. Forget this but once again, and you will never remember anything more in this world."

A dead silence ensued for the space of about ten breaths, during which Martin's round face was a study in varied expressions of liveliest joy. For Master Elias Pentreath was his pet abomination. In the first place, unfailing instinct warned him that the man was a sly hypocrite capable of all villainy beneath that smug cloak of facial sourness and sanctimonious tone; and while Martin, as he phrased it, "was no professor or practiser of godliness," he had a profound reverence for those who combined the two, allied to an equally profound disgust for those who simply made the Puritan fashion a screen for their native and well-beloved vices. But beyond all this, the action of his commander was especially welcome to Martin, in that he was one of those rare men who are not only conscious of the value of discipline for others, but are willing, even anxious, to submit themselves to discipline of the sternest kind for the general good.

This was one of his principal reasons for admiring Captain Blake—that the silent, sphinx-like captain looked upon his lightest word, as he did upon the lightest order given to him, as a stern law which could by no means be broken, unless a higher law, a straiter order, intervened. *Then* Robert Blake believed in the duty of disobedience at the dictates of one's conscience, allied to a willingness to bear the full penalty of failure to prove oneself right—a hard condition for the majority. However, Captain Blake's countenance, as usual, bore no impression of such thoughts as these, nor of any interest in what the men under his command might be thinking. He gave a few curt orders, and in a few minutes the little cavalcade was under way again for its objective, the busy seaport of Lyme.

The recent stern set-back delivered by the captain to Pentreath had effectually stopped the small flow of conversation trickling along before, and now the march was made in perfect silence, much to the discomfort of Martin, who needed sorely some kindred mind to rub his own against, and suffered much from lack of such facilities for lively talk. Still, the necessity being laid upon him for keeping quiet, he did so, but with an ill grace, casting an occasional questioning glance, almost comical in its entreaty, in the direction of the captain. That great man, however, made no sign that he took interest in any external matters whatever, until suddenly, at a bend of the lane where two high banks hid the whole of the surrounding country from view, he breathed out the word "Halt!" All came to a standstill

simultaneously, and, amid a silence so profound that men hardly respired, there was presently discernible a far-off throb, as of some pulsation of the atmosphere, growing more and more distinct with each beat. They sat silent as statues, while overhead the bright sun flooded heaven with golden flame, on either side the sweet wild flowers filled the pleasant air with scent, and all the full tide of an autumnal day whispered "Peace."

An occasional snort from a horse, or a slight jingle of arms caused by a change of position, only accentuated the utter stillness, heightened the intensity of expectation common to all—except the captain, apparently. To those who, in these days of ease and general security, are apt to forget by whom our pleasant times were bought, that little company waiting in the leafy lane of Somerset should be an object-lesson beyond price. What matter their errors, their fanaticism, or mannerisms now? Nearly all of them were prepared to give the ultimate price, life, for the highest of all principles, Freedom; were as ready to shed their warm blood upon that bright day, and in the midst of all that beauty, as to die upon a bed of sickness when life has lost its charm, its desire of continuance, its hold upon the world; and for what? For that which we now enjoy and prize so little, real Liberty.

A low word from the captain sent every man sliding from his horse, another almost whispered sentence formed them into a perfectly arranged ambuscade commanding the narrow way, while four scouts climbed up the steep bank, two on each side,

where, with bared heads, they peered over the top beneath the brambles to see whence the attack expected would come. Swords were loosened in the scabbards, flints of pistols and muskets quietly examined, and undoubtedly silent commendings of individual souls to God were made, while the company, ready for what was expected as they could possibly be, settled down for a dogged wait in perfect silence. Meanwhile that stern beat upon the ears grew more and more distinct, though naught was to be seen. An occasional accompaniment of the monotonous throb was also to be heard, but whether of voices or the rattle of arms could not be distinguished. And so, all silent save for an occasional scramble of a squirrel, or the scream of a plover, or the caw of a crow, Captain Blake and his men waited the beginning of what, although they knew it not, was to be the turning-point of the great Civil War in England.

CHAPTER II

A MERE SKIRMISH

A SUDDEN sliding down the bank, amid a cloud of dust, of one of the scouts brought the quiet query from the captain of "Well, and what now?"

The man answered breathlessly: "They come, captain, a great company of malignants, at least ten times as many as we be, riding furiously as Pharaoh's host after the Israelites."

"Look they as if they were aware of us?" queried the captain.

"Nay, they ride as to a feast, and look not to the right or left; they seem all unaware of any danger near. Haply the Lord hath blinded their eyes, hath taken away their reason, captain."

Very grim looked the captain's face as he gave quiet orders for his little force so to dispose themselves that every shot should tell upon the advancing company. Very quiet, too, was the voice in which he commanded that no sound should be made, no shot fired, until their enemies were so close upon them that to miss them would be almost impossible. But a close observer would have noticed a momentary spasm as of acutest pain pass over those impassive features as the captain recognised in their leader

a dear friend of his own at Wadham College, one whom he had loved as only men can love one another when their spirits are akin. But the spasm passed, and there was no dimness in that keen eye as it swept over the little force for the last time before the stern low voice gave the word to "fire."

The Cavaliers were then within fifty yards, and every detail of face and equipment under that strong light was distinctly visible. At the word a sheet of flame topped with smoke, and a thunderous report filled the deep lane, while a stern voice followed immediately: "Recharge, look to your flints, take good aim, await your orders."

A light air lifted the foul fog of gunpowder smoke, revealing the lane full of maimed, dying, and dead men and horses, all in a hideous welter of confusion and pain, all unknowing whence had come this almost supernatural visitation. In the rear of the struggling mass were to be seen the bulk of the company hastily re-forming under the orders of one who seemed of no higher rank than the rest. But suddenly, out of the dreadful entanglement in front, a blood-bedabbled figure struggled up and rushed back to the unwounded, shouting, "Steady, men, steady; up the banks, some of you, and see where our foes lie, if you can. 'Tis an ambuscade of the most successful, but let us stand fast."

Another volley closed his speech, and added to the number of his wounded (for he was the captain of the band), and when its smoke had cleared away he was still to be seen, though with another stain upon his gay clothing, quite coolly giving his orders



"The Cavaliers were then within fifty yards"—PAGE 16



to his men to seek points of observation and eke of shelter. Then he fell dead.

The heavy clouds of smoke rolled across the fair landscape, defiling its purity, and the groans of the wounded broke the quiet that had followed upon the first hideous outburst of war. But the company thus taken by surprise was by no means terrorised. They were Englishmen, inured to fighting and little liable to panic. Therefore as soon as the condition of things became manifest to them, and the first shock was over, they set about finding their hidden foe, each man taking a keen individual interest in the operation, for it was before the hideous system of pipeclayed drill and absurd clothing had converted the soldier into a mere cog in a machine, useful indeed while the machine is intact, but utterly useless apart from it. These hardy warriors divided themselves into small companies, even units, taking advantage of any corner and creeping from point to point almost like Indian braves. But they laboured under the heavy disadvantage of being overlooked by their hidden enemy from the beginning, and they could only guess his whereabouts by the overhang of an occasional puff of smoke from a pistol or matchlock whenever one of their number exposed himself for a moment.

There were no more casualties, however, for a period of over two hours, during which the wounded, under the fierce rays of the now high sun, suffered intolerable agony untended. Most of them died in hideous fashion, with their blood dried black upon their bodies and caked around them upon the dust of

the road. It was a terrible lesson in the horrors of war pread beneath the eyes of those patient watchers, who lay or crouched in almost carven immobility, yet with all their senses at highest tension. But it must not be thought that any compunction for the suffering of their foes was felt by these godly men. In their hearts and upon their lips were the fiercest of the fierce texts of the Old Testament; in their own eyes they were the chosen instruments in Jehovah's hands for the execution of His stern decrees upon the sons of men, and consequently their human sympathies were for the time completely in abeyance—the groans of their victims sounded as sweet music in their ears, as a fitting accompaniment to their inaudible praises to the God of battles. Yet it must not be supposed that there was any fierce, revengeful exaltation among them, at least consciously so. A high sense of gratification there undoubtedly was, but it was impersonal—the pride of the chosen vessel who, in his perfect faith in the justice of the cause for which he fought, implicitly left such minor matters as human agony and human sympathy to be dealt with by God, as not at present concerning him at all. Apart from what we may think of this mental attitude in this day of ours, we must admit that it could and did carry men far on the way to becoming perfect warriors.

It must also be admitted though, that not all of Captain Blake's little company were moved in this high manner. Martin Penfold, for instance, that genial Pagan, fought from innate bravery, served

Captain Blake, his visible leader, from highest admiration of that individual, nor did he look behind his leader, except in most indefinite fashion, for the springs of conduct. And so it came about that he suffered as much almost as the wounded through seeing their agonies, although he had helped to inflict them in hot blood. He had all the illogicality of the ordinary soldier, straining every nerve to kill his foe during one minute, and the next doing his utmost to save that same enemy's life. Elias Pentreath, on the other hand, was a born mercenary of the worst type, with all the vices of the hypocrite to boot. No one can dispute the fact that there have been mercenaries most faithful to their employers during their turn of service, although when that service ended they might become that same employer's fiercest foes. But Pentreath was a traitor from choice, a Judas by birth. Such was the facile villainy of the man that while he vied with his companions in long prayers, upturning of eyes and nasal bellowing of psalms (all of which might well be, and constantly were, done with most transparent sincerity of soul), he was ever in the depths of his murky mind spinning webs of vilest deceit, concocting plans whereby he could turn the errors or weaknesses of others to his own private and profitable account.

Each of the members, then, of Captain Blake's company lay perfectly still as to his body, but abnormally active as to his mind, until suddenly the voice of their commander recalled them to a present emergency and stiffened every muscle.

"Face about, the rear-guard: I see they are about to attempt a flank movement on both sides. Now, as before, reserve your fire, waste no bullet, and although they so greatly outnumber us, we shall be more than a match for them."

The words had barely been uttered when, in wide open order, and apparently from three sides at once, the whole of the enemy came rushing across the mead. Their cries of "King Charles and Holy Church!" rent the air, nor did the dropping shots that now fell among them seem to have any power even to hinder their headlong assault. They were very brave, and also very reckless, these forefathers of ours; and no matter whether they were on the wrong side or the right, they might well be trusted to quit themselves like men of the best type. But the Royalists made, among many other terrible mistakes, the old one of undervaluing their opponents, men of their own blood, because hitherto those opponents' lives had been spent in peaceful pursuits. That mistake they nobly atoned for on many a bloody field, but discovered it was a mistake too late to save their cause from destruction. Now the two forces were bound to meet in hand-grips, although, owing to the wise disposition of Captain Blake, by the time they did so the attacking party were not more than double the strength of those awaiting them. The Cavaliers flung themselves at the natural glacis of the bank, as if naught awaited them there but lovers' caresses; heedless of briar, and nettle, and greasy clay, they tore themselves frantically to the top to meet thrusting pike, slashing

sword, or bullet fired point blank. But in many cases the dying assailant held his slayer in so fell a death-grip that the twain went rolling down to muddy death under the bright sunshine, never again to be sundered until the weather should have worn the poor framework into utter ruin.

This stern struggle lasted perhaps a quarter of an hour, when, totally defeated, with no way of escape open to the still surviving handful of whilom assailants, the once gay young lieutenant, who had commanded them, bade his merry (?) men lay down their arms the while he asked grace and quarter from his victorious opponent. It was immediately granted, for scant as the justice done to Robert Blake has been, none have ever dared to accuse him yet of treachery, cruelty, or meanness. In a few minutes after the surrender victors and vanquished were fraternising, dressing each others' wounds and sharing each others' scanty rations—albeit the stern faces of the Puritans often grew sterner, and brows blackened ominously, at the ribald, lewd talk of the careless soldiers they had overcome. All unconsciously Martin added to the offence; for he was far more in sympathy with these limber-tongued gallants than with his own sour-visaged comrades, and took little pains to conceal the fact. This heretical behaviour brought upon him much blending of dark looks, and at last, egged on thereto by Pentreath, a long-faced sergeant approached the captain and laid before him a complaint as to Martin's loose behaviour. Surely never was there a more astonished man than that tale-bearer. Blake's

inscrutable visage turned towards him, the small mouth opened, and the words, "Begone to your kennel, slanderous dog. Do not dare again to malign a ten times better man than thou art, or reckon with me," issued from his lips.

That little incident but added to the rancour in Pentreath's black mind, and determined him to obtain if possible a balancing of his account with his captain and Martin; but, politic as usual, he said to the discomfited sergeant: "Bide your time, Joash, but be more wary on another occasion. Saw you not that the captain had been drinking again?" (This last in a venomous whisper.)

Meanwhile the captain and his prisoner, well apart from the rest, had been holding a conversation of the deepest importance. The lieutenant was young, and as wax in the nature hands of his interlocutor, so that ere long Blake had ascertained that this company which he had so opportunely met and overcome had been despatched from before Lyme to Taunton in order to bespeak a large portion of the Royalist army that was even then occupying that hardly entreated town. Late successes had made the Royalists very bold, and it seemed a wise as well as courageous thing to attempt to seize that important little seaport of Lyme while yet the Parliamentarians were reeling under the loss of Bristol.

Therefore this stroke had been decided upon, and, but for the misfortune of the company losing their way, and instead of making an almost air-line for Taunton finding themselves under the left bank of the Parret, the easy downfall of Lyme would doubt-

less have been accomplished. But why dally with ifs? The two forces met as in manner detailed aforesaid, the larger succumbed to the smaller, and one more of England's shackles was broken off. At least, so said the universal voice of Blake's camp that night, for they bivouacked where they had fought, designing to move southward again at day-break.

The sweet night stole over them, and the shy stars peeped out one by one over that little blood-bedabbled patch of earth. The silent sentinels each on his post felt the influence of the hour, and thought, according to his temperament, of glory, of love, of righteousness, or of peace. And the wild creatures smelt blood of man, and kept away. There were no vultures to swoop down upon the slain. Some restless ones, courting sleep in vain, tried to forecast the future of the land they loved; dreamed, though wide awake, of crushed rebellion and glorious monarchy, or triumphant democracy and tolerant commonwealth; but none imagined even dimly the real course that events would take, or of the influence their individually obscure action would have upon the history of the world.

At the first flush of dawn Captain Blake's deep voice was heard through all the camp. "We march in half an hour. Make all speed with the morning meal."

And indeed no time was lost. None was wasted upon ceremony, and as for cooking, there was none, for such effeminacies as tea and coffee were not yet in common use—tea, indeed, had not arrived. Sturdy jaws champed upon sea biscuit and tough

salt beef, manfully and with great satisfaction, while deep draughts of ale from leathern jacks washed down the somewhat dry provender. Not a word was spoken, there was no time for talk; and as the great orb of gold appeared on the eastern horizon, the whole gathering was on the march for Lyme. A very close observer might have detected a gleam of satisfaction in Blake's small eyes—more than human he would have been had he not felt some stirring of pride. For he, a fugitive surrounded by foes, had not only succeeded in capturing one of the enemy's provision trains and so assured his command against hunger, but had incidentally met, defeated, and made prisoners a force nearly three times more numerous than his own. Truly, the stiffest part of his undertaking yet lay before him, if it were correct what his young prisoner had told. He must needs break through the beleaguering force before he could get into the town for which he was bound. But Captain Blake, like so many other great men, had two favourite maxims that were of infinite service to him: "One thing at a time," and "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Perhaps hardly two if closely looked at. And so he took his great success most quietly, and while all his men looked at him by stealth to see if this would not break the calm of his features, they could read nothing there. Yet, strange to say, the more part of them felt doubly convinced that this was indeed a man to live or die for. Some men have that magnetic power over their fellows, nor do they ever seem to need any exercise of it—attraction is a

part of their being. Of these Robert Blake was one of the foremost.

They made a long march that day, a forced march, only halting for a brief hour at Ilminster, then a blackened, ruined village. Their scanty meal despatched, they pushed on again with such speed as their jaded horses and laden wains would admit of, until, as the sun drew near the western verge, they were rewarded by a sight of the rising land of Uplyme, where in a sheltered hollow, with well-posted guards, they encamped for the night. Then the captain called Martin to him and said: "Seek out, Martin, another man like-minded with yourself, and then depart, using all caution to avoid capture, for Lyme. Get into the town if you can, and obtain speech of the Governor Ceely. Give him this secret word from me. Tell him of our welfare. Humbly suggest to him that if the Royalists be in any force around the town, a sally to the north-eastward here will be immediately seen and supported by us, and maybe we shall enter the town with but scant loss of life and the most of the necessaries we have captured on the way."

To Captain Blake's intense amazement, Martin immediately replied: "Sith I may choose whom I will, captain, let me have as my companion the godly Elias Pentreath. I would fain avail myself more than I have yet been able to of the savour of his discourse. And then what man can do shall be done to deliver your message."

"Well, Martin, be it as you say," mused Blake; "but, certes, I marvel at your choice of a companion."

Martin only smiled comprehensively, and departed to busk himself for the perilous journey, believing as he did that every rood of the ground between him and the outworks of Lyme was the probable lurking-place of desperate enemies.

His scant preparations made, he sought out Pentreath, whom he found amid a little knot of grim-visaged companions in arms, holding forth most learnedly, albeit with considerable discursiveness, upon the inner meaning of the last few verses of the nineteenth chapter of the Book of Revelation. And as he rolled forth his sonorous denunciations of the man of sin, the beast and the false prophet, finding, to his own apparently great satisfaction, their exact antitypes in certain well-known personages then living, his hearers occasionally emitted growls of satisfaction or deep-toned Amens. For in this he was an adept; no Scripture-wrester that ever lived was better able than he to draw specious conclusions from the words of Holy Writ by choosing such words as he would, and deftly fitting them together in a cunning mosaic of special pleading. Martin paused for a few minutes on the outskirts of the little circle, glancing from one to another of the hard faces so keenly fixed in their gaze upon their instructor (save the mark), and then with a grin of pure amusement he let his eyes rest upon the saturnine visage of Pentreath as from between his lank jaws rolled the flood of jargon that in those days, alas! was too often accepted as the true and right interpretation of the Word. At last, with a movement of impatience, he strode into the midst of the group, saying: "Masters all, loth

am I to break up this joyful gathering, but Captain Blake hath done me the honour to ask me to ride into Lyme town to-night, and hath ordained Sergeant Pentreath for my companion. The captain's orders are urgent, and I do but wait Master Pentreath's pleasure to set forth. I would fain be beneath the walls ere the rising of the moon, for on this clearest of all nights she will make matters almost as light as day."

Very fierce and dark was the look Pentreath turned upon his interrupter, but his words were smother than oil. "I had not looked for so great pleasure this night as thy bright fellowship, Master Martin," he murmured, "but right glad am I that it hath befallen so. I will but seek among my small belongings for a little flask of brandy to keep out the night chill, and I am with you."

"Spare your flask, and fill from mine," jovially responded Martin, at the same time holding up a huge bottle before the flickering fire. "In very deed we must waste no time, for the captain's commands were most urgent to begone."

Pentreath's lips moved, but not in prayer, as he perforce followed his companion into the darkness. But only as far as the camp bounds did they travel in this wise. As they passed into the blackness beyond, Martin drew up by his companion's side, saying: "See here, Master Pentreath, let us understand one another. I have my doubts of both your religion and your loyalty to our cap'en, and I do not propose to let him be betrayed by any such sneaking landlubber as you seem to me to be, not

though your face be long as my leg. So I have requisitioned you for this service to-night to keep you out of the way of doing harm as far as may be, should there be anything doing in camp to-night. I know pretty well what your intentions are, but if I know anything about myself, you will do well to abandon them to-night and do your best, always in front of me, to get into the town of Lyme. If you but make a move or utter a cry with treacherous intent, it will be your last, for I am close behind. I'll stick to you like a sucker to a shark. So now you know, and after this the less said the better, until we are within the town boundary of Lyme."

So that ill-assorted pair groped and plodded and wormed their way across country, passing sometimes so close to the various scattered camps of the Royalists that they could even hear a more than usually energetic snore. But such good progress did they make that all unnoticed, and therefore unmolested, drenched with sweat, bedaubed with clay, and torn by brambles, at one hour before watch-changing at midnight they quietly challenged the sentry, gave Captain Blake's secret password, and found themselves within the walls of Lyme.

CHAPTER III

THE TWO BROTHERS

NO time was lost in conducting Martin and Pentreath before the governor, who met them in no pleasant mood, for he had but just been aroused out of his first sleep. Bending his deep brows upon them as they stood in all their travel stains under the flickering glare of the torches in the guard-room, he seemed as if he would penetrate their very souls. Especially was this the case with Pentreath. For Governor Ceely was, although a sound and staunch Parliamentarian, also a profound hater of cant and the wearing of long faces to hide sinister designs. He said—and few will quarrel with him for so doing—that he would rather have a roystering blackguard to deal with than a scheming hypocrite with his vices all preserved for home consumption. So he turned from the contemplation of Pentreath with manifest disrelish, but his face lightened instantly when he saw the genial countenance of Martin, with its open smile that nothing seemed able to banish for more than a few minutes at a time. “So, sirrahs, you come from Captain Blake, do ye? Have ye despatches, a letter, aught in the way of credentials that ye can

show me, or must I decide whether I will take your unsupported word?"

"May it please your worship," replied Martin brightly, "Captain Blake judged that the risks we ran of capture were so great that it would be highly unwise to trust us with the written word, but if I may speak in your honour's ear alone I can give you proof that we are true men bearing a true message."

Glances passed between governor and guards, for treachery was not then considered beneath the doing of an English gentleman—*all* was fair in war. But Martin, locking his hands behind him, said: "Bind me fast as ye will, it matters not. I seek but to whisper two words, the rest of my message may be heard by the whole garrison." Immediately the governor stepped forward, inclining his head towards Martin, who, leaning, whispered Blake's private word to Colonel Ceely, "Jehovah Shalom." The governor's face immediately lit up, and saying "Look to the other man," he led the way into his private apartment, beckoning Martin to follow him.

The interview between these two lasted an hour, during which Martin had faithfully reported the progress of events from an early period of the siege of Bristol down to the present time, winding up with a vivid presentment of the need for getting Blake and his company within the walls. "And," he wound up, "if your worship will forgive me for mentioning such a thing, I would have an extra close watch kept upon that mate of mine. I doubt his being a true man very much. I asked for his company in order to keep an eye upon him, but here in the

town I fear me I shall not be able to do so. Believe me, I have no private spite to gratify against any one in the world, but if Elias Pentreath be not a spy of the Royalists, why, I am just as wooden-headed as the figure of my poor old *Rebecca*, now tumbling about between the 'Mumbles' and the 'Hats and Barrels.'"

"Guard there," shouted the governor, and several men immediately answered the call. "Let not that long-visaged messenger go out of your sight on any pretence whatever."

With a harassed expression the officer of the guard replied as soon as he could for stammering: "Your worship, the man expressed a wish to go out, and you had taken his mate in with you alone, and——"

"And you have let him go, dolt," roared the governor. "Send search parties after him at once; do all you can to repair your fault, and remember if he be not recovered by morning your punishment will not linger. Send the lieutenant of the night watch to me."

The crestfallen officer departed, and Colonel Ceely, his face softening, turned to Martin, saying kindly: "You need food and drink, and rest. You shall have them. You look like a man that can take them whenever offered if duty be not hindered." And without waiting to receive Martin's muttered thanks he passed in to his apartments and gave orders that the sailor's wants should be carefully attended to; and as Lyme, being on the sea, had kept in full touch with many sources of supply, this

was no figure of speech. In ten minutes Martin was enjoying a rich pasty of mutton, a manchot of fine white bread, and a portentous flagon of sack.

But Colonel Ceely was closeted with his officers, making arrangements for the sally at dawn. The beleaguering force had grown slack of late, stale maybe from long lying idle waiting for the relief that, in spite of all the successes of the Royalists in the west, did not come. It was no uncommon experience with those who served the faithless Stuarts; fidelity was so little understood that it was seldom recognised, and so disaster followed disaster just for want of a little realisation of what a man's plighted word should mean, whether he be king or hind. This growing slackness was well known to Ceely, and his dispositions were made accordingly. So that when the dawn broke dimly through a beclouded sky, from which a cold, drizzling rain was falling, three bands of well-equipped men issued from Lyme well directed as to their duty, eager to break the monotony they had endured of late, and utterly regardless of danger, so that they could show these scoffing malignants what sort of men the personal fear of God bred among fishermen, carters, tailors, and handicraftsmen of all sorts. Colonel Ceely commanded the centre party, and by his side rode Martin, who, with all a sailor's sense of locality, had volunteered to lead the main body of sallying troops straight to where he knew Captain Blake and his company awaited the onfall with all impatience, yet with dogged endurance.

But hardly had they ridden two hundred yards,

when up from beneath their very feet as it were there arose a stabbing, yelling, shooting force, on foot, but snatching at horses' bridles, springing from among furze clumps, out of ditches, showing almost conclusively that some news must have been conveyed to them of the threatened sally which had made them all ready to meet it. Just for one minute all was wildest disorder. Then the steady, dogged spirit of those Puritan amateur soldiers asserted itself, and the ambushade revealed itself as a forlorn hope composed of less than a hundred men, whereof not one was taken prisoner unwounded. Leaving the wounded to the care of a few, and sending a messenger back into the town for conveyance for the sufferers, the party pressed on upward and westward out of the great ravine in which Lyme nestles, for the rendezvous. But not the closest scrutiny could reveal any sign of the enemy, and presently in full panoply and martial pride Captain Blake and his gallant band were discerned cantering towards the governor's force.

The meeting was entirely business-like and unemotional, as became the Puritan character. By this I do not mean in any sense to decry emotion, or emotionalism, which is so mighty a force in mundane affairs. But it will, I think, ever be found that our emotions are manifested in exact proportion to the shallowness of our natures. Great emotion may be simulated with much ease after a little practice, and is no guide at all to the real feeling of the exhibitor—merely histrionic, in fact. And nowhere is this more marked than in religious matters,

nowhere more clearly recognised and condemned than in Holy Writ. Moreover, both Colonel Ceely and Captain Blake accurately recognised that while religious enthusiasm as a dynamic force was of the utmost value to them in their Titanic task, it would need all their wisdom and knowledge of man-handling, aided by the most level-headed assistants they could collect, to keep within bounds the seething mass of fanaticism, of wild interpretation of Old Testament stories, of strange looking forward to of the present coming of King Jesus to reign upon earth, which lay immediately under their hands. No small honour is due not merely to them, but to hundreds like them, who so successfully cultivated the single eye to their present duty that they were able to control their fanatical followers and to leave a record of good work done for England such as has never been surpassed.

To the two leaders' unqualified amazement, the other wings of the sallying force joined up presently with the astounding news that the enemy was nowhere to be seen. He had apparently raised the siege and gone elsewhere, for reasons rather difficult to imagine, since at this time the Royalist forces in the West of England were having matters almost entirely their own way. Plymouth, Poole, and Lyme were practically all the towns of any importance left to the Parliament; but in those places there was a spirit of resistance so fierce and dogged that it was evident that no conquest of them could be made but at the greatest possible expenditure of blood and treasure.

Within the ancient town of Lyme that night the sounds of praise rose rugged and high. Men, women, and children praised the Lord lustily for deliverance, or listened with strained attention to the fervent exhortations addressed to them by the numerous sectaries, each fully convinced that he and he alone possessed the true exegetical key to the mysteries of Scripture, uniting only with other equally fiery souls upon the common ground of hatred to the Scarlet Woman and their overwhelming desire to be free. This is no place to discuss the vexed question of how much freedom any of them would have been prepared to grant to any one who differed from them by so much as a Hebrew vowel-point; what we must bear in mind is the amazing skill, energy, and faithfulness by means of which such men as Cromwell and Blake held those fiery enthusiasts in leash, or launched them like thunderbolts against the common enemy, failing not until the essential work was done.

This, however, is but dry reading, and really only by way of reminder—we are so apt to forget whence our present liberties come; and so it is with a great deal of relief I return to Martin. Although his duties in attendance on Captain Blake were by no means light, and his idea of carrying them out so comprehensive that he should have had but little leisure for aught else but food and sleep, he yet found time, sailor-like, to attend to as much private business between whiles as some of the garrison would have considered sufficient for their sole occupation. Thus it came about that, sitting late one

evening under the sea-wall shelter of the Cobb, or breakwater, the night being pitchy dark, and a stiff south-wester getting up, he suddenly sprang to his feet, dashing his glowing pipe to pieces as he did so, and roaring to the two seafaring cronies who were with him, "Haste for life, here comes a craft; God send she strike not on the outer end! No—no, she'll clear it! Now hard down that helm—hard—down with it"; and with a swoop like that of some mighty raven breasting a snowdrift, a vessel about eighty tons register turned short upon her heel and came up against the inner wall of the Cobb as lightly as a row-boat. Willing hands flung as many ropes, and in five minutes she was well fast. But Martin had not waited. Amidst the hubbub he had recognised a well-beloved voice, and springing from the quay to the rigging like a bird, he slid down on board the ship and clutched his twin brother Thomas in a bear-like grip, kissing him repeatedly on both cheeks, for in some things Englishmen were more demonstrative then than now.

"Why, Tom, boy," shouted Martin, as soon as he could find his voice for sheer wonder, "a thought thee wur on the coast o' Guinea after the black folk, or else on Spanish Main trading. Hadn't looked to sec thee again for many a long day. But there, the world's but a small place after all, and it's main hard to lose oneself in it. Come away—come 'way ashore, lad, an' sec what thy brother has come to."

"Not yet, Martin," answered Tom gravely, "Ah've a duty to perform here first. You won't mind waiting a bit?"

Down went Martin on the nearest spar at the word, as who should say, "Waiting for thee is a pleasure not to be surpassed." And as Tom moved briskly away on his business of seeing things shipshape after a rough Channel passage and an exceedingly sudden making of harbour, let us have a look at him.

At first sight, and having seen Martin, one would say, "a perfect twin." But put them together and at once the points of difference revealed themselves. Heavier in build, sterner of face, less lively in action, difficult to impress, but having once set to his seal that anything was true, utterly dependable to the last gasp: such was Thomas Penfold, one of the best of that glorious British type of man which found perhaps its choicest examples in Cromwell's Ironsides, and to-day in the rank and file of the British Navy.

His words of command (for he was captain of this trading vessel, one rigged almost exactly as our ketches are rigged now, but with a kind of "lugsails" instead of gaff-sails) were given quietly, and yet in a volume of voice so penetrating that all could hear in spite of the moaning of the wind overhead and the almost incessant splash of the baffled sea as its crests flung themselves over the top of the Cobb wall. Soon all was snug, the sails well secured on deck, the hawsers attended fore and aft, and all made ready for her settling on to the shingle at the ebb, when Captain Thomas said, "Come aft, my men, and let us, each in his own fashion, praise God for His mercy which endureth for ever." And there before Martin's astonished

eyes eight weatherbeaten men fell on their knees and remained with bowed heads in perfect silence while a man might count a hundred slowly. A deep and solemn "Amen" from the captain closed the scene. Then all rising, went their several ways, while Captain Thomas went over to his brother and said, "I am ready now, Martin, to go with thee."

"But, but," stammered Martin, "I had no notion that you had become a—a—hang it, man, I don't know what to call it—a singer of Psalms, a howler of prayers at all times and seasons. Oh, Tom, Tom, what shall I do—I do hate it so!"

The skipper cast a pitying glance upon his brother as he took his arm and gently led him to the side nearest the Cobb. The little exercise necessary to get ashore prevented further talk, and it was not until both were strolling leisurely along towards the town that Tom began to reply. "Martin, lad," he said, "do you believe in a God who sitteth in heaven and ruleth the earth?"

"Ay, surely," answered Martin.

"Very well then: now listen, and say naught until I have finished, for I am a man, as *you* know well, of few words. God tried for long, thousands of years, by means of priests ordained by Himself, to teach His people His will, and He found that instead of doing so they all sought their own ends, or the ends of tyrants who would protect them, and they never told the people what God really was at all. Except, of course, the righteous rare ones, who got killed off pretty quick. Then God came to earth Himself in human form. 'The Word

was made flesh and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.' Now God was on earth showing what man might be ; but man, educated man that is, saw that if the common people could only get hold of this good news, good-bye to all their spiritual power, which is the most awful power wielded by man over his brother man. So the religious people, the holy ones of the day, crucified God manifest in the flesh, as they would do again to-day under the same circumstances. And when He had died and rose again, and His pure and holy life became known, the descendants of these Pharisees and Sadducees took possession of the whole great story and builded temples and made more priests than ever, and declared that they were the lineal inheritors of the gentle Christ's teaching. In His dear name who went about healing the sick, they slew, they defiled, they defaced His image, and ever they turned the truth of God into a lie, in that they made themselves princes and potentates and powers in a world of which He declared that His kingdom was not of it. Now, Martin, the day has dawned when the babes, even those who know nothing of the art of making slaves of their fellow-men, are learning of Him direct, without aid of greasy, covetous, lying priests ; are hearing from Him directly the still small voice saying, ' Arise and follow Me.' Seest thou, brother ? He calleth His sheep by name, and they hear His voice, and they follow Him and do His will, even to

the uprooting of kingdoms and the laying low of the powers of hell."

Captain Tom ceased, and his brother, whose face had been a lively picture of supreme wonder, drew a breath as if at last he felt he might do so without missing a word. For a time words struggled vainly in his throat for utterance, until at last he got out the bald exclamation: "Well, Tom, in the name of all wonder, where didst thee get it all? Never should I have thought it of thee. Let me tell thee though, Tom, that while I have no love for the Roundheads, their psalm-tunes drawled through the nose, and their long bellowings of what they call prayer, but seems to me as much like prayer to God as my swearing doth, what you say touches me as being sensible like and bound to be believed in by a man who wants to do right. But coom thee ways, lad, and see my Captain Blake, a man after thine own heart, I would say; but that I'll leave thee to find out. As for the other matter, you'll tell me more at my lodging when we go to rest for the night."

So they strolled along leisurely into the town, past little groups of hard-looking men in the duffle rig of fishermen and mariners, or the worn cloth garments bearing marks of the cuirass worn over them, each group busy discussing some knotty point of doctrine and vaunting the ability of their favourite expositor; while on the outskirts of the little gatherings women and children listened wonderingly, patiently, but with a certain hopelessness of expression as if they knew it would never be their lot to understand. Every now and then from some

adjacent cottage burst of long-drawn-out psalmody would issue, overwhelming for the time all other sounds, to be succeeded as they passed beyond its influence by the impassioned exhortations of some trumpet-tongued preacher pouring forth his views of monarchy in general and that of the man Charles Stuart in particular, fitting with scrupulous exactitude all sorts of Biblical denunciations upon him and his adherents, and solemnly warning his hearers that these were indeed the last days spoken of in the Book of the Apocalypse, and telling them to account themselves happy if called upon to shed their blood for the cause of God and of His saints.

Under such stress of oratory stern faces set harder, stooping backs straightened, horny hands clutched weapons as in a vice, and the fire of fervent resolve glowed fiercely in deep-set eyes. Martin noticed furtively that his brother's stalwart form seemed to swell, his footsteps to strike the earth massively, as if asserting the supreme nobility of man, recognising himself as made in the image of God. And so they came to Captain Blake's lodging, where, giving the countersign to the weatherbeaten sentry at the door, Martin passed in with his brother. The captain welcomed them both with that grave courtesy which so well became his stolid features, and was equally extended to visitors of all ranks. Then he bent an inquiring look upon Martin, which loosed that worthy's tongue-strings immediately.

"This, your honour, is my twin brother Tom," burst forth Martin; "a sailor like myself, except that he is more fortunate, for while I lost my poor

Rebecca, as you know, captain, Tom here still commandeth as tight a *Pink* as you shall find between Lizard and Harwich. He hath but just arrived, and knowing his love for the people's cause, I ha' made bold to bring him to your honour in the hope that he may be able to do you some service."

Martin paused for breath, for he had rattled off the foregoing at such a rate as to make a single sentence of it, and a rare smile spread over Blake's face as, turning to Captain Tom, he said: "Shalt find all that thou canst do, Thomas Penfold, upon the sea for England, and that right soon. It cannot be that this quarrel may be confined to the land, and indeed I hear rumours already of vessels being seized to prey upon peaceful merchantmen and attack defenceless villages by those enemies of the human race who believe that they were born to be the spoilers of the few. I hear too that the malignants hope to gain adherents on board every ship, resting that hope mainly upon the repute that sailors have of being godless, drunken, lecherous men, who fear that a righteous Government would curtail these their favourite pleasures. What say you to that, Thomas Penfold?" and Captain Blake turned suddenly upon Tom with a flash in his eyes.

Very soberly Tom answered: "There be much in such a description of my co-workers that is too true, I admit. And also I will own that seafaring folk are generally ignorant of shore matters, and too much at the mercy of those whose authority they recognise, cozening them with fair speeches. The best virtues I can claim for them are: first a certain dog-like

fidelity to whoever commands them, rightfully or wrongfully it is not theirs to inquire ; secondly, an obstinate courage that the sea breeds in us, whereby we learn not to accept defeat while to us life remaineth ; and lastly, an ardent overtopping love for that leader, whoever he may be, who showeth those qualities in a superlative degree. For him we will give unquestioningly the best blood of our hearts, and feel ourselves well repaid if in our dying ears ' Well done ' soundeth from his lips. But of religion, true or false, I fear we can boast (were it meet to boast of it) little. Among our fishermen and those who do but hover as it were between the sea and the land for their living you shall find many godly men, but of sailors who go down to the sea in ships and do business in great waters, ah, they be rare as roses at Yule."

Rising, Captain Blake said to Martin : " You will desire your brother's company to yourself to-night. I need no further attendance. I thank you heartily for bringing him to me, and doubt not that he and you will be of infinite service to me in the days that are coming upon us. How or in what way the Lord alone knoweth. But as long as He shall guide us the way shall be made plain before us. Good-night, and be with me, both of you, betimes in the morning."

The brothers emerged into the night and sought Martin's lodging, both feeling hungry and weary. But while a meal was being prepared by the good wife of their host, Martin, goaded by a desire he could not at all account for, only feeling its irresistibility, began to ply his brother Tom with questions as to the reason for this great change in him.

CHAPTER IV

MAKING READY

BEFORE, however, Tom had summed up his strong reasons in reply to his brother's importunate questioning, there came a diversion into their thoughts of a most unexpected character. A young woman of about twenty-two tripped lightly in through the half-open door bearing some adjunct of the table. She was of medium height and well-nigh perfect figure, yet not as robust physically as most of the maidens of that neighbourhood, whose outdoor and somewhat laborious avocations were apt to make them a thought too sturdy and athletic for womanly grace. Judged by any standard, she was truly beautiful. Her hair was of that sweet shade of brown seen on the fur of the young seal, shot with threads of glittering bronze colour. Her brow, almost too lofty, came down with the gentlest of curves to a pair of eyes blue as the sea in mid-Atlantic. Her complexion was wonderfully fair, with a glow of health diffused over it that compensated for the absence of any pronounced patch of colour. Her nose, upper lip, and mouth were pure Greek in their contour, but her little chin was some-

what too square for such as always look for tokens of yielding in the faces of their lady-loves.

Almost ludicrous were the expressions on the faces of the two men as this vision burst upon them. She was not unaware of the sensation she had caused, for without looking up from the small duty she was performing, the tender suggestion of a smile made a series of tiny dimplings about her mouth and eyes which passed almost immediately. She disappeared, and Martin, gazing after her as if her image were still haloed in the vacancy before him, looked so absurd with his starting eyes, partly open mouth, and air of utter bewilderment, that Tom's habitual gravity deserted him for the moment and he burst into a merry and most musical laugh.

"Why, Martin, lad," he cried, "thou hast not seen a sprite, but a fair maiden of goodly flesh and blood. Yet you look as if you had gazed upon the father of all evil."

"Man," gasped Martin, getting his breath at last, "didst ever see so lovely a maiden? She hath smitten my heart in twain. Many maidens have I loved and had sweet dalliance with, but this one surpasseth them all as far as the moon doth overshadow the stars."

"Martin," said Tom gravely, "beware. I know thou art somewhat free in thy behaviour towards women, and reck little of the sorrow you may bring them; but bethink you, is not yon maiden too holy-looking to be treated like the rest?"

Martin's face flushed fiery red as he sprang to his feet and confronted his brother. "Since when,"

said he, "hast thou known me a villain? If I forget not, thine own record as regards women is none of the cleanest; but who gave you the right to accuse me?"

"Dear Martin," said Tom sadly, "I know thou speakest sooth, and God He knows I desire not to be in that sense thy keeper; but since I have set my face as a flint towards Zion, women have ever been sacred to me, to be holpen when need arose, and in any case to be regarded as one of the sex to which Mary and our mother belonged."

His remarks were interrupted by the approach of Mrs. Pook, the goodwife of the house, and the maiden, bearing smoking dishes of fish and dumplings, which appealed strongly to the healthy appetites of the two brothers. "Friends," said the goodwife somewhat loftily, "this is my cousin's child, Grace Pentreath, whose father, being with the army of the Lord in the field against the man Charles Stuart, hath left her in my charge, and she hath desired to help me in my duties. Grace, know these two worthy men, Captain Tom Penfold and Captain Martin his brother.

"No—sergeant," eagerly cried Martin. "I have no higher title."

"Captain Martin you have always been to me, and Captain Martin shall remain," sententiously muttered the dame. "I am no turnabout. Good appetites to you both for the bonny codfish caught but this afternoon off the Cobb." And with this benediction she swept out of the room like a goodly galleon wearing to leeward, the more graceful galley following in her wake.

Martin was about to fall to when he saw his brother fold his hands before his face and heard him say: "Lord, for these, Thy gifts, I thank Thee. Make me strong to do Thy will"; and fell upon his food instantly, as one who needed it mightily. Martin said nothing, but followed his example much more slowly than was his wont: this brother of his was becoming a problem far beyond his power of solution.

The meal proceeded in silence until the somewhat alarming hunger of the two men was appeased and their thirst slaked by a copious draught each from the leathern jack of small ale that stood at the head of the board. Then both methodically filled and lighted their pipes, taking easier positions naturally as they prepared to enjoy the pleasant sense of plain food well earned and taken in all reasonable moderation. Just a brief moment of disturbance came as the goodwife put her head in to say good-night and to ask if Captain Tom were staying the night in the house. Finding that he was not to be persuaded so to do, Mrs. Pook laughingly bade Martin see to the fastening of the door after his brother, and retired to her well-earned rest.

For some time the brothers sat silently smoking, each busy with his own thoughts, Martin especially endeavouring to find some way of commencing a series of questions by means of which he might ascertain the true inwardness of his brother's wonderful change, but never seeming to discover an opening. Suddenly Captain Tom said: "Martin, lad, I must

go. The *Pink* may be safe enough as she lies, but thou knowest how easily the boys forget duty when the master is not on board. Don't thee trouble to come down now," as Martin made a move toward his coat.

"Ay, but, Tom, I must come," replied Martin: "there are things I must ask thee, and get answered too before I sleep again. Oh yes, I'll come, no matter what the hour or the weather might be."

Captain Tom made no further demur, and soon the pair were descending the steep winding path that led down to the Cobb, past various houses whose inmates were all asleep, it being now nearly midnight.

They struggled down the rugged pathway in silence for some minutes, until, coming to a smoother part of the descent, Martin said abruptly: "Tom, what is this mighty change in thee? When last I saw thee, was never a seaman readier with his glass and his oath or to run after a petticoat than thee, except perhaps it might be thy brother Martin. Wert a jolly companion as ever trolled out ribaldry in tuneful voice at a meeting of boon companions, and a very king among drinkhards. But now thou art grave and reverend, as if thou hadst been a priest for a thousand years—nay, never saw I priest look as holy as thou dost, for all his robes. My heart yearns to know how this miracle hath been wrought in thee, for to tell truth I feel strangely drawn to a liking for thy present frame, in spite of my natural man crying out against it. Saidst just now that thou hadst set thy 'face as a flint towards

Zion.' I have heard many words like that from men whom I knew as wholly evil, the more so, and the more dangerous, for ever having these goodly words upon their tongues. But blind as I am to matters of religion generally, I am ready to swear that what thou sayest thou meanest, and that holy words come not idly from thy tongue."

Further conversation was now rendered impossible for a space, as they had reached the Cobb, against which the heavy seas, driven by a brisk S.W. wind, were hurling themselves thunderously, and occasionally sending a drenching shower of spray right over the rugged breakwater into the little smooth harbour, where half a dozen vessels lay gently rocking to the Channel swell that came stealing in to leeward. The two brothers managed to dodge a wetting by keeping close along the sheltering wall until they were abreast of the *Pink*, which Captain Tom hailed with a voice akin to the melodious thunder of the waves themselves. The drowsy seaman on watch aroused himself to welcome his skipper, and with a curt inquiry or two as to how the vessel had been riding, the two brothers descended into the poky den of a cabin sacred to the skipper. Then Tom turned to his brother and said: "Martin, I am full of desire to answer your questions, but I am also full of fear lest by any darkening of counsel through vain words I obscure the truth. It is all so clear and real to me that I feel I ought to make it so to you; yet when I essay to speak on these things to anybody I find myself doing the thing I hate, that is, falling into the cant and jargon which

bears insincerity in every word—mere words that an honest mind cannot receive as it would. Thou knowest how for years, ever since we were boys together, I have been what thou hast just said; but thou dost not know how my whole heart was sick of the sin and dirtiness of my life, and how I felt like a gull with a broken wing, longing to rise from the sea of mine ill-doings, but could not. Many times I would fain have asked guidance of those I met on shore who had repute as godly men, but could not, for my lips would neither frame the questions nor my heart feel that they, any of them, knew the secret I desired to learn. And this miserable state of soul remained with me for over a year like a canker-worm gnawing at my bowels, a pain from which none could relieve me, of which indeed I could tell no one. I loathed my meat, my sleep was broken with terrible dreams: I was weary of my life, and prospect of relief saw I none. Then as one night I was rounding the Bill of Portland, bound to Southampton with a gentle westerly wind, a bright moon and smooth sea, I heard plainly as man ever did a voice which said, 'He that believeth in Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.' And I knew it was the Lord. How I knew I do not know, nor whether others have had a like experience—but I did know, I do know. I heeded not the helmsman, but slid incontinent to my knees and poured out my longings to that unknown One. I told Him of my desire to live well, not for fear of death, but for the joy of doing good; of the loathing I had for the evil

life I had been leading since my first : . . . so to do, and with all my heart and soul I believed on Him.

"Martin, that is all. Since that day a great peace hath been mine. I think not of myself as being godly or righteous—I think not of myself or my past life at all. But I find the King's promise sure: His light lighteth me, His voice guideth me, His peace lieth all around me like the air of heaven. I can tell thee no more except this, that if thou desirest the same blessing thou mayest find it in the same way, or thou mayest search for it all thy life and never find it because of thy stubbornness in refusing to see that the Word is nigh thee, even within thy heart."

We will not intrude upon that sacred scene any longer, or listen to the birth-pangs of a soul; but when Martin came on deck again it was with a sense of freedom and certainty about him that he had never known before. There was a certain gravity of demeanour, too, that made him appear much older than the light-hearted, cheery Martin of the day before; but even that conveyed an added charm to his comely face. The twins embraced, bade each other good-morning, and with an invitation to Captain Tom to come up to his lodgings again that night, Martin strode briskly towards his temporary home, reached it without being greeted by a soul, ascended to his chamber, and in five minutes was sleeping like an infant.

Morning at daylight found him at his captain's door as usual awaiting orders, but within his heart a

strange, sweet sense of peace, of satisfaction with all things and all men. It was not a fine morning—the low leaden scud was flying swiftly overhead, and the moan of the rising westerly gale echoed mournfully among the scattered houses and down from the hills; but in his heart it was summer, the time of the singing of birds. His heart bubbled over with thankfulness at the sweet smell of the moist earth, the clean breath of the raw wind. He felt that it was good to be alive, to praise God and serve Him. And when Captain Blake came forth and greeted him gravely as usual, that keen observer could not help noting a subtle change in his devoted follower, an aura of high resolve and self-sacrifice not evident before with all Martin's good-will and eager service.

But he made no comment upon the change, only saying: "Well, Martin, we seem likely to be favoured with a long period of quiet if we stay in Lyme. The malignants are working their usual works over the brave West Country, but from what I hear they are unlikely to trouble us here for some time to come. And I would have you accompany me each day on journeys about the town and its environs, to the end that I may see the weak spots and fortify them as well as may be, for sure I am that before we be done with this, Lyme will be as fiercely beset as ever Bristol was. Master Cromwell and his generals have their hands full fighting the good fight in the north and east; it is for us here in the west to see that what we have we hold, and above all things keep the ports free. That brings me to what I have desired to say to thee. Thy brother seems a brave and able

seaman, and one well affected towards the true cause ; is it not so ? ”

“ Indeed, he is all that you say, and more, captain,” eagerly replied Martin.

“ I had thought so,” replied Blake. “ Bring him, then, to me to-night at Governor Ceely’s house, and he shall receive his orders, which, if he faithfully carry them out, as I doubt not he will do his best to, shall result in great benefit to the righteous cause. Now after thou hast taken the morning meal, come up hither again with two trusty men, and let us take our first march of examination.”

Released, Martin strode swiftly homeward, the vision of the maiden Grace Pentreath having just crossed the horror of his mind. But as it did so, he halted as if shot, for the name recalled the traitor who he felt sure had sold the sally on the first night of the present visit to Lyme, and had never been seen by any of the relieving force since. The name was an uncommon one in Lyme, and he felt a pang as the conviction came to him that the girl must be some relative of that villain, against whom he felt a perfect fury of anger, not without a curious under-current of thought that such fierce wrath might be un-Christian. Poor Martin, his spiritual troubles were but just beginning. But he comforted himself with the thought that whatever relationship might hold between the maiden and his enemy, she at least must be held blameless. His desire to see her again became so strong that it lent wings to his feet ; but to his intense surprise, and it must be admitted chagrin also, as he entered the house

and passed into the modest apartment where meals were served, he heard his brother Tom's deep tones and a sweet bell-like laugh which he felt could proceed from no other mouth but Grace's.

Yes, Tom was there betimes awaiting his brother for breakfast, and incidentally enjoying a little light conversation with Grace. To Martin's somewhat surly good-morning Tom replied cheerily and with a look of faint surprise, for it was a most unusual thing to see a cloud on Martin's sunny temper. And even now it passed like breath from a mirror, for Martin had been mentally chiding himself for his folly at being angry without a cause. So that before Tom could be quite sure that Martin was at all vexed, he became certain that he had made a mistake, and the twins were on their usual happy terms.

Grace brought in the breakfast, a dish of boiled whiting, with a mighty loaf, and sweet butter and cream in plenty, also the universal jack of small ale. She was the recipient of tenderest glances from both the supersensitive men, but smiled on them impartially and withdrew. With a loving look at Martin Tom asked his usual blessing, and his brother responded heartily, feeling that now he could indeed enter into the spirit of serving the Lord. For a while nothing was said, those healthy appetites claimed all attention from the hungry brethren ; but as soon as their first fierceness was appeased, Martin began to unfold the captain's message to his brother. Tom listened intently to both the message and Martin's shrewd comments thereupon,

saying quietly when his turn came: "It hath long been my desire to serve the righteous cause in whatever way I might, but I have hitherto been unable to do so. Now I think I can see the way clear before me. All I have is at the captain's service—it is but a half of the *Pink* yonder, the other share belongeth unto Master Tavy at Poole. I cannot answer for his goodwill unless paid for it, but at least, albeit somewhat close-fisted, he is no malignant. And now, Martin, as it is useless talking over these matters until we know what is in our captain's mind, let us turn to another subject. How is it between thee and thy God now?"

Martin answered steadily: "It is all well. I seem to have lost the incessant desire to fret and worry over coming happenings. I feel quite at peace as knowing that I am wholly at His orders, and that all my doings shall be ordered by His governance. Yet I am only clear upon the present. In respect of what I shall or may do, or what will be the outcome of things, I seem to walk among the clouds or sail in a Channel fret, yet withouten fear of running aground or falling foul of a sister ship."

"Let us then praise God for that, dear lad, and ask Him that so it shall be with both of us while we live, content to let Him order our outgoings and our incomings as seemeth Him best."

And for the first time in their lives Tom and Martin knelt side by side to proffer their simple tribute of prayer and praise together to the All-Father. They made no long prayers, and each interpolated an only half-defined aspiration concerning

Grace, but the impression she had made upon these twins was very deep, although such a brief space had elapsed since she had first been seen by them. As yet, however, neither of them had hinted to the other his admiration of the maiden, both being, indeed, somewhat in fear of rivalry.

Putting all these things aside for the time, the brothers betook themselves towards Captain Blake's quarters, Tom casting somewhat anxious looks upward at the leaden sky overhead, and muttering to himself as he went such sea phrases as "I hope Jakin will ease off yon breast and keep her well free of the quay-face: there's quite a swell on now inside the Cobb." But his brow soon cleared as he reverted to his old, well-tryed practice of casting all his care upon the Lord.

When they arrived at the captain's house they found him ready, and a guard of six troopers also awaiting his pleasure. There was a horse for Martin also. But Captain Blake, calling upon the brothers to follow him, ordered the troopers to come on to Governor Ceely's house and wait for him. So saying, he went by a near cut through several gardens and winding paths to the abode of the chief. Arriving there, no time was lost by Captain Blake in introducing the two brothers to Colonel Ceely, who in turn showed what manner of man he was by the conciseness of his questions, the clarity of his orders, and the knowledge he possessed of his own mind. It was one of the principal factors in the failure of the Royalist cause that leaders could not decide what to do, or having decided,

were unable to carry out their intentions from lack of discipline among their officers ; jealous dissensions, and, where possible, much drunkenness, also assisted, but want of decision was certainly the chief. This power of leading was possessed in an eminent degree by both Ceely and Blake, although the former was never able to exhibit it on so grand a scale as the latter did when he held the reins of power.

The result of the conference was that Captain Tom was given plenary power to purchase stores, arms, ammunition, and such needful things wherever he might be able ; that he was to consider his *Pink* permanently engaged in the Parliamentary service, while retaining her appearance as an ordinary trader of the better class ; and that he was to miss no opportunity afforded him of collecting information of the movements of the Royalist forces which might be useful, for all of which services he was to be paid by the governor of Lyme. Tom showed no elation at this sudden turn of fortune, save by a straightening of his shoulders and a look of additional content upon his good face. Martin could hardly contain his delight, for he, with all the joy of the new convert, looked upon this sudden accession to favour of his brother as a direct proof of the Lord's desire to honour that good fellow whom he loved so well.

"And as for thee, sergeant," said the governor, "methinks I can do no better than leave the ordering of *thy* goings to Captain Blake, since he hath informed me that thou art almost as necessary to him as his right hand. Eh, Captain Blake?"

"I thank thee, governor. It would indeed be a blow to me to lose Martin, and the more that this part of the country is so well known to him, he having, so he tells me, traversed it many times upon errands connected with the defrauding of the man Charles Stuart of his revenue, if so harsh a word be applicable to what must now be considered a meritorious proceeding."

A quiet chuckle, the nearest approach to a laugh which either of those grim warriors ever permitted himself, was heard, and Martin turned away to hide the grin he could not help coming. Then they took leave of the governor, and separated, Tom to go and see after his command, Martin to follow his captain upon an excursion into the surrounding country, to see all that could be seen of the lay of the land, and of the possibilities of defending the quaint old town. It was this element of thoroughness which counted for so much in the strenuous days to come, when the Royalist forces battered themselves to pieces against an unfortified town, and fled to return no more.

Meanwhile within the town there was a veritable ferment of religious views. The freedom of thought which the Bible bespeaks from all who are professedly willing to follow its dictates does produce without question some strange results. One especially, which persists until the present day in more and stranger forms than most people are aware of, is that of believing that every upheaval of the established order of things, whether it has been good or evil, presages the end of the world as limned

in the sublime verses of the Apocalypse. This was pre-eminently so during the struggle between Royalist and Puritan. The latter saw in the former only an abettor of the Man of Sin, an adherent of the great Harlot of Babylon, the time of whose destruction was come. Many, nay, I believe most, of the Puritans believed this with a pure heart, and became iconoclasts without any other desire than to do God service, the breaking of images and the defiling of churches seeming to them only a part of the ordained destruction of Babylon. Of course there were those who, villains at heart, shouted for King Jesus as they would have shouted for King Satan, and did according to the iniquities of their kind. Alas that this leaven should have operated so powerfully in later judgment upon the whole movement! Others there were, fanatics to the bone, plentiful in all ages, but always prominent in times of public stress. The word is a weapon all too freely used upon earnest men and women, but that should in nowise prevent us from remembering that a fanatic is in very deed one of the most dangerous of all madmen, in that his or her madness is of so contagious a character that many quiet but easily led people are often drawn after them to destruction. So, in common with many another little town in England at that time, Lyme seethed and bubbled with the violence of religious controversy. As ever, the raging sectaries fell foul of each other over exegetical passages which none of the disputants were competent to elucidate, and even could they have done so, would not have

mattered one jot or tittle, would not have retarded or helped one soul to or from heaven by one foot's breadth. It needed the stimulus of a common danger to unite all these warring elements, and it must be conceded that when that stimulus was applied, no warriors on earth could have fought more valiantly, no comrades have clung closer to each other, than did these wild-eyed manglers of great Gospel truths. The reason? Well, principally because, in the words of Scripture, they endured as seeing Him who is invisible. Every one felt his or her responsibility, and the impossibility of delegating the work of their salvation to another. God to them was very real, very terrible, but very approachable, and He took a personal, intimate interest in all their doings. And never was a more sincere warcry raised, although utterly mistaken, than that which was the last sound issuing from the lips of so many "Fifth Monarchy men"—King Jesus.

But Governor Ceely, as wise as he was strong, made it known that, while under his rule the freest possible latitude should be obtainable for discussion, the greatest toleration for differences of opinion, any rioting consequent upon such liberty would be put down with a strong hand, and severest punishment meted out without discrimination to all disturbers of the peace. Thus brawling was avoided; and even in conventicle, when discussion seemed about to degenerate into physical appeal, a word from a cool-headed member was sufficient to recall the foolish ones to their better minds, to recall to them the fact that in the face of the common enemy,

as it were, such internecine squabbings were little short of blasphemy. So the peace was kept and the days wore on, while Governor Ceely and his men held the town in readiness to take its part when the day should come for it to do so.

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CHAPTER V

THE SIEGE OF LYME

WHY any sane man should ever have chosen Lyme, of all places on the South Coast, for a port must ever remain a profound mystery. Lying almost at the bottom of the great bight between Start Point and Portland Bill, it has absolutely no natural advantages whatever, while only a little way to the westward is the magnificent harbour of Torbay, the fine estuaries of Teignmouth and Exmouth, and even (for such vessels as *could* use Lyme) the pretty little mouth of the Axe. All these places, moreover, are completely sheltered from the fiercest winds that ravage our South Coast, the westerlies from N. round to S.S.W. But every westerly wind with any southing in it at all, with every southerly wind round to S.E., blows unhindered right "home" to Lyme. Yet here, so far back that its origin is lost, the stubborn denizens of the quaint old town in the hollow built them a breakwater. They had determined that Lyme should be a port, and a port it accordingly became, albeit the only shelter in it was within the walls of the Cobb, as for some other lost reason the breakwater came to be called; and that shelter was hardly worthy

of the name, since the great seas rolling up during a south-westerly gale took, and still take, the Cobb in their stride, making the position of the vessels lying inside an utterly unenviable one. The more so as under such conditions there was no possible way of escape—a vessel once outside of that guarding embankment could not live on that stern coast an hour in a southerly gale unless she were a steamer of highest power.

But in spite of all these drawbacks, Lyme, as we have seen, became a port of renown, mentioned as such in all histories of England up till Cromwell's day, and then coveted most earnestly by the Cavaliers as a point where arms and munitions of war might most conveniently be landed from France and Holland. Therefore the Parliamentary admiral, the Earl of Warwick, kept a watchful eye upon it by sea, while it was held with bulldog tenacity against the fiercest attacks by land. The Royalists, however, finding their hands full with Exeter, Plymouth, and Poole, did not trouble the little town again until the spring. Those intervening months were well spent by Ceely and Blake; but in the nature of things little could be done in the way of preparing for a siege by the laying in of provisions, so hardly had the land been entreated by the contending forces, and so thoroughly were Dorset and Devon overrun by predatory bands of Royalists.

Still the town had rest, and as people get used to any state of existence in time if they can live, so the good folks of Lyme went about their ordinary avocations much as they did before the war, except

for the never-ending clash of creeds. Martin, while closely attending his chief, now promoted to a lieutenant-colonelcy, spent most of his leisure at his lodging, clinging with rare pertinacity, in one naturally of so mercurial a temperament, to the study of the Bible, as his brother Tom had desired him to do. Occasionally his reading was lightened by the presence of Grace, who had fairly mastered the maidenly reserve with which she had at first greeted the two brothers, and had now come to treat Martin with a sweet sisterly frankness that was most winning, but at the same time gave no promise that the seed of a warmer feeling was germinating in her heart. Occasionally Martin was so torn by conflicting emotions, his honourable love for his brother, and his no less pure longing for the wholly desirable maiden near him, that he was fain to close his book, leap to his feet, and with a muttered excuse rush down to the beach and stand there listening to the savage roar of the baffled waves until his mind had regained its normal calm. But although he did not know it, Martin Penfold had bidden a final farewell to the heart-whole peace he had once known, the peace of ignorance of love and the claims of God. He was no longer a happy animal without care save for the passing moment; he was a man whose fibres were stiffening for a great task. He had exchanged the peace of the world for the peace of God.

But who shall say what the mind of Grace was towards him? At times she bent upon him a look which made his pulses leap, yet to an unbiassed observer it was but the mothering glance peculiar

to all good women bending their sight upon some one for whom they feel tenderness which may be very far removed from sexual love. Then when Martin felt as if he could no longer contain himself, but, brother or no brother, must avow his love, she would inquire after Tom so lovingly, and with such yearning interest in her tones, that Martin would feel self-accused, and wonder how he could ever have harboured a disloyal thought, the while black despair seemed gnawing at his vitals. So the days wore on, and Martin, while making great strides in his knowledge of the Word, made none in his worldly life that he could see. Then Tom came to Lyme again with a cargo of food-stuffs and ammunition, gathered with much labour from obscure ports, and paid for with coined money out of the scantily furnished treasury at Lyme. He was welcomed by the colonels with as near an approach to enthusiasm as those grave men ever permitted themselves to show; but in the town his arrival was hailed as a direct manifestation from on high of the Divine favour.

Grace especially spoke of him to Martin as if he were in her eyes a man almost above praise, her fine eyes brimming over and her face all rosy with blushes. And for the first time in his life Martin heard his brother well spoken of without any echo in his own heart, nay, with a real feeling of distaste, and wondered mightily what manner of man he was becoming. Happily he was a man of sense, not one to cherish an evil seed in his bosom until it grew into a tree of death, or to let untold calamities happen for want of a word spoken in season. So at the close of

their supper, after long talk with Grace and much outpouring of Tom's experiences, the two brothers retired to their room; Tom serenely happy, Martin in a very torment of conflicting emotions, but with a set determination to have the matter out with his brother once for all. As soon, therefore, as they reached their room and had closed the door, Martin said, "Tom, lad, hast fallen in love wi' Grace?"

Tom's fine face glowed ruddily as he answered: "Why, my dear Martin, I had hardly dared to tell myself how much I loved the lass, and to be questioned by thee is like having a door into my heart opened from the outside for the world to peep in. But since thou hast asked me plain and straight—Yes, I do love her, and if God wills I'll win her for my wife."

"God help me, then!" groaned Martin, like one mortally wounded, "for I love her too; and were it any other man than thee that dared to come between us, I feel as if I could brush him from my way like a worm. Oh, Tom, my brother, what can I do? How can I give her up, or how can you?"

For a few minutes neither spoke a word. Then Tom, lifting his head, said quietly: "Martin, for years perhaps, but at any rate for many months, until these unhappy troubles have ceased, none who serve our country have any right to think of aught but her and God. Marrying is quite out of the question. Let thou and I go on doing our duty, watching over the damsel we both love as best we may, and guarding ourselves lest any root of bitterness spring up between us, and leave the future

with God. He will surely find us a way out of this terrible difficulty that hath suddenly sprung up between us. Moreover, there is another thing which thou and I have quite forgotten—she may choose neither of us. There be many men more fitted for catching a maiden's fancy than we are, much as it may irk our hearts to know it. But let us take it with all other difficulties to the Master: He will surely find a way out for us. Come, brother, let us play the man and allow no such thing as this to come between either our two selves or us and our work. Good-night, and God bless thee."

The morning brought them relief from worry over love affairs, for the news was abroad in the town that Prince Maurice, with three thousand men, was marching for Lyme, determined upon subduing and securing at least one port on the South Coast where reinforcements both of men and material from France and Holland might be poured in for the desperate Royalist forces already beginning to feel like a rat in a trap. And for many days to come Martin was kept so busy obeying his great chief's commands, and seeing that others obeyed them too, that thoughts of Grace only obtruded themselves occasionally amid the great multitude of things which so crowded his brain. So true is it that "man's love is of his life a thing apart." Tom also was kept busy cruising between Plymouth, Poole, and Lyme, or scouting in the Channel in order that from the sea at any rate there should be no surprise. And in this service he proved himself invaluable to the garrison of Lyme, being one of those rare souls

with whom duty first towards God and next to his masters becomes a part of being there is no living without.

So that fine winter passed away, and the bright springtide drew near. Men whose lives had hitherto been bound up in their farms moaned over the waste of such wonderful opportunities as were now afforded for cultivating the kindly earth, neglected, overrun with rank grass and weeds, with hedgerows straggling across the unused lanes, and blocked-up ditches turning meadows into foul swamps. And still the siege did not begin, only rumour kept murmuring that the Cavalier general was taking his time in order to be sure. No more did he intend to retire baffled from this paltry town—he would crush it like a snail under his heel.

At last one night (April 21, 1644, Old Style) the sentinels of Lyme heard afar off the notes of a trumpet, and through the soft quiet of the dark a murmuring like that of the incoming tide when the wind blows home. The alarm was at once given, and something like a wave of relief intermingled with the natural spasm of dread felt by the townsfolk. The long worry of anticipation was past, and the stern reality was here. There were practically no preparations to make: all that men could do with the means at their disposal had been done by the governor and his men. Only the voice of ardent prayer for victory over the Lord's enemies was heard rising everywhere, and even the toughest campaigner felt solemnised as he thought of the mighty and overwhelming force said to be now

ready to hurl itself down the valley at that devoted town.

Slowly and painfully the night wore away, and at dawn an attack was made from four quarters at once, prefaced by an astonishingly hot fire from the Royalist siege guns. It was accounted no less than a miracle by the defenders that the only death was that of a venturesome sow which, crossing the main street, was met by a cannon ball and distributed in greasy fragments over a large area. Men and women and children had been so exactly trained what to do during the siege that there was hardly any loss of life in this terrible form. But suddenly the long sullen roll of the cannon ceased, and in the quiet that ensued the defenders manned every barrier and loophole, hiding like rabbits, but pouring so hot a musketry fire upon their assailants that the latter were unable to come to hand-grips with them. Most nobly did the people of Lyme acquit themselves that day. While men loaded and fired, or waited like hounds in leash for the order to meet their enemies breast to breast, old tottering men, women, yea, and even children brought up ammunition, food, and water, so that not a fighting man needed to leave his post.

When that first fierce day closed, it was found that only four men of the besieged garrison had been killed and six wounded, while it was known that at least five times that number had fallen on the side of the assailants. And the voice of praise rose so high and strong that it was heard in the Royalist camp, making Prince Maurice and his boon

companions to swear horribly at the howling of the crop-eared knaves, as they called the defenders. Hope rose high in Lyme that the brave thousand therein would, unless their food supplies from overseas failed them, have no great difficulty in holding their own against the scornful invader. That first day's onfall had done them as much good as it had done the Royalists harm. It had taught those who were previously ignorant of the fact that the defender has always the best of the game, unless by carelessness he throw his advantage away.

But their bold and resolute foes gave them little rest. With a perseverancè truly astonishing, remembering the small success met with, the ever-recurring repulses and the few casualties in the town, the besiegers kept up their attack until an event occurred which made the Prince realise that he had tempted his fate almost long enough. Shortly after the siege began Captain Tom arrived in his vessel from Plymouth with ammunition and food, and after a long consultation with Governor Ceely, put to sea again with all possible despatch. When he returned it was in company with two men-of-war under the banner of the Parliament. These, unable to enter the Cobb, anchored in the road, and with that promptitude which has ever been characteristic of the Navy, landed stores and a force of men full of fighting ardour. It was at once decided to make a sally, and accordingly a full half of the garrison, with the eager soldiers, rushed out of Lyme and fell upon the advance camp of the besiegers with such fury that the bright little stream which then supplied the

town with water, and still may be seen purling and rippling in the sunshine through the eastern purlieus of the town, ran blood. And strange as it may seem, this was the sorest felt trial yet endured by the hardly entreated inhabitants. For they stored not their water, nor did they stay to consider that this defilement was but for a very short time ; but they lamented much that even in their death their foes did embarrass and annoy them.

The sallying party returned with but little loss, while the besiegers were fain to bemoan over a hundred dead. Yet, being Britons, their fury was rather increased by this disaster to their arms, for it is recorded that for the next three weeks the alarums and excursions went on almost without ceasing. Nay more, Captain Tom had the grievous ill-fortune to be caught in a gale within the Race of Portland, whereby his gallant little *Pink* was dashed in pieces against the Bill, and only he and one of his men escaped as by a miracle. But shortly after he had struggled back to Lyme with the bad news the admiral of the Parliamentary fleet, the Earl of Warwick, arrived off Lyme with succours for the garrison. As far as its houses were concerned, the town was a ruin, the defenders were almost bare of clothing, and food was very short, but the defences were in good order, and their courage was high as ever. Again the gallant sailors came to the rescue of the townsfolk, with food and stores of all kinds ; and better still, they landed in force and fought like lions shoulder to shoulder with the garrison to beat off the last despairing assault made by the besiegers.

In this the wounded were numerous on the defenders' side, besides ten killed. Lieut.-Colonel Blake himself fell into an ambush of ten Cavaliers who had sworn a great oath to kill him, at the cost of their own lives if need were, believing that he was the core and substance of the splendid resistance made.

And on this, the hottest day of all the fighting that took place at Lyme, Tom and Martin both fought near their friend the colonel. As if all care of their own bodies were a simple superfluity, they watched over him, shielded him from blows with their own bodies, seemed each possessed of the strength and courage of three men. Also they were terrible to their enemies from their silence, the calm of their faces, their perfect serenity of soul: as if nothing that could befall the tabernacle of that immortal part of them were worth considering, or as if (as the vulgar hath it) they bore charmed lives and knew it. On the instant that their commander fell, they ceased to fight, leaving that to others, and seizing him in their strong arms, bore him down to a place of safety. The bonds that had united them to him before had been strong, but now they were adamant. He smiled upon them as they left him to the care of the surgeon, one of those rare, sweet smiles which lit up what his enemies called his lumpish face and made it beautiful as that of an angel bestowing a benediction—so clearly does the soul shine through the veil of flesh at times like these.

They would have gone back to the fighting, but joyful shoutings told them that again victory was with them, that the baffled besiegers had once more



"She had been carrying water to a thirsty gunner — PAGE 73



retreated, and that another step in the direction of peace had been taken. At which they rejoiced greatly, and permitted themselves to feel the weariness of the flesh. Almost dragging one foot after the other, they reached their lodgings, hungry, thirsty, and longing for a wash and a rest. On the threshold they met Mrs. Pook, her eyes all inflamed with much weeping, her bosom heaving with tumultuous sobs, and her voice almost gone. Full of sympathy and bewilderment, they sought eagerly to know the reason of her grief, and at last, unable to understand her, followed her within, where they found Grace lying upon a bed, pale as the linen, and wanting both her pretty hands. It seemed that as she had been carrying water to a thirsty gunner, taking the duty as other maidens did, a cannon-ball had swept across the front of her as she was raising the vessel in both hands, and left her thus.

The two brothers gazed at each other helplessly, a maddening impulse battering at their hearts in the direction of wild, blasphemous rage. But only for a moment, as the storm-blast sweeps the crest of the deep-seated mountains, whirling the dust away, and leaving the rock unmoved. Then murmuring "The Lord be gracious to thee," they went upstairs to pray for her they both loved so well, but never dearer than now, when it was seen that she could never again do aught in this world with those willing hands that had never grudged a moment of their toil. Into the brothers' chamber we will not follow them, nor intrude upon their hour of fiery trial, albeit it was but to reveal their fine gold. But when,

washed, and the battle-stained garments removed, they came down to eat, Martin said as he seated himself opposite his brother: "Is it thy experience, Tom, that as soon as a man sets out to serve the Lord sorrows come up against him in companies? Or am I wrong in believing that my griefs are more and greater since I set my face Zionward? Tell me, Tom, dear, for I am sore distressed."

And Tom made answer: "I do not believe, Martin, that griefs are greater or more plentiful, but the burden of the flesh, the consequences of sin, the working of evil passions within or without, are felt more keenly, since the Christ's man has in him the Divine Nature, feeling all these things a thousand-fold more strongly than he who has not. 'Tis a terrible mystery, but one thing I know: that if I feel griefs greater, I also feel joys in such measure as I never knew before. Yea, so that I can understand how a man or even a tender maiden might go singing into the fire or the wild beast's jaws for the joy set before them." And Martin bowed his head silently.

The conduct of the enemy, after that last great fight made it plain that there was no more heart in the attack. Except for a shot or two in an hour, fired at the town with the usual no-result, there was no more molestation. And even that was felt to be more to divert the attention of the townsfolk from the coming departure of their enemies than anything else. At last a reconnoissance, led by Martin, on a morning when there had been no sign given of any activity on the part of the enemy, revealed the fact that Prince Maurice had drawn off his forces

and was gone. The siege of Lyme was raised. How high rose the voice of praise at that great news! The various sectaries almost forgot their microscopic differences of creed, and, indeed, met in the streets singing praise to God with never a scowl on their stern faces for the misinterpretations of their warlike fellows. The good news was brought to Grace as she lay patiently enduring the healing of her ghastly wounds. The sympathetic visitor said: "How pitiful, lass, that thou shouldst have suffered thus on the very last day o' th' fightin'."

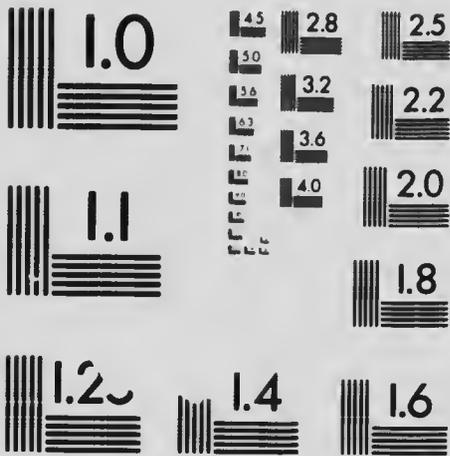
But she made the memorable answer: "Had I another pair of hands, I would willingly give them in the same godly cause."

Now it needs not any emphasis to show that a cause so supported must be most difficult, if not impossible, to beat down. When hard old Governor Ceely heard of it he was moved so that a bright tear glistened on his russet cheek. He dashed it away with something very like an oath, and declared that it was worth a siege to learn that there were such people in the world. Very quietly and steadily the little town resumed its normal aspect. Builders went to work at once to repair the damage done, and hardy fishermen undertook to carry the brave news to Plymouth and Poole, and any places in between whence restoration might be brought. Among them went Martin and Tom, at the command of their beloved commander, who pointed out to them that in this way they could do far more service than in any other, especially as he himself would be laid by for some time. Most strictly he



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enjoined them, if possible, to buy another *Pink*, or similar vessel, so that they might work as sea-scouts and keep the loyal coast towns informed of any movements of the Cavalier forces. And thus it came about that these two faithful ones became for a season separated from the leader they loved so well, as from the suffering maiden dear to both their hearts. For the next four years, while Blake was steadily winning renown by his masterly defence of Taunton, and his general behaviour in the South Country, the two brothers were steadfastly pursuing their calling as seamen along the coast between Cornwall and London, gaining experience in all kinds of sea-craft, but mostly in that perilous part of it relating to an enemy or enemies at sea. But it must be recorded of them that they cost their country little or nothing, making their business as merchantmen pay them. Of adventures they had many and wonderful, but here is no place to record them, since it is in their association with Admiral Blake that we have to deal with them, and so we must let those four strenuous years go by without comment.

CHAPTER VI

THE ADMIRALS' BEGINNING

IF at the close of the last chapter no mention was made of Grace, it was but in order that she should have full justice done to her at the beginning of this. She had made a splendid recovery from her terrible wounds, but was sadly harassed by the thought of her uselessness. The only friend she thought she could count upon was Mrs. Pook, her mother being dead, and her father, the villain Elias Pentreath, having kept a silence as of the dead since his escape from Lyme on the night before Blake's entry. Governor Ceely had seen to it that she lacked for nothing (indeed, she could not while the twins lived, but that neither she nor Mrs. Pook were allowed to know), and so for the period of her convalescence all was smoothed over. But when she was thoroughly healed, came the question: how should she live? Without making any extravagant claims for her, let us admit that she was a maiden of an independent spirit, fearing God somewhat conventionally, but fearing the epithet "lazy" almost as much as any other name that can be applied to a woman. Enforced idleness preyed upon her mind as well as her body, for except in active bodily

exercise, she had no resource. She could neither read nor write, nor had she yet learned to love, although each of the brothers fancied she loved the other. Lastly, she had not the least idea that she was a heroine, any more than thousands of women amongst us to-day, making up forlorn hopes in life's battle without any prize before them, or recognition of their self-sacrifice.

Her two silent lovers, however, having recognised in the calamity which had befallen her the Divine answer to their hard problem, as they thought, decided to regard her as a sacred trust, and to that end kept Mrs. Pook supplied with ample means for Grace's support and her own, only stipulating that in addition to her attendance upon the helpless maiden she should keep a home always ready for them. And thus one object of every seafarer's desire was attained, namely, a place on shore to look forward to as a haven of refuge from the stormy ways of the sea. All their plans were carried out smoothly and successfully, and never during their seafaring lives had their business been conducted more steadily and quietly than in those years of storm and stress ashore. For the Navy, such as it was in those days, had sided with the Parliament—a strange thing, if one accepts the common dictum of the godlessness of sailors. Yet many factors went to make up this decision of the shipmen, with which we are so imperfectly acquainted to-day that any pronouncement on the subject would be presumptuous. That such was the fact, however, cannot be gainsaid.

So Tom and Martin, now aged thirty-four, went steadily to and fro upon their sea-business, learning, ever learning, as such seamen will, and all unconsciously being prepared for other work. Apart from the reputation they gained as "The Round-head Twins," first applied in derision, but afterwards known as the high-water mark of excellence in all seamanship, it was known all along the South Coast that these two grave brothers had made it their life's work to keep and care for the "Handless Maid," as she was then known far and near. And men whom nothing else could restrain, sea-comrades who were the prey of every evil quality, save cowardice and laziness, rendered to the two Penfolds a homage that spoke volumes for the quality of the religion possessed by the latter. Did the brothers come into a seaside ale-house to quench their thirst, the ribald song or story going with such unholy zest stopped its unclean course, healthy conversation resumed its sway, and everybody, in spite of a restraint that galled them, felt that they breathed a higher, better atmosphere, one of true manliness. Thus their influence upon seamen around the coast was far greater than any one, least of all themselves, dreamed of, and it would be idle to deny that much of it was due to the fact of their having some one to work and care for who was fully worthy, as well as to the solid basis of Christianity upon which that benevolence was built.

Matters had been far different with their well-loved master, Colonel Blake. In besieged towns, on the battlefield, in Parliament, he had as far as

in him lay been serving God and his country. Whoever cares to read well the chronicles of that stormy time, on whichever side their sympathies may lie, cannot but wonder why it is that such scant justice has been done to the memory of this great Englishman. Few men and no women seem to have crept into his heart, but those who did clung to him as the limpet to its rock; naught but death could tear them away. He had the solid virtues, without the showy vices, that have endeared lesser heroes to their countrymen; but if ever there was a man who fulfilled the Scriptural command: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might," Robert Blake was that man. It has been well said by David Hannay that if Blake had died within two years of his defence of Taunton, he would only have been remembered with Parliamentary officers of the second rank; with Skippon, Brereton, or Massey. Why? Because he was a man who effaced himself. Duty to be done was his ideal; talk, whether in Parliament or out of it, he abhorred. And so it comes about that the greatest admiral England ever had is now so little thought of that even his best-affected biographers fear to speak of him as he deserves, as may be seen by glancing at any life of Blake to hand. It is really time some measure of justice was dealt to him.

In 1649 Colonel Robert Blake was in his fiftieth year, which, in spite of what croakers may say about the "good old times," was quite equivalent to the average man's sixtieth year to-day. During the seven years previous he had served an apprenticeship

to the art of war which had made him much more famous among his contemporaries than is realisable to-day. It had also furnished another proof of the fact which professional soldiers spend their lives in combating, namely, that a great general may be made from a civilian in a few months, while some of the worst men that have ever led armies to destruction have been those whose whole lives have been spent under military auspices. But after the Boer war there is certainly no need to labour that point. What is an unsolved enigma is the naval career of Robert Blake, promoted from a colonelcy to be an admiral without any knowledge of the sea at all, after the age of fifty until his death. The present writer humbly puts forward in the following pages what he believes to be the key of that riddle.

It is on record that no sooner had Colonel Blake become, by a stroke of the pen of Oliver Cromwell, Admiral Blake, than he sent to Lyme for Richard Squire, Jonathan Pook, and James Pelsor, to join the flagship *Triumph*. No mention is made of my heroic twins, but be sure that they had been warned for service before, by one who never forgot a friend, however humble. Thomas Penfold was appointed pilot of the *Triumph*, and Martin her master, an easy transfer in those days, when Englishmen took to fighting at sea as ducks to water; indeed, were compelled to do so if they would continue to do their business on the deep. In this appointment the great admiral showed his wisdom in choosing his instruments, for it would have been impossible to find men more perfectly fitted for those duties

than the brothers ; while difficulty from the change would be entirely absent, as there was practically no difference between a man-o'-war and a merchantman but in name and duties.

It was time that some active steps in this direction were taken. The Royalist forces, completely defeated in England—that is to say, driven out—with the bulldog tenacity which characterises the race, took to the seas, and became privateers, or pirates, from the point of view of the Parliamentarians. The energy and courage of Prince Rupert were here to find a fitting opportunity for their exercise, and by what some have called an accidental occurrence, and others the result of Royalist machinations, a compact little squadron composed of three capital ships and four frigates, the remnant of a mutinous fleet revolted from the Parliament, sailed to Holland, and were placed at the disposal of the fiery Prince. After great sacrifices had been made, even to the selling of the guns of one frigate in order to fit out two others, the latter vessels put to sea and began what can be rightly called nothing but a career of piracy, preying upon their helpless countrymen at sea in order to raise funds for Royalist refugees. Nefarious though this practice was, it for a time succeeded, and Rupert at last sailed triumphantly down Channel convoying a fleet of Dutch merchantmen. After seeing them off safely, he got into Kinsale Harbour, where he remained for a long time in full enjoyment of security.

But alas for the new-made admirals : Popham, Blake, and Deane ! There was a fleet, it is true, but

to prepare it for sea was another matter. At this time of stress Blake felt most keenly the support of his trusty twins. Night after night, after "fighting with beasts at Ephesus," as he phrased it, he would have them to his cabin and take counsel with them. And it is with one of these informal but intensely valuable meetings that I propose to open the story of the twins' sea relations with Blake.

It was in April, 1649, that the fleet lay straggling in the River Thames from Blackwall to Gravesend, the *Triumph* nearest the city. The season was late—cold, wet, and stormy. All day long the crews had been busy overhauling running-gear, scaling guns, stowing ammunition, and occasionally taking in a meagre boat-load of stores as they came off. Sentries kept close watch, warning away all vessels from any part of the ship but the one main gangway, for even at that early day the long-shore sharks were busy with poor Jack; whether he had money or not, something might be made of him. Curses loud and deep were hurled at the flagship, for it seemed as if she was guarded by Argus—there was no getting near her without risk of being shot unless your business was legitimate. The captain and lieutenants were so greatly impressed with the value of the pilot and master in this direction that they forgot to be jealous, and only accorded them ungrudging admiration for the way in which they kept the crew in hand. Such discipline they had never seen before. And by the testimony of contemporaries the discipline of that fleet was maintained without recourse to the horrible expedient tried later and right up to

the middle of the nineteenth century—flogging such as no judge now dare award one-twentieth part of to the most shocking of criminals.

But there was honesty. Blake's word was his bond, and though pay might be low and food poor, what was promised a man that he received if he lived. It remained for the Admiralty at the Restoration to inaugurate a system which made the sailors who fought the country's battles at sea come in whole crews to Whitehall begging for bread to keep them from starvation. Money they could not hope to get while the King needed it for his harem. But the shame and scandal of that neaptide of our Navy ever since it existed will never be erased from our history, nor should it be so long as its terrible lesson is needed.

At last the long business was completed, and the fleet dropped down the river with just such exercise of seamanship as may even now be seen occasionally in a belated Geordie collier brig, as large and swift maybe as most of Blake's cruisers, wearily struggling to maintain her owner in spite of the tremendous influx of steamers. Without any mishap worth recording the whole fleet anchored in the Downs, and Blake was able for the first time to cast a commanding eye over all his ships at once. His dumpy, ungainly figure trod the high and narrow poop of the *Triumph*, communing with his own thoughts, confronting the gigantic difficulties before him and his colleague Deane, without any visible sign of the mental conflict going on within. Presently pausing, he said to an urchin in waiting, "Go, call the

master, boy." Off flew the lad, and in a very short time the master appeared, changed, it is true, since we first made his acquaintance on the march from Bristol, but for all that a man to delight the eyes of a judge of men. His sturdy frame was a thought broader in the beam perhaps, his glance sterner, and tanned face no longer so ready to light up with a merry smile. He looked a man upon whom cares and responsibilities had fallen, only to find him worthy and capable of bearing them. His dress differed little from that he had worn ashore, save that he bore no armour. It was a heavy grey cloth made into a jacket with wide collar, and flaring away from the single clasp at the neck, a voluminous pair of knee-breeches, worsted stockings, and low square-toed shoes with big brass buckles on the instep. A soft felt hat coming up to a point crowned his rig.

As he approached his admiral the look on both their faces was good to see. It told of a perfect confidence and love on both sides that, could any of his biographers have seen it, would have explained how this middle-class bourgeois Englishman became in so short a time what he did.

It has been suggested, with the usual unfairness to Blake, that the reason why the seamen of the Commonwealth Navy were better fed and paid, better treated all round than they had been or were afterwards for a hundred years, was from policy, fear that otherwise they would revolt and bring the Royalists into power again. All reasonable facts are against this sneering theory. But since imagination has thus been called into play to discredit this practical

provincial Englishman's motives in acting righteously as well as bravely, we may at least take leave to imagine that he was just a good man doing his duty to God and man as far as he understood it.

"Well, Martin," said he, "the first, and maybe the heaviest part of our task is done. What think you of the fleet?"

"Admiral," answered Martin, "for the fleet itself, I think well of it, but I need not to remind you that we need licking into shape as regards the men. We have here as turbulent a crowd as ever put to sea, who fear not God and have little regard for man. What would be thought of them in our godly fighting companies ashore I know not. But already they begin to realise what manner of man their admiral is; and, moreover, the most of them have suffered much from the over-boldness of foreign pirates as well as home-bred sharks, owing to the disturbances ashore and the consequent neglect of the Navy. Tom agrees with me that once on active service our motley crew will soon settle down, and a victory or so, such as we are sure to have, will make them as good sea-fighters as even your honour could desire to see."

"Now that is brave talk," murmured the admiral, "and, indeed, confirms my own opinion of them. Call the pilot, Martin."

Tom came at the summons, and having saluted his chief, waited inquiringly. The admiral, after a short pause, said: "Master pilot, it was in my mind to ask thy opinion of a plan I have devised for getting at the pirate Rupert, but methinks it

would be better if I did so in formal council. So wait, both of you, while I summon the ship's other officers and speak to my colleague."

With that the admiral went to the great cabin, where he found General Deane in earnest consultation with the captain upon the art of war as practised at sea. After salutations Admiral Blake made known his intention, which was immediately received with satisfaction by Admiral Deane, as we must henceforth call him, although really it was long ere these suddenly made admirals were spoken of by any other title than that of general. Soon all the fighting officers were assembled and ranged according to rank, with the two admirals at the head of the table, and the master, pilot, and gunner at the foot.

Then Blake began by saying: "We are met to discuss a plan which I have formed of accomplishing the principal aim of our expedition, the destruction of that pirate squadron under the malignant Rupert, which is working such damage to our honest seafaring traders. But in order that we may go with the more confidence about our work, I have thought it good first of all to take the advice of two skilled shiphandlers, men whom I am proud to have known for years as brave, competent, and utterly reliable. These are the master and the pilot. And I wish now at the beginning of the voyage to put all of you, my comrades, upon your honour that you will allow no foolish jealousy, no punctilio of difference between fighting men and working men to bias you or make you disregard the counsels of these experienced seamen. I have heard with grief sundry rumours

already of favouritism. I say" (here his voice rose slightly, and he struck the table with his clenched fist) "that, God helping me, there shall be no such folly done in this fleet while I can prevent it. A man shall be judged by his deeds, and justice shall be done between all. If the lowest seaman in the fleet can do aught for the furtherance of our aims he shall have liberty to do it, and if he succeed he shall in nowise fail of his reward. Now, gentlemen, it is your business and mine to fight, and I believe we shall not fail in doing so when opportunity arises. But in order to fight, our ships must be handled for us, and that is an art of which we most of us know nothing. Let us, then, give all honour and attention to those who, being masters of this difficult art, who know the perils of the deep and the way to avoid them, are just as brave and worthy as we are, since their danger is no less than ours. Also, I say that any man, however high his rank may be, who doth not do what in him lies to help my colleague and myself in this good way is, and shall be treated as, a traitor, an enemy to his country and to us.

"Now it is reported to us that Rupert hath gone to Ireland and is hiding in Kinsale Harbour. There he must lie, I trow, for some time to come, unless for an occasional dash out aiter some helpless merchantman, pirate that he is. And I would make all speed thither that may be, only halting at Plymouth for provisions which I have ordered to be in readiness there against our arrival. It seemeth good to me that we get aweigh speedily, and exercise the men at their duties, in order that there may be that cohesion,

that comradeship among them, without which they are truly but a disorganised rabble. So that, the wind being favourable, I would leave this anchorage to-morrow, understanding as I do that all is ready for sea-service in the fleet. How say you, Master Penfold? Does that commend itself to your sea-judgment?"

Up sprang Martin to his feet, saying: "It is the best thing to be done, admiral and gentlemen. Our men do need that exercise of which his honour speaks, but most of all they need to get away from harbour. We are more put to it to keep women and brandy away from them than aught else, and I foresee that if we remain here much longer there will be mutiny abreeding—not because of Royalist traitors, but from the mariners' self-indulgence. Let us to sea, then, in God's name, your honours."

"Pilot, how say you?" queried Blake. "Is wind and weather favourable for our setting forth?"

"Not too favourable, your honour," said Tom, "but no worse for that, since it will afford the better opportunity for that licking into shape of which we have been speaking. The wind is backing to the s'uth'ard, and we shall surely have dirty weather, the kind that makes men grow into their business quickly if they be men and are rightly ruled."

"Very well then," commanded Blake, after a whisper to Deane, "we sail at daylight to-morrow. Captain, see that the signals are made to the fleet accordingly. The council is over, for the rest of my plan will keep."

Neither captain nor officers looked too pleasant

as they left the great cabin. There had been no need for their advice, since there was no question of fighting as yet; but the lesson they had to learn was one that naval officers had never shown eagerness to acquire. Jealousy of the men whose opinion *had* been asked would crop up in their hearts, and it would take some time ere the grim warning of their strong-willed admiral would have its due effect. Upon Martin and Tom fell the chief brunt of the order. While the signals were fluttering aloft, and their meaning penetrating into the innermost recesses of every vessel of the fleet, the two brothers pervaded the ship, listening with grave displeasure to the maledictions of the men, the most of whom, bred to believe in the innate dilatoriness of the Navy, had expected a long spell at each home anchorage, with such share of illicit delights as they might be able to achieve. And with regard to these last, it hath ever been noted by seafarers that even with men who are no great drunkards or lechers ashore, the fact of their being debarred from these Dead Sea fruits while at sea seemeth to breed an inordinate longing for them. So that a man will give ten times its value for a bottle of liquor so vile that on shore it would nauseate him—nay, I have seen men, otherwise decent, in China drink horrible stuff which compelled them to hold their noses the while, that scarified their throats going down, and afterwards made them not drunken, but most murderous.

Therefore the master and pilot, being the two buffers, as it were, between the men and the superior

officers, saw much that day unseeingly, heard much unhearingly, but by the innate force of their character and power of command prevented any outbreak in the flagship, while in many other vessels of the fleet men were being ironed and imprisoned by scores. Also wherever men were found well-disposed, quiet and diligent, they were placed where they might act as stiffening to those who were ready to rebel really for naught, but at the bidding of ill-ballasted minds. Only once had Martin need to exert himself beyond the common. A huge Yorkshireman having wrought himself up into a mutinous spirit that overcame him, hurled himself at Martin, foaming, who saw him coming and deftly stepped aside, with one foot extended like a tree-root and one arm ready to strike the stumbling, baffled one as he passed and hurl him to the deck. For a moment he lay there stunned and bleeding; then Martin raised him, speaking quietly to him of the folly of being in such blind haste as to fall when rushing to do something, and that was all. For just then the pipe sounded to supper, and all hands separated to their several messes to eat the good food and discuss the day's happenings.

But Martin and Tom, occupying one berth, felt the deep need laid upon them to seek the Lord and His promised help in time of need. Also, while they ate, to discuss the possibilities of finding among the crew any men like-minded who were as yet overborne by the others and unable to take their definite stand as men of God. But while they were still discussing this most interesting question, to them, there

came a summons to attend the admiral. They found him with Admiral Deane and his officers, and as soon as they approached he said :

“ Master and pilot, we have decided that twice a day there shall be conducted public prayer and the reading of God’s Word throughout the fleet, to the end that, first, God may be glorified among us and His blessing be ours ; secondly, that those among us who love that worship may be able to enjoy it ; and thirdly, that those of us who are evil-minded may hear that which is good. And since we have no man set apart to minister unto us, we have agreed that any capable godly-minded man shall lead us in prayer and the reading of the Word, but that none shall be allowed to preach or bring dissension by means of divers interpretations of doctrine among us. All hands lay aft to prayers.”

Immediately the ship rang with the shrill calls of the bosun’s mates and their hoarse reiterations of the command. They were followed by the tramp of many feet, and the motley crowd (no uniform clothing them) gathered in front of the high poop, lifting wondering eyes to the squat figure of the admiral, who with his usual inscrutable gaze looked down upon them. When all were assembled, and there was dead silence save for the little moan of the wind through the sails, he said : “ Men, we are about to commence a voyage of peril. Let us commend ourselves to the care of God, who will teach us to do justice to one another and to our foes ; who will show us how to live, and eke how to die, when we must.” He then prayed after the Independent

fashion, extempore, but briefly and to the point, as a father with his family. A short portion of Scripture followed, clearly and reasonably read, then a benediction, and the first service in Blake's fleet was over.

Dismissed, the men hastened forward, their tongues rioting in wonder. Was ever such a thing heard of before? Many had heard the service of the Church, albeit it was little used at sea, but here was a commonplace, common-sense religion that any man might use. Strange beyond expression. Then there crept into light the fact that on board were many who had learned these things, but had gone back on them; many who still loved them, but lacked courage to say so. And for all of these there now came a time when they could hoist their real colours, and if they chose be glad in the Lord and rejoice. Martin and Tom were almost speechless with delight, and their sanguine souls saw a wave of godliness rising around the whole fleet. So auspiciously began the wonderful work of the Navy of the Commonwealth.

CHAPTER VII

TRAINING THE FLEET

BRIGHT and fair smiled that April morning in 1649 when Blake's fleet left the Downs. A brave show they made, those picturesque old ships, with their high castle forward, and even higher erections aft, looking down frowningly into the scant well-like area of the main decks. Clumsy and unhandy in the extreme they look in the model room of Greenwich to any modern seaman's eye, and indeed were so by comparison with the snaky galleys of the Mediterranean as they rushed along regardless of wind or tide under the stress of two hundred slave-wielded oars, or skimmed gracefully as vast seabirds over the bright waters under the lifting power of two or three immense lateen sails. But still it must be said that, even to our critical view, the ships of Blake's time looked far handier than the vast three- or four-deckers of a later day, whose immense height above water make them even now an enigma to seamen, who cannot understand how ever they got to windward at all. On that cheerful morning, however, there were no thoughts of comparison such as these running through the fleet. All

except the fighting men, who stood proudly aloof as usual—for Blake's splendid theory of seafaring had not yet come into full play—were too busy with that most important operation, the getting under weigh of the fleet, to be critical. Also the seething discontent had disappeared with the active employment on so fine a morn. And at last, without a single mishap, the fleet was ranged in order, the flagship proudly leading the battle-line, and the cruisers, some of them hardly larger than a fishing smack of our day, scouting on either side, but preserving a strict formation with a sea-craft truly wonderful.

Blake's keen eyes missed no point of the work, and as the fleet swept gracefully south-westward, he said to his colleague: "Deane, this business of ship-handling is a great and splendid one, isn't not? For my part I cannot but feel how foolish it is for us leaders to be ignorant of it, and practically dependent upon the mariners for all our movements. I foresee that this state of things cannot last much longer, and God helping me, I will do my best to end it. Well indeed it is for us that we have such good men to order the going of our flagship. Thus we can set an example for the others to emulate."

Deane fully agreed, as he usually did, not because he was in any wise a man of colourless character, but he recognised Blake's genius in selecting and using men, saw too what a false position the Parliament had assigned to him, and feeling his early sea experience reviving in him, proposed

to tranship to the next largest ship in the fleet, and take what we should now call a vice-admiral's position.

This sensible proposition appealed to Blake very strongly, and accordingly the transfer was made, to the benefit of all parties concerned and the great lessening of friction. Martin and Tom rejoiced to hear of the new arrangement. Not that anything had predisposed them to dislike Deane or wish him gone, but these sensible seamen saw at once, what we can only see by our later light, that such a divided authority as to equal admirals on board one ship in command of one fleet could only lead to confusion. Yet the powers ashore, in their wisdom, had originally decreed three equal commanders. But let that pass ; folly has not even until now been the monopoly of any particular Board controlling our naval matters.

At Blake's suggestion the fleet spread widely seaward, making a wondrous picture on that sparkling sea, and extending the area of vision over almost the whole breadth of Channel. And as each vessel's crew settled down to their sea-work, they began to forget the malign influences under which they had been labouring while ashore. Even before leaving the river there was a noticeably better spirit among them ; not but what at the messes there was many a ribald jest passed upon the idea of there ever being a Puritan Fleet as well as a Puritan Army. From the smallest boy upward all knew and admired the work done by Cromwell and his Ironsides, delighted in the prowess of these sons

of toil suddenly called from plough and loom and bench, to prove themselves the equals of any warriors in the world ; but of the spiritual force behind those fighters the general voice professed to know nothing and care less. On board the *Triumph* though, in consequence of the admiral's pronouncement of the preceding evening, discussion was much less general and vague. It came to minute particulars concerning the admiral and his two henchmen, as they had come to be called. The spirit of criticism and inquiry was abroad, only somewhat hampered by lack of facts to go upon. As far as the admiral was concerned, most of the sailors had heard rumours of his prowess, but there were few who did not predict all sorts of disasters from his sudden transference to the sea command from one on shore. Sailors were ever intolerant of landmen meddling on board ship, and very loth to obey orders given by those who they feel do not know their business. It is in the sailor's blood. Nevertheless, they all admitted the intense seamanship possessed by the two brothers, felt that it was well their admiral should have two such consummate sailors at his back, and then, sailor-like, began to swear and grumble at the power such a position would give these two, just sailors like themselves, only a little more experienced and capable. Lastly, the religious character of the two brothers was felt to be an almost intolerable grievance.

"Why," said one old tarryfist, seamed with the scars of a score of fights, and burnt almost black by tropical suns, "I wouldn't give a pipeful of tobacco

for a pilot or a master that couldn't curse you a man's soul into hell and out again. I got no use for such mealy mouths. Let me hear a good mouth-filling oath sounding homely in my ears now and then, and I'm happy. But these two new-fangled shipmen—I don't know what to make of 'em, and don't want to either." With which conclusion the orator resumed his pipe.

The bright day clouded over, and the wind began to blow fitfully and with many a change of direction. Up from the west there arose the mountainous banks of cloud well known to all northern sailors as presaging a westerly gale. The fleet, well out in mid-Channel, began to draw closer together, as a flock of birds preparing after a day's questing to change quarters in unison. The admiral, after gazing long and steadfastly at the rising gloom, sent a messenger for Tom, who was busy with his brother looking to preparations for the coming night, and in the presence of his fighting officers asked the pilot's opinion of the weather probable, and the prudence of keeping the sea with the newly-manned fleet. Tom unhesitatingly gave his advice to proceed, in spite of the fact that dirty weather was sure to be upon them ere the night fell. He said that nothing would do so much to shake the crew down into their respective grooves as a few days' fore-reaching in the Channel. Weak points would be brought to light in time to be repaired, the most weatherly vessels would show themselves, and, in short, all the capacity of the fleet for the task it had in hand would be thoroughly tested. There were dark looks among

the officers as he concluded, but the admiral's face wore a contented smile.

"Thou art right, pilot, as usual. All is as I would have it be. Make, then, the signals to prepare for the night, and to keep as nearly in mid-Channel as may be. Other arrangements I leave to you. But keep me well informed of our position, and make all the progress possible westward."

Tom smiled as he saluted in token that he had heard and would obey, for he knew how little way to the westward would or could be made for the next few days against such a gale as was now rising. But he remembered complacently that in case of the weather becoming too severe there was always a port under their lee that they might make with speed. And then he addressed himself with his brother to the task of snugging down for the night, for the wind had suddenly leaped out into the southwest, and had hardly settled there before it began to rise with wailing, moaning cries through the web of rigging. All hands wrought with a will, and presently that white-winged fleet of the afternoon was reduced to a scattered array of tiny flecks of white, looking forlorn and few in the wide Channel under the watery rays of the pale sun just visible for a moment through a break in the pall overspreading the western half of the horizon. Then came the shrill pipe to prayer, and once again, their feeling of strangeness worn off a little, the ship's company gathered aft to hear the word of the Lord. The brief service over, they dispersed to discuss the situation with renewed energy, but also to realise that so far there was no sign

that an avowed belief in God made any difference in the seamanlike qualities of those ruling over them. And so the night closed in upon them with rising wind and sea, thickening darkness, and occasional sharp squalls of rain, sleet, and hail.

All being snug, and the flagship fore-reaching under small canvas, Tom and his brother had one of their much-valued opportunities for a talk over the situation. With their pipes aglow, seated in a snug corner of the high poop aft, near the helm, so that Tom could keep a watchful eye on her course according to his wont while on deck, their thoughts roved back to the little fishing town and their beloved charge, whose helpless image was enshrined in both of their hearts like that of a patron saint. But neither of them spoke of her; there was no need, each knew that from the other's thoughts she was scarcely ever absent, in her youth, her beauty, and her helplessness. They never thought of her without a wordless prayer.

After a few moments' silence, Martin said, "Looks like a snifter from the westward to-night, Tom," more as an opening than from a necessity for stating so obvious a fact.

"Yes, lad," replied his brother, "and I feel inclined to thank God for it. We need some rough times; nothing but a common necessity for all to play the man can make of this crowd what they must be if we are going to do what we are sent for. And we need it too, Martin. For those gallant officers of ours must feel their helplessness ere they will admit that we in our humble position are as good as they.

Not that I care for recognition, but I do want our grand admiral to be fully supported by all, and to have a full measure of success. But there, as usual I'm worrying about what doesn't concern me at all. We are in the hands of the Lord—let Him do what seemeth Him good."

"Yes," answered Martin, "I think I've nearly learned that lesson too, only I feel sure that the Lord doesn't mind our being anxious to do our part. It seems so easy to let things slide with the lazy excuse that the Lord will make all things right."

"Good lad," cried Tom, springing to his feet, "I don't think there's much danger of you failing in that respect. But look at the sea."

Indeed, it was worth while. The vessel was being tossed, just a black mass, in a sea of light so faintly shining that it lit up the one small sail under which the ship lay with a pale glare, as if a tiny luminous cloud hovered above her. The great lanterns on the poop cast no gleam over that bright sea, and the pressing dark above seemed to shut them in. They appeared to be alone in a vast untenanted ocean, where none other but themselves had the temerity to sail. And they were filled with a strange momentary compassion for the three hundred men all unheedingly shut in with them within the strait compass of those wooden walls. The ship's motion was horrible. The waves striving against the tide, tormented between it and the gale, made the sea appear as if rising in heaps, and every hour that passed the weather worsened. Yet as it did so the

seamen's courage rose to meet it, but the warriors longed for the firm earth, feeling that fighting would be out of place upon so unstable a field. Also they longed for the day.

The long night passed without mischance, but never a moment of sleep relaxed the vigilance of the pilot or master. They must needs watch their men, their ship, and their ever-changing position, besides keeping keen look-out for their fellows of the fleet. But when day broke wild and cheerless, with the gale at its height, all the vessels of the fleet were in sight, and Martin reported to the admiral, with gladness on his face, that after such an exhibition of seamanship as that in such straitened waters, he (Martin) would have no hesitation in vouching for the fitness of that fleet to go anywhere.

So for three weeks under storm and stress like that the fleet held together without mishap, until even Martin began to desire a change of wind. They had made scarcely any way down Channel, and their gear, with the consequent battering about, was sadly chafed and worn. And a joyful shout arose when suddenly, at a lifting in the pall of gloom above, there came a shift of wind, and the whole fleet, following the example of their flagship, shook out their wings and began to glide slowly westward. Then became visible the effect of the drilling they had received during the storm. How smartly sail was made, how wonderfully order was kept, distances held! It was not a straggling disarray of fortuitously met vessels; it was a homogeneous fleet, subordinate to the will of one man,

and ready as well as able to obey his lightest order as soon as it should be given.

Now as soon as the weather fined, Admiral Blake gave orders to have the men exercised at gun-drill, at boarding, and all the minor manœuvres of war, nothing doubting but that they should soon have occasion to use them. Full well he knew Prince Rupert's temper and dash, nor did he ever commit the fatal mistake of undervaluing his enemy. So he gave strict injunctions that no time should be wasted, but that every man should be made to feel that great events were ahead, in which there would be room for every gallant English sailor to play a glorious part. And he on his side vowed that as far as his care went the good work of none should be forgotten. So, getting daily nearer to the sea ideal of fitness, the fleet, led by the *Triumph*, sailed proudly up Plymouth Sound, and anchored, to the exceeding delight of the stalwart Puritans of the brave western city, and the great satisfaction of her purveyors, who saw here no common opportunity of gain in the legitimate way of the trade.

They had hardly anchored when news arrived on board, brought by the master of a coaster, that Rupert still lay snug in Kinsale, as if unable or unwilling to leave the harbour, and that in consequence there was no more than the ordinary difficulty and danger attendant upon English seafaring. English seamen were ever prepared to fight the foreign sea-thief, nor asked protection from ships of war, esteeming it their duty, if not their privilege, to fight for their own rights. This news caused

Blake to order the utmost expedition in getting on board the necessary sea-stores, much of which had been accumulating here awaiting his arrival. Therefore, within a few days the fleet was again at sea, and the twins were sorely disappointed at being unable to visit their ward or hear the slightest news of her. They had need of all their sturdy faith now, for they knew not how long they might be away, nor were they any too certain of the regularity with which their pay, or such portion of it as they had allotted to her, would reach her. But had they known what they wished so sorely, they would have suffered much anguish of mind which they were mercifully spared. Of that anon. The fleet set sail, then, without the loss of a man by desertion, or more than the very slightest amount of disaffection shown by grumbling. The men had by this time learned to know their master, to rest secure in his just rule, and to feel certain that under him they were as well off as they could ever hope to be at sea. In short, Admiral Blake had thus early achieved at sea what he always compassed ashore—a hold upon the love and confidence of his men, not so much by overt acts, but by the sheer force and goodness of his character.

Turbulent and stormy was their passage across the great opening of St. George's Channel, yet in three days from leaving Plymouth Sound they were off Kinsale, and the scouting vessels had gone in close enough to see the seven vessels of Rupert's command quietly at anchor. Now, to a thoughtful reader of Blake's career, here a great mental difficulty

crops up. Why did he not, with his eager crew and thoroughly well equipped fleet, do with Rupert as he did with the Spanish admiral in his last and greatest fight at Santa Cruz de Teneriffe? The answer lies mainly, I think, in the character of Blake, than whom no braver man ever breathed, but against whom no word of foolhardiness has ever been spoken. His courage was of the highest order, that which takes all into account, runs all legitimate risks necessary, and dares face the most fearful odds when need arises. Also he saw that in war the commander was most merciful who sought most strenuously to end the fight by swift and heavy blows. But here was a brave and daring enemy anchored within a tortuous, secure harbour, with all its shores in the hands of his friends. To cut him out seemed not unnaturally risking too much for too little. Besides, Blake was certainly then conscious that his lessons had only just begun, and that he might well linger awhile until he was better versed in the art of sea-fighting before essaying so tremendous a task as the cutting-out of Rupert's squadron would have been. So he blockaded the harbour, and, with his usual tenacity, held on all that summer, while Rupert suffered all the evils consequent upon his crew's lack of employment and pay. Not until autumn was the blockade broken. Then the autumn gales made it imperative for the Parliamentary Fleet to withdraw, and Rupert immediately slipped out and sailed for Lisbon. There he found that Maurice, his brother, who, like himself, had taken to preying upon English

commerce, had brought in several prizes captured on that coast.

It would be absurd to doubt that the long summer blockade, though colourless from an historical point of view, was of the utmost value in the making of the fleet what it afterwards proved itself to be. What Blake thought of it may be judged from his choosing to remain where he was when his great chief, Cromwell, offered him a comparatively comfortable major-generalship ashore. He had his reward in one sense immediately, for when next he sailed he was in sole command of his fleet. Things were done in leisurely fashion in those days, and we read that during the whole of the winter of 1649-50 the work of preparation went on, while Rupert and Maurice were working their piratical wills on the Portuguese coast, making Lisbon their headquarters.

As may be imagined, neither Martin nor Tom were likely to lose an opportunity of visiting their sacred charge. So, although it was not possible for both to be absent from duty at once, or at least neither of them thought that it was, they took turns to make the weary journey from the shores of the Itchen to Lyme in the winter. Martin went first, and reached Lyme ten days before Christmas. He found that the sufferings of the people during the winter had already been very great; the reaction from the long siege had found them without elasticity, crops had failed, and fishing had been bad. The news grew steadily worse as he neared the little town, so that it was with a fevered heart and

parched lips that he rapped at the door of Mrs. Pook's house. He was answered by that worthy woman herself, wofully changed since he had last seen her, and bearing the indelible stamp of famine about her once bonny form. Filled in spite of himself with the direst forebodings of evil, he grasped her hand, stepped inside, and said almost breathlessly, "God bless ye, Mrs. Pook, how is Grace?"

"Ah, Captain Martin, thank God she is well and sound, not as you might fear from seeing me. But come thy ways, I'll not keep thee from her a moment." And in all haste Martin followed the good woman into the little prim chamber which had always been her pride. And there sat Grace, looking more beautiful than ever, her glorious hair brushed back from her lofty forehead, and her eyes shining with an almost celestial light. As soon as she saw Martin she sprang to her feet, flung her poor maimed arms about his neck, and kissed him, the bright tears rolling fast down her fair face.

For a moment or two neither spoke. Then Grace said sweetly: "And how is my dear Tom, my other benefactor, brothers, sisters, mother, fa——" (here she stopped herself), "all in one that ye are. Oh, I am so glad, so thankful, to see thee again, Martin. My heart feels ready to break for joy."

Before Martin could speak in reply the goodwife said: "Yes, Martin, and she may well say 'Thank God for thy safety.' Wouldst thou believe it, her father has been here ruffling it with the best, bragging about the town of his services to the Parliament and our holy cause, but living upon us and worrying

that sweet saint nearly into her grave. I vowed to you that she should want for nothing while I lived, and I have tried to keep my word ; but oftentimes I have feared that yond evil man would leave naught for us but the four bare walls. I had a little hoard carefully put by in case of evil days—'tis all gone. He begged from her first, then threatened to take her with him ; then finding I was wrapt up in the child, wrought upon me through her. And so we do but live by the grace of thy money, which cometh monthly, and while enow to the full for Grace and me, cannot also keep that man. Ah, Martin—Captain Martin, I mean—I had not thought there was so wicked a man in the world—and to be her father ! Can it be true ?”

By this time the goodwife was quite exhausted, and as she paused for breath, Grace said : “ Martin, dear friend, let not this vex thee. I grieve that my father should have been so wicked, but good men have been that ere now. I do not think he is altogether so bad, but has just given way to temptation for the while, and will repent. In any case, I pray thee for my sake do not harm him.”

For a minute Martin sat speechless, warring with his feelings, which undoubtedly were prompting him to seek out Elias Pentreath and put a summary stop to his evil-doing. But remembering himself, and all the circumstances, his brow slowly cleared, and presently turning a cheerful face to the afflicted girl, he said : “ Well, dear Grace, let it go. We won't interfere with him except to make it hard for him to interfere

with thee again, if that be possible. Where is he now, and when did he go?"

The goodwife made answer that he had left the town on that day a week ago, telling them he was going to London, to see whether justice could not be done to his daughter for the loss of her hands. "But that means, of course," she went on, "that if he succeeds in getting a reward for her from the Parliament, it will all be swallowed up by himself in his own pleasures."

Martin smiled grimly as he realised how easy it would be through the admiral, who would certainly remember Elias, to stop any villainy of that kind, and then somewhat abruptly changed the subject.

The two women had little news to give him, and that little of a sad nature in the main. How since the raising of the siege the hearts of the people had seemed to fail them, and wanting the supervision of the military authorities which they had been under so long, they did not appear capable of managing their own affairs again. True, there had been a few faithful souls, willing to work as well as pray, who had stemmed the ebb of decay, and now there were signs of reviving prosperity. But it must be slow, wanting the oversea trade from France, which had been so great a factor in the townspeople's living before the Civil War. That could not revive until the war at sea was over, and without it things must be very dull. Then Martin told them tales of the blockade, of the wonder of the sailors at the admiral who had picked up seafolk like a man born at sea. He told them—the

first appreciative listeners he had found since the experience of which he spoke—of the growth of good amongst the seamen of the fleet. Quietly, but with a certain glow, he recounted the various occasions on board of their own ship where discontent and smouldering mutiny had been met by quiet, even-handed justice; how the men were becoming a law unto themselves in the sense that it was becoming their pride to show how well they could keep the law; how drunkenness and cursing were fast disappearing, while smartness and ability in their business were subjects of constant good-natured emulation among them.

"But you have said nothing about Tom," she suddenly cried.

"Ah, dear one," he replied, with shining eyes, "that is only because he and I are so knit together in one spirit, our duties lie so nearly on the same level, that I could hardly tell of his doings without bringing myself in. And you would not have me do that, would you?"

"Verily I would," said she, "for how am I to know that which my heart aches to learn unless you tell me. Who else is there?"

Martin was silent for a long time.

CHAPTER VIII

BLAKE'S SECOND CRUISE

TOM PENFOLD, left in charge of the executive branch on board the *Triumph*, felt no dragging of time. In fact, except for an occasional keen pang of desire to know how his brother had sped, and how their dear charge was faring, he was in that happy position of being quite engrossed by his duties. More especially, as, after the long cruise of the summer and autumn, there were now many changes in the men under his command, and great need for constant supervision in order that the fine tradition of the ship should be kept up. Here he was greatly helped by the presence of the admiral, whose fame was beginning to spread among the shipmen all around the coast for his wise, humane, and steadfast treatment. Already he was acquiring that confidence from his seamen that means so much in the day of battle, that has been at the bottom of so many of our naval victories. But none knew save himself how heavily the work of getting supplies and ships pressed upon him, or how hard he found it to bring the authorities at Whitehall to his views. Yet it may well be believed from history that during the Commonwealth naval officers had more liberty

of action, were permitted in a much greater degree than ever since to act as they, being on the spot, saw best. And certainly the Parliament did what it could, considering all its difficulties, to make a Navy.

Martin returned early in January, well pleased with his journey, full of serene satisfaction in the arrangements he had been able to make for Grace's benefit, but anxious that Tom should go and clinch them. As soon as ever they were both free from duty he told Tom all that he had learned of the sufferings of Mrs. Pook and the villainy of Elias Pentreath, feeling much surprised at Tom's calmness under the recital. And then he sought the admiral, who welcomed him with that quiet satisfaction shown by Blake in all his dealings with the twins, and readily obtained a promise that the admiral would take speedy measures to choke the luff of that consummate scoundrel, Master Elias Pentreath. Pilot Tom formally applied for leave and obtained it at once, with the commission to engage any tall fellows willing to join the Navy under the Parliament. He accepted gravely, and departed, promising to return in a fortnight if it should please God. His visit to Lyme was a very pleasant one, the weather being bright and sunny, the gloom of impending distress having cleared from Dame Pook's wrinkled brow, and Grace full of delight at seeing him. Moreover, Martin had told a few folk in town that Tom was coming, and there were therefore awaiting him several eager, anxious souls who had been helped by him in former days, and were now overjoyed to

hear of his welfare as pilot of one of the greatest warships. So he found little difficulty in selecting two suitable elders to give an eye to the affairs of Grace and her faithful guardian; and after eight days of unalloyed happiness he bade them farewell and started eastward again, with twenty stout fellows bearing him company, all well reported of in Lyme and the adjacent villages as godly youths, and all eager to follow the fortunes of so good a man under the rule of so great a warrior as Admiral Blake was known to be. Within a week after Tom's return, the fleet, under Blake, sailed for the south-west after Rupert, who was known to be using, against all international law, the harbour of Lisbon as his headquarters, whence he and his brother could make raids upon English merchantmen with impunity. Admiral Popham was left in command in the Channel.

Fortunately for Blake, he had in London men who knew their own mind, and in dealing with foreign powers were not afraid to speak it. Plain terms in dealing with the astute fabricators representing Continental powers has of late been called the "New Diplomacy," but surely it ought more reasonably to be termed a revival of the old, of Cromwell's time. His generals and admirals spoke in no ambiguous terms to those with whom they had arguments, and the instructions to Blake were to attack the enemy's ships wherever he found them, and any foreign prince giving such pirates harbourage was to be treated as an enemy or friend according to how he took the interference with his sovereign protection. Moreover

—and this is worthy of remembrance by those who have so consistently sneered at the Puritans as clodhoppers, who knew not how to maintain the dignity they had stolen from its rightful possessors—Blake was instructed to demand from all and sundry recognition of Britain's flag, by saluting it, as dominating the seas. Where, as in the presence of a much superior force, it was not possible to ensure this homage, and the vessel, or vessels, challenged refused it, note was to be made, so that fitting measures might be taken as soon as convenient.

The stormy days of the latter part of February and the first part of March were occupied by Blake and his gallant subordinates in getting to their new cruising-ground. By this time not only Martin and Tom, but many other masters and pilots with the fleet who were like-minded as far as serving Blake went, were busy every waking moment in getting their crews into fighting trim again. For it must be remembered that many of the crews who had served through the long Irish blockade had been disbanded, or, if reshipped, had been scattered throughout the fleet—a sort of game of "general post" that is terribly destructive of efficiency for a considerable time. I have often wondered whether folks ashore ever realise what it means to a sailor who has learned the whereabouts, in blazing light or Egyptian darkness, of every rope or other article he has to use in a ship, to be suddenly compelled to learn all that bewildering complication again. Let me assure the reader that even in ships of war to-day, many of which are as nearly as may be

duplicates of each other, this is a very serious matter, owing to the individual peculiarities of officers; what then must it be where no two ships are alike except to a landsman's eye, and every item of equipment of each vessel is kept in a different place or position from that belonging to any other.

But enough of that; surely I need not now magnify the sailor's offices, except incidentally, while showing that many of the most important items of ship duty are never realised by landsmen at all. Martin and Tom, however, although they but dimly realised it, had at the outset of this cruise an auxiliary they had not possessed before. Almost entirely owing to Blake, the *Puritan* spirit was abroad in the Navy. In every little seaport round the coast brawny seafarers had discussed the coming of the man who placed honesty, truth, and justice in the forefront of his dealings with the men under his command; yea, and was powerful enough in the Council of the nation to make his will respected there too—a man who had lifted the Navy to a pinnacle of excellence as a fighting machine, and as a drawing force for brave men, that has never been surpassed since. This lightened the labours of the sea officers like the masters and pilots amazingly. They no longer had to labour to convince their men that certain results would follow certain actions, that discipline was good, and ought not to need brutality to enforce it; they had only to teach them how to do the necessary work. And that to men of the calibre of Martin and Tom was just a labour of love.

Now in these days, it has been commonly supposed

for many years past that men were braver than they are in these our peaceful times (for civilians, that is). It is surely high time that some attempt was made to show how utterly baseless such an idea must be. Man is a fighting animal, but if a long period of peace has prevented him from putting his warlike instincts into practice, he will, of course, get out of the habit of war. We pay our soldiers and sailors and police to do our fighting for us, it being more respectable and cheaper for us so to do; and with curious ingratitude we, as a people, are inclined to look down upon the man who sells his youth and vigour for our defence. But if—which God forbid—the “good old days” so many purblind people are always bewailing should suddenly return upon us, there is nothing more certain than that the average man would promptly degenerate into a fighting animal again with infinitely more rapidity than he has climbed out of that state. The fact that the utterly abominable system known as the “press-gang,” which, aided by the gaol deliveries, manned our warships in the “good old days,” produced the men who won the Nile and Trafalgar and hundreds of minor battles, ought to close the mouths of those who speak of the degeneracy into cowardice of modern civilised man. The men picked up to man the fleet which Blake commanded had no more stamina or lust for fighting than our merchant sailors of to-day; but they had one advantage—it was a part of their duty at sea to fight whenever it became necessary. Why endeavour to prove that because they were compelled to fight they therefore loved to fight?

Be sure that when pirate or hostile warship hove in sight there were just as many shaky hands and parched lips as there would be to-day, and be equally sure that the seamen of to-day or our own race would fight when they must with just as much heart as those old mariners did. All of which ought to go without saying, but unhappily does not do so.

Therefore, not only were these men good material whereof to make men-o'-war's men, as our sailors ever have been, but many of them—sufficient, at all events, for stiffening the whole force—were practised sea-fighters, who only needed the binding touch of discipline, and the enthusiasm for their service that a good leader breeds, to make them very nearly perfect in their calling. Others were eager to learn, doubly eager to fight, because the desire of revenge lay heavy upon them. When Rupert scoured the narrow seas, preying upon his own peaceful countrymen, he did a most unwise thing, even though necessity bore hard upon him. In Blake's fleet there were hundreds of volunteers who had lost their all at the hands of Rupert, and were ready, yes, hungering fiercely for an opportunity for retaliat'on upon him. And once these men acquired that belief in Blake which he was able to inspire in his followers to so remarkable a degree, they were able in an eminent manner to communicate it to the rest, the majority who were there for many reasons, but chiefly because their invitation to come could not be refused upon any pretext whatever. So, as the great fleet made its slow way westwards, the work of welding its component parts into one grand organisation, to act

independently of each other or in combination, went steadily on, all hands from the admiral downward acquiring knowledge of value.

The Navy was then, as now, a splendid school for brave men, although it has never been claimed as a school for God-fearing warriors. But the heroic virtues of patience, of unselfishness, of steadfast, as opposed to blindfold, courage, here grew to their full height. Into one of those ships, the largest of which was about one-fifteenth of the tonnage of one of our battleships of to-day, were crowded as many as five hundred men, compelled, no matter what their personal ideas or desires of and for cleanliness might be, to live under appallingly insanitary conditions. Only one or two writers have dared to lift the veil and disclose the real state of things, to tell us in plain language how our sea-warriors lived down to the beginning of last century. And we feel that we would rather they had not done so, so awful are the revelations. Yet human virtues flourished there in spite of the unfavourable soil, and we, looking back upon that time, although we can only see the broad results, feel that these were men indeed.

By dint of hard conscientious work, then, the Parliamentary Fleet again became an efficient weapon in the hands of its dauntless admiral by the time the beautiful harbour of the Tagus was reached. And now was witnessed the strange sight of two hostile squadrons being anchored within sight of each other—the one outside, the other inside of the harbour. Warlike operations were hardly possible as yet, since the unfortunate King of

Portugal, leaning towards the Royalist, yet afraid of the Parliamentarian, would undoubtedly have been driven to use his heavily armed forts upon the aggressor if Blake had done that which he burned to do—namely, attack Rupert at once. But Blake did not mince matters; it was not a feature of Puritan warfare. He warned the King that if the pirate Rupert, were permitted longer to enjoy the security of what should be a neutral harbour, he, Blake, would prey upon Portuguese commerce, whether it were under the English flag or not.

But in spite of Blake's energy, a long and most trying period of delay now set in, during which, while the leaders wrangled, the sailors suffered. The Parliamentary Fleet anchored outside the harbour was as badly off as if under way; fresh provisions were woefully scarce, and the crews, ever on the alert, got but little rest. Fierce encounters took place between Royalists and Puritans when the blockading squadron's boats went ashore for water, and in some mysterious manner offers of the most lucrative kind were being continually made to the men of Blake's Fleet to desert. It was indeed a weary and profitless time—a blockade usually is, but this blockade was more exasperating than usual, while the investing ships were getting so foul that they could hardly sail at all. The invention of copper sheathing for wooden vessels had not then been discovered, and consequently, with that strange affinity which marine growths have for bare wood, the bottoms became hardly distinguishable from some wave-beaten rock covered with each tide. At last, when it became

evident that Blake would be as good as his word and attack the homeward-bound Brazil fleet of merchantmen to Lisbon, there was some show of preparation among the Portuguese, who asked Rupert to assist them in beating off this arrogant countryman of his. A few shots were exchanged ineffectually; but nothing further came of the matter, and the weary blockade went on.

In September came Admiral Popham with eight ships and orders from the grim Council at London to confirm all of Blake's threats against Portugal. Accordingly, when the Brazil fleet hove in sight, it was captured with scarcely any resistance, only one of the vessels being sunk, and the rest, with their rich cargoes, sent home. This convinced the King that the rebels, as he regarded them, were decidedly to be feared, and he besought his truculent guests to begone. And they went, escaping without casualty to the Mediterranean. Various reasons have been assigned for their getting away so cheaply after the long blockade, some of them reflecting greatly upon Blake's tactical skill; but the simplest and most probable explanation is that Blake's ships were too foul to chase, that Popham's squadron was either not strong enough or was more needed at home, and running through the whole reasoning, there was most likely a desire to let them get well away so as not to rub in too hardly the humiliation the King of Portugal had already endured. Moreover, there was the certainty that Rupert and Maurice could not do much more harm, and the probability that they would be trapped very soon.

However that may be, it is certain that the long pent-up fleet did escape, and Blake went into a friendly Spanish port to heave his ships down and clear from their bottoms the accumulated sea-growths of many months ; also to give his weary men some relief from the monotonous sequence of their late duties, and some fresh food, which they stood greatly in need of. Perhaps it may be said that, so far, the Parliamentary Fleet had done little to justify its existence, since it had only carried on two ineffectual blockades, each ending in the escape of the blockaded fleet. But upon mature consideration, I think it must be admitted that those months of blockading duty, monotonous and inactive as they are to read of, were the reason of Blake's splendid successes thereafter. For in them he and his men became fully acquainted ; the sturdy, if somewhat dour Puritanism that had wrought so mightily among the land forces had time to leaven the *personnel* of the fleet, and every day saw the seamen under Blake becoming more and more ripe for the great work which was before them.

Blake, engaged in preparing his ships for sea, heard that Rupert was again at his old business of piracy. We can almost see the grim nod of determination with which he received the news and gave orders to press forward the work of fitting the fleet for sea. At last all was ready, and the fleet sailed, coming in touch with Rupert's squadron off Carthagena. The ensuing fight is unworthy of record, much as one may desire to come to the real fighting achievements of the Puritan Fleet. Here there was

no scope for their energies. The ships of Rupert were partly manned by the crews of captured English vessels, who hated their captors and would not fight. Moreover, Rupert was not there himself to communicate something of his own headstrong, dauntless courage to his subordinates. In the result, the whole of the Royalist squadron present was captured or destroyed; and although Rupert himself escaped capture, he never again troubled the Parliamentary Fleet. He joined his brother Maurice at Toulon, and together they left the Mediterranean for the West African coast, where they began that wonderful series of adventures as buccaneers, of which the soberest recital reads like the wildest invention of a riotous imagination. Henceforth there was no longer a Royalist squadron as there was no longer a Royalist Army.

Again Blake returned to England, his work well and completely done, and leaving a competent squadron under Admiral Penn to guard English shipping interests on the coasts of Spain and Portugal and in the Mediterranean. The Continental enemies of England were now beginning to learn that the period of plundering English ships with impunity was past with the close of the Civil War, and that the Commonwealth was not in the least likely to neglect what was obviously one of its chief concerns—the oversea commerce of England. One little episode during Blake's chase of Rupert to Carthagea emphasised this. In the Straits he fell in with four French ships. He captured them and impounded their cargoes as a simple warning to the French that

their piratical depredations could no longer be tolerated. It is moderately certain that he had no authority to do this ; but in those direct and forceful days there was far less consideration for Britain's enemies, and far better backing of her servants and friends than ever there has been since, and Blake received due commendation for his vigorous upholding of his country's interests.

That was a peaceful passage home for the weather-worn squadron, and it is not too much to say that in it Blake's reputation as an admiral of the first rank was established upon the surest basis. He had accomplished the work he had been sent to do without the loss of a single ship ; he had practically annihilated the fleet of the enemy ; and he had taught at least two Continental nations that the fleet of England was fully capable of protecting her sea traffic, and that no trifling with her majesty would pass unpunished, if her rulers were the shopkeepers and clodhoppers they had been represented as throughout Europe. But best of all was the sense of loyalty, of confidence, of invincibility which had grown up in the fleet itself. It has been easy to sneer at Blake as a time-serving, snuffing Puritan, who really had no more religion than Monk ; but it is far more reasonable, as well as honest, to attribute his marvellous success in the rehabilitation of the Navy to his simple faith in God, his plain exhibition of the Christian virtues to those under his command.

During the whole monotonous cruise the position held by the redoubtable twins had been steadily

strengthened, until it was unanimously conceded, when running up Channel homeward bound, that they had not an enemy in the ship, or indeed in the fleet, for their fame had spread throughout the squadron. They had kept their heads, for one thing; the close intimacy afforded them by the admiral had not made them in the least arrogant or less inclined to know their place as regarded the other fighting officers. So shall you see to-day—since the naval traditions are more enduring than those of any other service—the grizzled coxswain of the captain's gig allowed a freedom that by an outsider would be considered as certain to be abused. And it never is: there is a noble spirit among the men of the Navy that scorns such adventitious aids to power, and is ready to stamp out with absolute ferocity any sign of accepting them.

As the noble fleet in perfect cruising order swept up the Channel one bright February night, the twins foregathered for a smoke and a chat, as was their wont at the close of the day's duties. The wind was almost due north, so that a pleasant smell of green fields and moist earth was borne towards them, filling them with desire to tread the dear land again.

Said Tom: "'Tis a wonderful way the Lord hath led us, Martin, since you and I met that night on the Cobb at Lyme. I wonder if ever two brothers c'u'd have been happier together than we've been?"

"Yes, an' both lovin' the same maid, too," interjected Martin. "That's the most marvellous thing of all t' me. Don't seem real somehow, an' yet

there 'tis. Poor Grace! I wonder how she is, an' whether that bad father of hers has been worriting her since we've a-been away."

"Why, there you go again," remonstrated Tom. "'Tis the only thing that keeps you from growing to the full stature of a Christian man. You seem to think the Lord must keep you 'ware of how He's a-doin' His business, else 'twill go wrong."

Martin laughed quietly as he replied: "You'm quite right, Tom; 'tis so, and you'm not far behind me in the same course either. An' yet, after what we've seen in this fleet, Tom lad, it does grieve me some when I think of all these fine lads, so fit, so faithful, so well up to their work, being scattered among the sharks in London town or Portsmouth, to creep to sea again soon in different ships, blasted in health, cold, hungry, and penniless. It ought not to be. God knows I want to get home—along bad enough; but I'd be blithe to stay at sea if only I could keep these fellows as they are now."

There was silence for a few minutes, then Tom murmured hopefully: "Something might be done, I think, if we ask the admiral to consider it. We might try and arrange for the crews to come back to their own ships as many as would, and be taken on until the fleet was ordered to sea again, which I'm thinking will not be very long first."

Martin gave his entire acquiescence, and before they parted for the night they had decided to approach the admiral with their proposals, nothing doubting that his wonderful statesman-like sagacity, allied to his immense influence in the Council, would

enable him to develop a workable plan for keeping their good fellows in touch.

The next day, after rounds, Martin approached the admiral with his idea. The latter, with his usual promptitude and common-sense, immediately saw the force of Martin's proposal, and called a meeting of his officers, to whom he suggested that they should consider the feasibility of a proposal to the men to return each to his ship when his money was spent or when he got tired of shore pleasures, with the certainty of being again engaged and treated with special favour as an old and tried hand. It met with unanimous approval, although doubts were freely expressed as to its working, from the known carelessness and want of forethought possessed by the sailor. Still, all agreed that the attempt ought to be made, and accordingly the admiral's offer to his crews was communicated by signal to the whole fleet. It met with a clamorously favourable reception, and it was unanimously decided that no such care for crews had ever been manifested before. By general command a service of thanksgiving was then held among the crews of the entire fleet, and a half-holiday followed. The next day in stately fashion the ships entered the Thames and moored in the Lower Hope, the second cruise of the fleet under the Parliamentary flag having been successfully completed.

Before closing this chapter it may be as well to notice that, pre-eminent among the leaders of that troublous time, Blake eschewed politics. He deemed it sufficient to justify the high trust reposed in him

as an administrator and a general to do what he was told, not exactly to the letter, but with the high wisdom and courage of common-sense; nor can it ever be alleged against him that he used his immense and well-deserved power in cabals against those in authority over him. No higher praise can be given to Blake than this: that he was the supreme type of Englishman as Englishmen fondly believe that character to be—straightforward, unhesitating, full of courage, willing to learn, and genial to all around him, from the highest to the lowest. Withal, a man of simple tastes, and deeply attached to a plain Biblical faith.

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CHAPTER IX

PENTREATH REAPPEARS

END of February, 1651. The ships are paid off and in process of overhaul; the crews are fast dissipating their hardly-earned pay and prize-money, for in the vast majority of cases the clean, religious discipline to which they had submitted with such apparent joyousness at sea had vanished from them, like the breath off a glass, now they are ashore. But with only two of them are we concerned—with Martin and Tom, freed from their responsibility ever present at sea, and jogging contentedly westwards on two stout nags to the well-beloved little town at the foot of the hill. No word had reached them of Grace's welfare since they had seen her last. They, like almost every other member of the crews of the fleet, must practise patience and submission, since mails were not, nor newspapers. No doubt, to holy and humble men of heart like these, such a condition of things fostered faith and patience; but it needs considerable power of imagination to realise how they could have endured such privation of news of those they loved, in the "good old days."

It was a lovely day, such as this much-maligned climate of ours often gives us at the end of February. The scent of spring was in the air, although as yet there was no trace of delicate green in the hedgerows or sign of budding on the trees. But the birds felt the regenerating call and carolled loudly, as if they would hasten the upward flowing sap in the trees, while the good moist earth exhaled the breath of returning life after the winter sleep. The prevalent feeling entered into the blood of these two staid seadogs as they soberly plodded along, making them feel as if they must lift up their voices and sing. But neither of them spake a word for long, until Martin suddenly gave a heavy sigh, followed by something very like a moan. Tom looked up from his reverie in surprise, saying, "What ails thee, lad?"

"Why," replied Martin, a deeper glow shining in his tanned face, "I was but thinking how hard 'tis for us, that be men who could love faithful and true, to be cut off from such heavenly gifts as wife and children must be. Whether 'tis the time of year or not I cannot tell, but my heart yearns for the sight of a bonny woman sitting at my own fireside nursing my babes and listening with her soul in her ears for my footstep. Not," he added hastily, "that I begrudge one thought given to that dear saint at home. For her I still feel I'd freely give all a man can—only—only it does seem hard nows and thens to be denied that joy which a man may rightly expect as being peculiarly blessed of God."

"Martin," sighed Tom, "I've no word of contradiction for thee. What you say is what I feel too. At times I feel fiercely angry to think of my youth having slipped away as it has without a taste of wedded happiness. But presently comes a kinder touch of peace an' a recollection that after all our lives haven't been wasted, and if we have lost in one way we've gained much more in another. I very much doubt if two men have ever been happier than we have since the siege of Lyme. We've been put in places of high trust and responsibility, and the Lord hath enabled us to fill them well; we've seen the man we love better than any one else in the world, save Grace, go from strength to strength, from one honour to another; we've been spared bodily suffering from wounds and ill-health, and we've been kept from the evil while living daily in the midst thereof. Say, brother Martin, is not ours a case for praising God?"

To which both agreed heartily, and from thenceforward there was no more plaint on either side; each seemed to have fully recognised the good hand of their God upon them and to be content therewith. And so, favoured by goodly weather, on the third day they came to their destination, the lusty, loyal little town of Lyme. Without pausing to greet any who recognised them, they made direct for Dame Pook's house. Springing from their horses, they entered unannounced, and pressing into the well-known little parlour where Grace was wont to sit, came suddenly upon the dame, Grace, and Elias Pentreath.

While a man might count twenty no word was spoken, but each member of the little group thought with furious rapidity over the strange meeting and what might be its outcome. Pentreath appeared to be the least moved of the party. He sat and surveyed the others with a calm assumption of superiority that was new to him, but which the first-class quality of his clothing did not a little to help out. He was dressed formally, and in brown cloth trimmed with velvet, but it was evidently of superlative quality and cut, and his linen was dazzling. Everything about the man said loudly, "prosperity."

Tom was the first to speak, and he said in a strangely altered voice: "Grace, my maid, how hast thou been faring this long while? Thou art not looking nearly as well and bright as when Martin and I left thee. Has aught befallen thee of evil and sickness? Tell us, dear one, and ease our hearts."

Then uprose her father, and both Martin and Tom marked the great improvement in the man's appearance. Stouter and almost ruddy, his tall form well set off by his new clothing, he dominated the small room and its occupants. He said in a rich, deep voice: "And who may you be, who come into a house unbidden and put questions to a maid before her father's face such as no father should hear?"

Disregarding the outstretched hand of Tom, Martin sprang forward, his eyes flashing and his face aglow, crying: "Who are we? Traitor and thief! you know right well, but shall yet know better. Wouldst gladly forget me, no doubt, and the entry into Lyme with Captain Blake, but I'll warrant myself a keen

remembrancer for you. Go, and leave the poor maid your daughter to the scanty living her friends provide her with, nor come again to steal it from her, coward that you are!"

There was a flash of a sword, a shriek from the women, and a clatter as of broken glass. Then Master Pentreath was seen fuming, his sword snapped at the hilt across the intervening blade of Captain Tom, who was holding back with his left hand the almost frantic Martin, evidently bent upon slaying his ancient enemy. Suddenly Elias lifted his hand to his lips and blew a long blast upon a whistle. Followed a short silence, presently broken by the footsteps of hurrying men, who soon arrived and swarmed into the tiny house.

"Arrest me these malignants," roared the deep voice of Pentreath. But every man there knew too well the honest faces of the twins to do anything of the sort, and the leader of the newly-arrived force glanced irresolutely from Pentreath to the women, and back again to the twins, before he found voice to say: "Nay, Captain Pentreath, ye mun surely be mistaken. These twain be 'bout the best known friends Lyme ever had. We cain't 'rest them as malignants."

But Martin's fiery nature, so long under control, here burst its bonds as he saw Grace silently weeping. With a cat-like spring, he seized Pentreath by the throat, and the two foes came heavily down in a life-and-death struggle. But the other men fell upon them and tore them from one another amid the screaming of the women, and for a moment or two

there was a hush but for the laboured breathing of the men.

Pentreath spoke first. "Hale ma these would-be murderers to prison, or pay the penalty which will surely be exacted for my death. Ye all know my position and the authority granted me by the Parliament, and again I command ye to obey."

Yet not a man stirred until one Jabez Wilson, who appeared to be the leader of the party, said: "Captain, we'm ready to obey orders when we'm sure they'm rightly given. An' as I've said, we all know these two men as the trusted associates of Colonel Blake and Governor Ceely. We've lived with 'em, an' fought side by side with 'em, an' no man in Lyme can ever say aught of 'em but good. We'm ready to respect your position, cap'n, but the plain truth is, we know the Penfolds better'n we know you, an' we wunt arrest 'em at your orders, so there."

Then Pentreath played his last card. His mouth drooped at the corners, he took off his hat, which he had replaced after the struggle, and he said through his nose, "Let us pray and ask Divine guidance on this thorny matter."

But with an expression of utter disgust, Captain Tom stepped forward, saying, in a deep, vibrating voice: "No. Let no man dare to aid this hypocrite in his abominable insult to God. Brethren of Lyme, there is an easy way out of this difficulty. Ask the maiden and Mrs. Pook whom they will choose to remain with them—us or Captain, as ye call him, Pentreath."

It was done instantly, and Grace, with streaming

eyes, lifting her handless arms, said : " Oh, pray don't leave me, brothers, to my father : I fear him—he has been cruel to me, cruel to my friend ; but let him go away scatheless. And beware of him, for I fear he has much power to do harm."

Pentreath gave one glare at his helpless daughter, and strode to the door, the men standing aside to let him pass, and without a word he disappeared into the darkness.

As soon as the shock of his sudden departure had passed, all present looked at each other with that indefinable sense of relief that we show when a sudden way out of a difficult place is found. And Martin, going swiftly to Grace's side, said caressingly : " There, there, Gracie my maid, don't cry any longer. It's all right again." And he patted her as one soothes a babe.

Jabez Wilson spoke musingly. " It do bother me more than all out how he come t' get such papers as he brought here. These last three months it's been who but he hand in glove with all the big folks, arderin' this and arderin' that in a most masterful way, so to speak. And I allus had some sort of a dim notion that there'd been some trouble wi' un time you an' Colonel Blake marched in here."

" Never mind," calmly replied Captain Tom. " The man's a traitor, no doubt, but he's wormed his way into favour in London somehow—through our negligence, maybe, for we promised to warn Admiral Blake of his intentions when we were home before, and must have forgotten it. But anyway he cannot do much harm, and while we remain in Lyme we

will try and see to it that the little he might do is made less."

So the good citizens departed, their dull minds profoundly disturbed by these happenings in their quiet little town, but great relief felt by them that the chief actor in the dispute was gone, for the time at any rate.

Peace brooded again upon the little house, and Grace, seated between the two brothers, poured out her innocent heart in questions as to how they had fared during their long absence. Mrs. Pook, too, so relieved was she by the sudden advent of the two men she most trusted and believed in of all the world, entirely forgot her hospitable duties, and waxing voluble, told in incoherent fashion such a tale of oppression and knavery on the part of Grace's father that at times it was difficult, nay, almost impossible, to follow. But the chorus and burden of her tale was the marvel of how the discredited spy, Elias Pentreath, could have regained his position of trust and responsibility. We, however, know something of the undercurrents of government, and the way in which even the most astute of rulers oft become the prey of cunning adventurers, need have no such wonder. Elias Pentreath was just an unscrupulous villain, a good actor, and also a man who, given his opportunity and his data, would succeed in hoodwinking almost the acutest of officials. And now, being reduced to living upon his wits as his sole capital, and all his energies directed to the main principle of keeping himself alive and in such comfort as could be compassed, he had

become exceedingly successful. Absolutely unprincipled, he found no difficulty in becoming all things to all men, in no Scriptural sense, but in a purely worldly way. Also he had discovered the gigantic power of judicious flattery. If only he could learn what were a man's pet theories, or hobbies, or doctrines, he could get them up and work them to his immense profit. It was only where manliness was needed that he failed—as in the meeting with Martin and Tom.

But we have had quite enough for the present of Captain Pentreath. The analysis of a villain's character may be interesting, but can never be profitable, since evil has a superficial but none the less fatal fascination denied to good, for some occult reason man has never been able to fathom. Martin and Tom found little difficulty in dismissing him from their minds, for they were triumphant, full of delight at finding their darling *protégée* well and hearty, also ready to shake off such worry as her father had inflicted upon her, now that he was driven away. Moreover, the brothers could not but feel immensely gratified by their reception in the gallant little town. Long before they had finished unfolding their budget for Grace messenger after messenger arrived from influential inhabitants imploring their company and news of the great admiral, for so he was beginning to be regarded already, although none of his great exploits had yet been accomplished. At last they were, by the importunity of their friends, reluctantly compelled to tear themselves away from that placid domestic scene they

both loved, and accompany an enthusiastic party to the largest room in the town. There to an overflowing audience they recounted the story of their almost bloodless campaigns, praised most gladly the faithful service of their fellows, and spoke almost with bated breath of the Christian virtues of their admiral, until, weary and nearly voiceless, they had to insist upon returning home. They were escorted thither by a rejoicing crowd, which, however, remembering the women-folk within, dispersed as soon as they entered their own door, and its several units, betaking themselves to the various inns, told again and again, with many fantastic additions, the news of the night. Martin and Tom, with a few good-night words, retired to rest, and slept the deep sleep of the simple, upright sailor.

For the next few days the two brothers were right busily engaged in communicating their intelligence and recruiting for the reformed Navy. For so rapidly did the fame of Blake spread through the brave West Country, which had so nobly supported him in his long shore struggle, that it became a sort of passion with the sturdy fishermen and seamen of the coast to go and serve with him. And in the twins he had the very best recruiting agents possible—men who spread his fame and that of his fleet for pure love of it, consciously straining no truth, but with all the fervour of ardent faith lauding the service of the Commonwealth at sea as being not merely a patriotic duty of the highest stamp, but a sacred duty owed to God and their brother men. Thus it came to pass that when the news arrived of Admiral

Blake's appointment to command the fleet for the Irish seas, his senior master and pilot had succeeded in securing for him the enthusiastic services of fifty-two splendid volunteers from Lyme, Charmouth, Seaton, and the neighbourhood. Their high resolves were in nowise lessened by the news that the Parliament, recognising "the wonderful appearance of the powerful hand of God with him in his services at sea," had voted Admiral Blake the thanks of the House and a sum of £1,000. The new recruits, as well as his old servants, rejoiced with Blake at this, recognising that if ever there was a man who deserved such treatment, it was he; and, better still, his men flocked to rejoin from all parts of the country whither they had been dispersed, sure of a hearty welcome.

It was but a small fleet after all—only seventeen vessels, of which full half were small, and one at least, the galliot *Hoy*, contemptibly so. But it was a competent fleet, manned by trained seamen and well officered. It needed all its virtues, for a gigantic storm-cloud was brewing, of which only the most astute heads of the Government saw the full significance. The King was still in the field, the work of the Great Rebellion still remained unfinished, and the most westerly outpost of England, the Scilly Isles, was still held for his deposed Majesty by Sir John Greenvil, who was using them as a sort of pirate stronghold whence he preyed upon sea-commerce indiscriminately. Now it was not to be supposed that the brave and haughty Dutchmen could or would allow their splendid sea-traffic to be preyed upon by a handful of English adventurers

under any pretext whatever. Not only so, but it is easy to see how specious a pretext might be pleaded by the Dutch admiral for the seizure of the whole Scilly group. Admiral Van Tromp was ready to say in effect to the ostensible rulers of England, "You are in the throes of civil war, you cannot police your own harbours, you show yourself powerless to prevent piracy from English ports by men of your own blood: I must therefore act as I see needful, and at any hazard, to put a stop to this harassing of Dutch traffic."

But, as I am never weary of noting, the statesmen of the Commonwealth were not merely politicians—they were brave men who never hesitated to act; so Blake got his broad general orders to proceed to Scilly and do what was necessary.

Early in April, therefore, Blake was under way again, and a few days later he had got in touch with Van Tromp and was requesting him to take his fleet away from such close proximity to English ports, being assured that all necessary steps would be taken to enforce the law against these malignants who were breaking the peace (?) of the seas. Whether the Dutch plans were not fully ripe, or the cogency of Blake's arguments appealed to his great rival, we do not know; but this much is certain, the Dutch fleet sheered off, and Blake's task of enforcing the law of the Commonwealth in the Scilly Isles began.

It must be remembered that it was still early spring, that the vicinity was one of the most dangerous in the whole world, and that the Royalist holders of the Islands were as brave as men could be—also

that they felt they were fighting with halters round their necks. Moreover, the risks of failure were tremendous. Should the fleet be caught upon a lee shore and a few of the ships lost, the great Dutch fleet, hovering at no great distance away, would certainly be encouraged to take some step that might very easily be fatal to the Commonwealth. So shall we understand something of the greatness of Blake's deed when he hurled his force upon the Islands, and seizing Tresco, converted it into a base whence he could the more conveniently attack the heavily fortified St. Mary's. In these operations he was most ably seconded by all his men, but notably by our two heroes, whose long experience in boat service and landing from small craft on our stormy coasts in winter came in now most opportunely. But the whole *personnel* of the fleet was so well trained, and had, moreover, such unbounded confidence in its leaders, that all their operations were carried on with a dash, an energy, and a skill that seemed to regard defeat as an impossibility.

It does, however, need considerable imagination, and does demand a very high meed of admiration, this consideration of the small campaign of Blake's fleet against Sir John Greenvil in possession of the Scilly Islands. Those who know the neighbourhood, however superficially, will need little pressing to acknowledge the courage and skill necessary to conduct an attack upon those scattered masses of rock set in a seething, stormy sea. Even now, when modern science has buoyed and lighted the intricacies of the little archipelago as perfectly as is consistent

with the needs of its traffic, it is admittedly one of the most dangerous pieces of navigation known on our dangerous coast. And that, too, with steam to aid. But with the clumsy vessels of Blake's day, with the islets in possession of the enemy, and any lights shown from headland or beach almost certain to be lures into a death-trap; while the furious, baffled sea foamed and raged about the jagged edges of the cliffs, and the treacherous unknown currents sped silently toward the hidden terrors of submerged reefs, it was indeed a place of dread. And over all the grim fact that when all outlying dangers had been surmounted, and the labouring crews had succeeded in beaching their boats after being at hand-grips with death scores of times, they must be ready to meet in deadly struggle their own countrymen, Englishmen of the best, as convinced of the justice of their cause as they were themselves, and as ready to spend their hot blood in asserting it. Such considerations alone will enable us to do scanty justice to the men who laid the foundations of our liberties, men whose only animating power was a passionate belief in God and trust in the wisdom of those who led them.

One scene alone of all that hardly-fought two months can be recorded here, though it be but one of many. An attack had been ordered in force upon St. Mary's one bitter night at the end of April, when the wind from the north-west, of the force of a gale, came howling down between St. Martin's and St. Mary's. The sky was hung with black, and only the glare of the breakers showed fitfully the

presence of the most imminent dangers. Ten boats, each carrying fifty men well armed and full of daring, left Tresco, their orders being to storm the castle if possible, but at any rate to consider themselves much in the light of a forlorn hope. Two boats from the flagship were sent, one in charge of Captain Tom Penfold as pilot of the flotilla, since he in all the fleet seemed to know most of the navigation among the islands; Martin being left on board, to his utter disgust. Through the thick dark the little company sped along before the wind, only exhibiting a patch of tanned sail, invisible at that hour. By just a hair's-breadth or so, as it seemed, they missed the growling dangers. Ever and again a rebounding swell from some outlying spur hurled them broadside on to the wind as if they were chips in an eddy, yet all unscathed they swept into the little harbour of St. Mary's, to be greeted with a tremendous cannonade from the castle. By some means the time and manner of their coming had been made known, and keen eyes had made them out by the flickering green light around their stems. As it was hopeless to attempt a storm where only a surprise had a chance of success, the low order was given to return. Oars were shipped and sturdy backs bent to them, forcing the heavy boats seaward again inch by inch, while an occasional cannon shot plunged past them, or, falling short, drenched them with brine. And at the first grey streak of dawn they regained the fleet, wearied beyond power of telling, but all sound. Not one of all those shots had reached them, which quite naturally all hands counted as a miracle equal to

any recorded in Holy Writ, being proportionally encouraged thereby.

All reached the fleet in safety under the wise guidance of Captain Tom, who immediately upon his return reported to the admiral, who listened with a grave face, but expressed himself as perfectly satisfied as to the wisdom of the course pursued. Nevertheless, as soon as dawn broke, the whole fleet was ordered under weigh, and an attack was made upon St. Mary's with such tremendous vigour that the castle was rent as if by an earthquake. Then a force of over a thousand men was landed, and, with the most desperate valour shown on both sides, the little town was taken. Sir John Greenvil surrendered, feeling, as he said, that there was no shame in recognising the hopelessness of his position; also that he was weary of fighting against Englishmen. And Tromp, sadly disappointed at the disappearance of his only excuse for landing and annexing the islands, sailed sullenly away. The great danger was over.

CHAPTER X

BLAKE AND HIS CAPTAINS

THE little campaign for the reduction of the Scilly Isles has met with scanty recognition from the historian, although we can now see how valuable were the services then rendered to England. But it was fought between brothers, a part of the Civil War, and it is not difficult to understand that Englishmen were not proud of that fratricidal strife, however deeply convinced of its necessity. Like everything else that Blake undertook, it was done thoroughly, and we hear no more of trouble about Scilly, which in the hands of a capable enemy like the Dutch would certainly have altered the whole course of English history.

All that summer Blake's fleet was doing police duty; he was watching the Irish Sea to prevent supplies of men and means being sent to the King in Scotland, cruising as far round as the Nore to keep guard lest the energetic Dutchman might find an opening wherein to thrust a strong interfering hand, fully in charge of the whole Navy, and wonderful as it may seem to us at this late day, even appointed to command all the troops in Cornwall, Devon, Somerset, and Dorset. Fortunately for the country,

however, the able admiral was not taken from the position wherein he was so valuable, and sent where he could have done little good. But only the dearth of sea-officers prevented this grave error from being made.

The time drew steadily nearer when all the preliminary work of "making" the Commonwealth Navy was to bear fruit. Unfortunately history seldom finds room for accounts of the doings of the obscure workers who rear a great national edifice. We read of battles, battles, and again battles until we can almost smell the blood, but of how those battles became possible, of the commerce and wage-earning and training which went before, and were either wasted on war, or made benefits from war accrue, we hear scarcely anything at all. Only by the faintest and most infrequent flashes of information, expanded by imagination, can we get the slightest idea of the vast underlying labours of the whole people. And especially is this the case with naval matters, still more especially with the Navy of the Commonwealth. The mighty deeds of the New Model as an army, with its countless cases of individual heroism, have been recorded by friend and foe until our knowledge of the Puritan soldier is fairly complete. But the works of men like my twin heroes, which alone made the naval exploits of the Commonwealth possible, how hard they are to dig out from those ancient records. One thing is helpful; we know that their work *was* done. Still less than an army does a fleet spring into being, ably handled, fully disciplined, and full of the

exalted courage which alone makes possible such great deeds as were done by Robert Blake and his men for the benefit of this beloved country of ours. But again we are in a difficulty. The common round, the daily task of the seamen of that early day makes somewhat dry reading in any account of it, while it is almost impossible to escape the charge of exaggeration even when recording the baldest facts of the case, so far has our standard of comfort, our ideas of how men ought to live, soared above those obtaining two or three centuries ago. Yet without being arraigned for prolixity, we may surely note that Blake's name and influence steadily waxed stronger among the seafaring population of England, until it became almost an easy matter to man any fleet that he commanded—a far easier matter, indeed, than it was to arm and feed them when once they were shipped. But his great heart must have ached and longed for the fratricidal strife to cease. Knowing what we do of him, we must believe that never did he bend his knees in prayer to the All-Father without a fervent petition that England, torn asunder by internecine strife, should be re-united again. And this not because he was less convinced of the justice of the cause he had espoused with his whole heart, but because he, being statesman as well as warrior and patriot, knew how eagerly the hungry Continental nations were watching England for signs of exhaustion, how dark were the clouds of menace gathering, especially in powerful Holland, then the only maritime nation capable of daring us to battle upon the sea. So

that it must have been with a heavy but still hopeful heart that he received orders to proceed to Jersey and crush the last Royalist stronghold, held by Sir George Carteret with 4,000 men. Taking on board troops and their horses under Colonel Hayne, he sailed for the Islands, and met with such terrific weather that upon arrival off the iron-bound coast it was utterly impossible to land—nay, it was entirely dangerous to approach so savage a shore. I wonder if any of us could realise what a few days under such conditions at sea mean. Remember that the vessels were small, quite small as compared with our men-of-war to-day; with only their own crews on board them we should now consider them scandalously overcrowded, and even in the finest weather life was hard, harder than present-day seamen have any idea of. But now in addition to their crews they had an almost equal number of landmen, also a large number of horses, poor creatures, helpless and terrified, yet hardly more so than their riders. And they were all huddled together in filth and darkness and stench, tossed about for days in a raging sea, every moment promising to be their last. But under such awful conditions, so many times worse than actual warfare, the proximity of death could really have had few terrors for any from the admiral to the bugler. Still, with the tenacity of their race, they held on, bating no jot of their faith; those who were faithful and those who thought nothing of faith or unfaith, but just dumbly endured in the struggle, were helped in their endurance by the splendid spectacle of their leaders

"carrying on," as the good old naval phrase has it, as usual, just as if storm and strain and distress had no meaning for them or power over them.

It was in times like these that Martin and Tom, and others too who had appeared on the scene in emulation of them, shone as splendid examples to their shipmates, and were also veritable sheet-anchors to their superiors. The power of their faith lifted them high above the mere idea of passive endurance without any hopeful outlook, which is the mental attitude of so many men under similar conditions. They were bright and cheerful when brightness and cheerfulness were worth untold treasures. A hearty word or so, when green cold seas broke aboard and drenched out the main deck, with its groaning files of seasick landmen, brave as lions, but helpless now as new-born lambs in the dim fetid atmosphere, gave even these hardly entreated ones a breath of new hope that all was not yet over. These true heroes never gave self one thought; they spent themselves for others, and in so doing received the certain reward of a joy that lifted them over every obstacle, drew them clearly through every slough. And yet many of our smart writers of to-day, especially in America, which is what it is because of the labours of Christians like them, would class them as snuffing hypocrites, canting texts and bawling hymns for their own superficial ends.

No one will ever know what those few days meant to Blake's men and his passengers, but all may know the outcome. At midnight one night, when the storm had moderated, the boats were lowered into the still

tormented sea. By the light of flaring torches the horses were transhipped into them, and the weather-worn soldiers followed. They made for the shore, where the Royalist troops, ready, well-fed, and comfortable, awaited them. Leaping from their frail craft into the foaming breakers, these miserable-looking soldiers of the Parliament met the defending force and—it seems impossible, but it is true—actually drove them headlong in defeat in the space of half an hour. The defenders retired to their fastnesses before these warriors, who truly never were beaten, and there they might have held out indefinitely; but Sir George Carteret, like many another good soldier of those stern days, realised that in a fight like this nothing was to be gained by a hopeless valour, and in due time he surrendered on good terms, leaving Blake free from civil war henceforth. It is not too much to say that such an ending to any fight with Englishmen was what Blake heartily desired. As at Scilly he was careful to leave a 'golden bridge for his recent enemy to retreat over, so here he was rejoiced to find his foe so reasonable, and with a great sigh of relief he realised that war with his compatriots was at an end. Thenceforward he had only to fight against foreign foes, and to win himself an undying fame in spite of his many detractors.

Now for a very short time Robert Blake enjoyed the rest which a change of occupation gives. He came home and took his seat in Parliament—one of the hardest-worked members of that strenuous time. He left his flagship confidently in the hands of those men who had served him so faithfully, quite

satisfied that they would not allow any slackening in the affairs of the Navy during his unavoidable absence. But he was totally unprepared for the startling news which reached him at Christmas by a strange messenger, a sea-boy who had been rescued from starvation by Martin, who picked him up in a by-way of Wapping, then, as now, a squalid purlieu of a great city where sailor-men were often inveigled to their doom. By dint of utmost persistence the youngster succeeded in gaining access to the great admiral in his lodgings at Spring Gardens, and there told him the following strange tale. He had been invited, so he said, by Captains Martin and Tom Penfold (he would call them Captains) to accompany them to their home for the short season of rest accorded to all the fleet. And gladly enough accepting the invitation, he had, to his great physical discomfort, mounted a horse and rode with them westward from Greenwich as far as Rochester, when suddenly they were surrounded by a band of armed men, who, in the name of the Commonwealth, had arrested his two friends. Him they would have captured also, he supposed, but that his horse, affrighted, flung him into a ditch, where, half-stunned, he lay listening to the talk of those who had captured his friends. And he learned in this way that those two good men, whom he loved better than his life, had been arrested as spies of the Royalists, at the orders of Captain Elias Pentreath, and were being conveyed under a strong guard (having been also seriously ill-used) to Rochester Castle, there to await trial and sentence. He had been quite unable to

get speech of his friends, but could not help remembering how certain they were, and how certain they had tried to make every one else, of the justice and truth of Admiral Blake, and so he had, as soon as he was able, made the best of his way back to London, and had at last succeeded in reaching the man he sought.

It was a fine scene. The great, grim man who wielded such power and had under that plain exterior such a loving heart; and the faltering lad, only sustained by the intensity of his affection for those who had been good to him, and were now in such dire peril. Swiftly passed question and answer, until suddenly, with a softening of eyes and voice, the admiral touched his bell and bade the answering servant take the lad and deal well with him, give him plenty of food of the best, and see him comfortably bestowed for sleep. But as soon as he was gone Blake's brows set blackly, and summoning his body-servant, he gave him orders under his seal to send at once a company of reliable men to Rochester, under strictest orders to bring Elias Pentreath before him as shortly as might be, and to speed Martin and Tom Penfold on their way with such recompense as their unwarranted detention seemed to demand, and a personal word from himself of his deep, sincere sympathy with them in their trouble through the machination of a villain, and his unchangeable faith in their loyalty and truth. Then, and not till then, feeling that he had done all that was possible under the circumstances, did Robert Blake retire to his small and meanly furnished chamber, and having

commended his country, his friends, and himself to God, fall asleep.

But though the admiral slept, his word was awake, and in the morning his messengers, thundering at the gate of Rochester Castle, found their commission easy of execution. For Pentreath, like so many other astute villains, feeling that he could not trust his emissaries, had mounted guard himself. And so it came to pass that the admiral's messengers found him there, and without more ado took him into custody. Thence to the triumphant freeing of Martin and Tom was but a short step. Noon saw the parting of two little cavalcades—that of the twins for Lyme, and that of the admiral's messengers, with the traitor well guarded in their midst, for London. And, although he would be a valuable figure to hang many adventures upon in the way of fiction, I am reluctantly compelled to admit that his after-career was exceedingly brief. Confronted with the admiral, his lies and effrontery had no chance, and a short trial brought forward many witnesses to the fact that he had long played a double game, hunting with the Parliamentarians and running with the Royalists. One last attempt he made to save his life. It was that he had an only daughter, handless through her loyal conduct at Lyme during the siege; and what would she do without him? It was the drowning man's straw, and failed as completely. For the admiral, cognisant of all that concerned his valuable auxiliaries, told the true story of Elias Pentreath and his daughter, and the effect of that witness was that this bad man

had his power of evil-doing effectually stopped two days after by a dozen bullets and a quiet nameless grave in the wilds of Islington.

Meanwhile Martin and Tom pursued their peaceful westward way, finding on their arrival at Lyme that matters were mending fast. Grace was blooming fairer and sweeter than ever, and even the elderly dame looked young because of the general happiness. Like boys home from school the twins revelled in their liberty, taking the dame and Grace on fishing excursions, on driving treats, and never breathing a word as to the fateful intervention of Elias Pentreath. It was one of those beautiful winters that are so common in England, despite what her enemies or those ignorant of her loveliness say, and there were many days balmy as those of midsummer, when over a sapphire sea, in the golden sunshine, Martin and Tom, convoying Dame Pook and Grace as far out as the Bill, felt *almost* perfectly happy. At any rate, with clean hearts, clean minds, and consciences void of offence, they were as nearly happy as any of us ought to be in this world. Now and then Grace would begin to fret about the possibility of her father molesting her, and weep because she feared him. Then all three would set about comforting her, and endeavouring to assure her that his potentialities of evil-doing were so strictly limited that no harm need be anticipated. But neither of them had the faintest idea that Elias Pentreath would do no more harm at all in this world. Nevertheless they all gradually forgot him and enjoyed their liberty most heartily, forgetting

the flight of time, the dangers of the seas, and aught but the delights of the present. And in spite of their supposed puritanical hatred of the keeping of days, they kept Christmas right merrily, for it was the first Christmas they had all spent together. Indeed they were very happy, nor did one thought of the dark days to come have power to mar their sweet and natural joy. Only, as was inevitable, there was at the bottom of the heart of each of the twins a little gnawing pain which stung each time he looked at Grace, for each had in him the makings of a splendid husband and father, and both felt that such a lot could never be theirs. And neither ever wavered in their loyalty to Grace and each other for one moment's space.

Of course both the twins thought and spake often one to another of their beloved chief, for they knew that he was now engaged in a severer warfare than ever he had waged at sea, and they knew also that he was entirely alone in the world, except for the blessed companionship of his God, so very real to him. For during that winter Robert Blake was in his place in Parliament, was doing strenuous work at the Admiralty, was cutting shrewdly through many a devious tangle of diplomacy, entirely hateful to his simple, manly nature, and in many ways labouring for his country's welfare with a single eye to her benefit, in full anticipation of the heavy days to come. Well was it then for England that those in power knew their man, and gave him a full, free hand to do what seemed good to him how and when he would. Rewards and honours they

gave but sparingly, with democratic simplicity, but trust they gave with no niggard hand, and never was trust given more wisely than that bestowed upon Admiral Blake.

In February, 1652, the admiral was busy getting his fleet ready for sea again. Great events were looming, and very well he knew it. His campaigns, if the operations he had so successfully conducted against Scilly and Jersey can so be designated, had certainly ripened his innate ability to command at sea, but they had done more. They had fully acquainted him with the far-reaching extent of the Dutchman's ambition. In both cases he had foiled that ambition by preventing Van Tromp from getting a footing upon a British island, a point whence he could in some measure dominate the adjacent coast. And he knew better than most that the tenacity of the Hollander would lead him on to greater attempts than these, that all the power and wealth of the Netherlands would be concentrated in one grand effort to destroy the growing maritime strength of England, and take the proud position of mistress of the seas from her. He felt no doubt, for all his humility of soul, that in God's hands he would be the instrument used to foil these great designs; but how his noble heart would have sunk could he have foreseen that all his noble work would so soon be undone. That the people of England, basely ungrateful and foully servile, would welcome back a royal debauchee, who should debase his country as it had never before been debased; who should dally with his foul favourites, his dogs, and his

mistresses, while a Dutch fleet sailed triumphantly up the Thames destroying at its pleasure; and how at last the abominable line of the Stuarts should finally be driven out of England, as too vile longer to tyrannise over it, by a Dutchman, William of Orange, whom the universal voice of the people recognised as the one Ruler who could save the country from irreparable disaster. All this, however, was mercifully hidden from him, and we can only record how well he did his duty in the face of those whom he was bound in the nature of things to look upon as his country's fiercest foes.

It must be admitted that there was ample justification for such an idea upon the part of an English admiral. The Dutch behaved towards us in 1652 as all the nations behave towards us now. They did what in them lay to destroy our trade by shutting us out of their ports as far as hostile tariffs would go; they swarmed upon our coasts fishing, driving off our own fishermen and insolently refusing to pay dues; while in the East they even went to the length of attacking our feeble colonies, and killing in cold blood the adventurers who manned those lonely outposts. All this they might safely have done had England been under a Stuart, but with a righteous man at the head of affairs reprisals were sure to follow, when the time was ripe. To-day we suffer much the same sort of treatment, not because our rulers are unrighteous, but because the old British backbone has become cartilage and foreign nations league themselves together to destroy our trade, to starve us out, and openly boast that

they are doing it, while we, in a sort of paralytic dream, feebly smile and do nothing.

Perhaps such sharp measures as were taken by the Commonwealth to curb the growing insolence of Holland would have been delayed but for the way in which the Royalist refugees were received there, the shameful and undisguised effort made by the Netherlanders to prolong the fratricidal strife in England. We saw much the same thing in France and Holland during the late Feudal war, almost as great as the encouragement given to the Dutch to prolong the agony was in those countries, it was trifling compared with that given them by traitorous countrymen of our own, flaunting their enmity to their own blood with impunity in our midst, and openly rejoicing when their countrymen were slain in cold blood. How Cromwell would have dealt with such people we know very well, but it was a different, a more manly age. People were just as ready to strike then as now, but not so unwilling to pay the penalty for so doing. There was not so much stabbing in the back and then running to the powers for protection. There were no ministers of the Gospel calling their brethren murderers of babes from their pulpits, and then howling because indignant citizens chased them with shoutings to their dens. The Puritan spirit was quite otherwise.

But for the time the Dutch had quite displaced the Spaniard as an object of national hatred. The infernal doings of the Inquisition were quite forgotten, and the terror of falling into Spanish hands had faded away ; largely because the Spaniard had fallen

so low in national proceedings that none were so poor as to do him reverence. But the Dutchman was felt, and rightly so, to be an enemy bent upon destroying England as a nation, and as, happily, there was no pro-Dutch party in Parliament nor any pro-Dutch committees subsidising newspapers to malign the Government and their countrymen, matters at home went smoothly enough, and Admiral Blake was able to prepare his fleet so that it might be fit to meet the great squadron under Van Tromp that was cruising proudly up and down the Channel. He not only used all his powers to furnish the fleet with material of war and get it thoroughly equipped, but sent his tried and trusted followers, like Martin and Tom Penfold, all around the ports beating up recruits, not too difficult a task now, since all the maritime population were burning with hatred of the haughty Dutch aggressors. But while he was fairly well supplied in the matter of his rank and file, he was badly off for officers. It is the blackest disgrace known to the Navy, that during the Commonwealth, and after, many of her officers were cowards, many more were traitors who allowed their political opinions to blind them to their country's welfare, and made them false to the oaths they swore. This must be borne in mind, in order to understand why Blake's triumph was not complete. He was wounded in the house of his friends. But of late years, thank God, the Navy has been outside politics. Its motto has been "Britain first," and I could pity the man that would attempt to introduce political dissensions into the councils of any of our

admirals at sea. He would never be likely to repeat the experiment.

One word more in this connection, and by way of justice to a great and grave adversary. If we, as English, were bitter against Van Tromp, he as a man, apart from his nationality, had only too good reason to be bitter against us. His father had been slain by an English pirate, and he, then quite a boy, made to serve almost in slavery, a slave in fact if not in name, of his father's slayer. However we may seek to extenuate the affair by saying that it was the fortune of war, fashion of the time, etc., the fact remains that young Van Tromp had just cause for his hatred of us, and, moreover, it is hardly too much to say that, had he been supported by his countrymen as he had every right to expect that he would, English history would have been very differently worded. This, however, was no concern of Blake's. He had his duty to do, and did it so well, that by April he had a fairly efficient fleet afloat, none too well armed or provisioned, but as well manned as it could possibly be. Moreover, he had detached cruisers prowling about the Channel, whose powers enabled them to commit deeds which to-day would be called piratical, but then were looked upon as ordinary incidents of maritime life, so long as they did not occur between vessels of war. The poor merchantman was fair game for both sides. His own countrymen might board him and strip him of men and provisions till he was barely able to make the nearest port, telling him sarcastically that he should be proud to be of such signai service to

his country ; or a foreign cruiser might come along, and after robbing his ship, and brutally hauling him and his crew out of her more dead than alive, set her on fire, and make for a Continental port, where the wretched trader would be landed to undergo all the horrors of foreign treatment of Englishmen, who were even less loved then than they are now, which is saying much. Yet strange to say, such incidents, which to-day would set two great nations ablaze at once were they perpetrated, which is quite unthinkable, did not seem to precipitate matters. It was just a sentimental idea of English arrogance of supremacy. England claimed then a salute, acknowledging her superiority, from all ships meeting with her vessels of war, and when, as sometimes happened, her forces were not powerful enough to compel it if denied, note was taken of the refusal and a cause of war made of it if considered necessary. But perhaps it is hardly worth while noticing this. The main fact is that both sides were ready for war, wanted war, were indeed determined upon war, and any pretext, however trivial, was valid if only it would bring about the desired collision.

And so it came to pass that when Blake, with fifteen vessels, was lying off Dover, while Bourne was at anchor in the Downs with eight others, Van Tromp came cruising along with forty sail. Heavy weather caused him to seek shelter in the Downs, where it is recorded that he was chivalrously polite to Bourne and his trivial squadron. The bad weather blown over, the Dutchman took his departure, and hugging the French shore, met one of his country

vessels, whose skipper had a budget of bad news for him. Dutch ships had been attacked in the Channel by English vessels, Dutch merchantmen were not allowed to proceed homeward; in fact, if not in name, England was at open war with Holland as far as the sea was concerned, and he, Van Tromp, would be recreant to his duty if he did not take instant action. There was not the faintest fear of his failing. For first, he was in overwhelming force, as he very well knew, and secondly, this opportunity he had been waiting for all his life since his great and terrible wrong at Englishmen's hands. So he kept away from Dover, intending to attack Blake and crush his vastly inferior fleet before any reinforcements could arrive. The subsequent proceedings have, I think, needlessly been involved in much mystery. Both sides aver, as usual, that the other began it, but there ought not to be any doubt about the matter. Blake had high courage and great enterprise, but he was never accused of rashness; and for him to have wantonly been the aggressor with fifteen ships upon Van Tromp with forty, even if he could have counted with certainty upon Bourne arriving in time with his eight ships to help him, would have been sheer gross folly, much less rashness. But in spite of the Dutch State papers, which emphatically aver that Blake was the aggressor, it seems beyond all shadow of doubt that Van Tromp, in pursuance of his orders to precipitate a conflict whenever he saw a favourable opportunity, thought that the time had come, and bore down upon Blake's small squadron, confident in his ability to annihilate it.

The stories about Blake having fired a shotted gun at the *Brederode*, Van Tromp's flagship, to enforce the lowering of the Dutch flag in salute to an English fleet, may be placed in the same category as the other story of Blake being seated at his cabin table with his officers around him drinking wine when the *Brederode's* broadside shattered the cabin windows. Both are the most palpable absurdities, yet both have long been current as facts. Blake's whole history would give the lie to either of them, and especially to the latter. That from being the wariest of leaders, neglecting no precaution that might give an enemy a surprise, he should allow a hostile fleet to come within a gunshot of him and be carousing at the time, is a statement so absurd as to make one wonder how it ever could have become current at all. But once having passed into print, such nonsense is very hard to eradicate. What did happen is not precisely known, but the intense probability is that Van Tromp came down before the wind with all hands at quarters, guns loaded and matches alight, and with his colours flaunting abroad. That Blake feeling certain of his errand, and in no mood to let his country take a lower place than her right, fired a blank cartridge as a notice to salute the British flag. That its firing was a signal interpreted with malicious intent by the Dutchmen as an invitation to battle, and was answered immediately by a broadside, which, fortunately for the *James*, Blake's flagship, was exceedingly ill-directed and did little harm. And so the most stubborn naval war in all our history was begun.

CHAPTER XI

DUTCH *VERSUS* BRITISH

AS was their wont, Blake's crew had met in solemn special prayer for the success of their arms long enough before the Dutch fleet came within gunshot. And the result was, that in spite of the disparity in numbers between the two fleets, and the certain knowledge that, even were they equal, a Dutchman could always be relied upon to fight with a doggedness quite equal to that of an Englishman in a similar position, the Englishmen felt a sure premonition that they would hold their own, if indeed they did not beat the Dutchman off, disastrously for him. Ahead of the fleet, as was his wont, Blake sailed into action and met the mighty Dutch force alone. No, not alone. Who can doubt, who, that is, in whom is any belief in God's overruling Providence, that Blake's God was with him, and that all his men were energised by his immense confidence in his being destined to do that day a great deed? Then all became enshrouded in the smoke of gunpowder, all sound was merged in the bellowing of the guns, and nothing but the tumult of that dire conflict was audible. Very soon, it is recorded, the *James* had her master killed and some fifty of

her men laid low. But Martin and Tom were unhurt and apparently ubiquitous. It seemed as if they pervaded the ship, always cool, confident, and collected, in no wise to be troubled with matters which they had tacitly handed over to the direction of a higher power, and apparently quite certain that each of them bore a charmed life. Apparently ; but really they were acting upon the highest impulse known, as far removed from reckless dare-devil bravery as it is possible to be. They believed most firmly in the justice of the cause for which they fought, were certain of their own truth and honour in the matter, sure of the courage, truth, and wisdom of their leader, and lastly, but of the utmost importance, were fully assured that He whom they loved would keep them ever from the most imminent and deadly dangers until they had finished His work. And when they had done that they cared not how soon they left these lower scenes. This will of course sound like fatuous hypocrisy to most people, yet it has undoubtedly been the mainspring of all great national movements. Like Moses, these pioneers "endured as seeing Him who is invisible."

So the British flagship *James*, surrounded by enemies, whose supporters, running down before the wind, were continually increasing, fought on sturdily, doggedly, all hands reaping the splendid fruit of their long attention to discipline and sublime confidence in their commander. They knew nothing of the whereabouts of their consorts, knew not whether the day was going against them or for them. And the lack of knowledge apparently did not trouble

them, seeing how they persisted. But who knows now what scenes of mental as well as physical agony were witnessed in the confined quarters of that sorely harassed ship, what meditations, clearly wrought out in the silence of the soul shut in from that terrific thunder of battle, occupied the mind of Robert Blake? Only God. We can but assess the results after listening to the details of the fiery trial. Five hours, of what a length! dragged by, and the hapless *James* was dismasted, a helpless hull, riddled with shot, and in every corner a shambles. Then the stout-hearted seamen surviving in the *James* noticed that their opponents' fire slackened: there was a perceptible movement of the Dutch vessels away from them. Afterwards they found that the diversion was caused by Bourne, who, as soon as he heard what was happening, brought up his eight ships from the Downs, his men fresh and eager, and fell upon the rear of Van Tromp's fleet. But the action was now nearly over. Sullenly, reluctantly, Van Tromp's ships hauled their wind and drew off, leaving two of their vessels in the hands of the English as prizes, one of which, afterwards abandoned by her captors, was recovered by the Dutch. The English, joyful at the respite, made for Dover, towing the sorely battered *James*. During the following day each fleet could see the other, but no more fighting was possible. Each side was too much exhausted.

Of course both sides claimed the victory, but after making every allowance for national bias, it is difficult indeed to understand on what possible grounds it could be claimed as a Dutch success. Twenty-three

English ships against forty Dutch (there is no doubt about the numbers—the Dutch admit them, or about the parity of size, that being also admitted), a fight for five hours, after which both fleets draw off, but the Dutch leave two of their ships behind them—how in anywise can that be construed into a Dutch victory? No matter, it gave both sides an opinion of their opponent's quality greatly more intelligent than they had before possessed, although we cannot say that it did anything to shorten the struggle then begun between two of the most stubborn nations in the world, a struggle which was to end in the reduction of the Netherlands to the lowest rank among nations. It has not been sufficiently noticed that this result was achieved by what was then considered on the Continent to be a country utterly exhausted by internecine strife, and that it was what all the might, cruelty, and unscrupulousness of Spain, backed by the awful iniquities of the Romish "Holy Office," had utterly failed to effect.

In the English fleet there was naturally a deep and settled feeling of satisfaction, which was perhaps deeper on board the flagship than anywhere else. Every survivor on board the *James* felt that he had been specially spared amid the tremendous slaughter all around him for some high and important work only to be performed by himself—felt that he bore a charmed life, or else how did he live amid the inferno of death that raged all around him? how did the ship in which he served escape being sunk by the fire of all those Dutch frigates hovering around her lonely hull like sharks around a dead

whale? This feeling reached its deepest expression in Martin and Tom, where indeed it came perilously near fanaticism. Always they had realised the good hand of their God upon them since they had dedicated themselves to His service in Lyme eight years before, but never until now had felt how great was the purpose to which they had been reserved; and they looked upon Blake as the best of the Israelites must have looked upon Moses, as the man whom God had appointed to be their deliverer out of all their difficulties, and their divinely commissioned leader into the Canaan of peace.

But they did not make any outward show of this inward conviction, except by redoubling their efforts to do their utmost duty. This was quite sufficient to absorb all their energies, for in addition to the tremendously heavy task of refitting their almost derelict ship, they were constantly called upon to attend the last moments of a shipmate who had learned in hours of health to value the simple goodness of the twins, and would rather have their murmured prayers in his ear when passing away than those of any so-called ordained priest. Also, any spare time they might have not actually demanded by the needs of the body was taken up by attention to the wounded, who, in those days of inexpert surgery, inefficient nursing, and utter absence of comfortable accommodation for the wounded, suffered agonies unspeakable. So much so, that it is safe to say that not one seriously wounded man in ten recovered, and that one only by a miracle, defying apparently all the rules of hygiene. In those

inhumane days he was fortunate who was killed outright. He who was only maimed, and had to brave the unprintable horrors of the cockpit, endured such agonies as only to think of induces nightmare. And endured them, too, without any palliative or anæsthetic whatever.

At home the news of the battle was received with the most riotous upheaval of public opinion. The high temper of the Commonwealth officials had bred in the people an equally arrogant belief in their powers, and they were consequently ready to bubble over with enthusiasm in favour of war with any country which they deemed antagonistic to them. Especially was this the case with Holland. England was then dimly realising that her future lay on the sea, and nearly all understood that the only serious impediment in the way of realising this dream was Holland, then the greatest and most zealous maritime power in the world. And this latest affair was so patently (in the opinion of the people) an act of aggression carefully timed for operation upon a weak fleet at a moment when our resources were at a low ebb, that the public rage knew no bounds, even so far forgetting the hospitalities of civilisation that the Council of State had to station guards around the houses of the Dutch Ambassadorial staff. Under these strenuous conditions, the Council, at no time willing to bear tamely any sign of foreign aggression or even insolence, issued an ultimatum to the Dutch States General in the most inflated style, out-Heroding any royal Herod in the extravagance of their demands. The States General by now had discovered

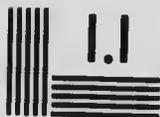
their mistake, and there is little doubt would gladly have climbed down if any opportunity had been given them. For there were none among the Dutch statesmen who did not realise that this was a matter of life and death to Holland as a nation. Her only hope was her maritime trade—whaling, fishing, and commerce. Her shore business, like her territory, was quite insignificant ; and now this terrible northern rival, roused to fury, bade fair to destroy all that sea business which had made the Low Countries great, and would, if not arrested in its development, make them greater still. But the language of the Puritan statesmen, energised by their absolute belief in the justice of their cause, was so overbearing that it was impossible for the States General to find a way of honourable retreat. They tried again and again to negotiate, but in vain. And as Hannay says, whatever the provocation they had given to England in the first instance, war was now thrust upon them, nor could they in anywise avoid it.

Seeing then that war was inevitable, they entered upon it, if not with light hearts, with the most serious determination and spirit. They felt that they had good chances of success. Their fleets equalled those of all the rest of Europe combined. Their sailors were hardy, stubborn, and unused to defeat. Their officers had no superiors, hardly equals, anywhere. And they had facilities for ship-building and repairing such as were possessed by no other nation. Lastly, their world-wide maritime trade had attracted to them great numbers of hardy seamen of the North, who now, as then, flocking wherever sea-work offers



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an opening, so largely man our merchant ships. But this great business, though a source of so much power to Holland, was, in the event of her being worsted at sea, a fatally vulnerable point of attack. She had no "hinterland." Her sources of wealth were in the East Indies, in the Levant, in the Arctic, in the North Sea. Close them against her, and she must dwindle to a nonentity in the comity of nations, as she has done. All this her councillors saw clearly, and it must be accounted to them for wisdom that having, after the first false step, done what they could to avoid war, they did what in them lay to conquer even to the draining of their country of its last resources. It is all the more to their credit, all the more wonderful to note, that their recuperative power was so great that after the virile direction of the Commonwealth had been succeeded by the emasculated, debauched, and utterly vile administration of Charles II., they should have been able to take an instant advantage, even to the extent of sailing up the royal Thames and burning the shipping at anchor. No more scathing indictment can ever be formulated against the English people, none more utterly unanswerable than that, having tasted the blessing of pure, strong, and brave government, they should deliberately have gone back to the unutterable corruptions of the Stuarts, have calmly given themselves over to the unnameable iniquities of Charles and his gang of titled bawds and pimps.

But to return to the business in hand. Even at the risk of that most fatal of all statements, the disparagement of an enemy, it must be said that while

the Dutch so greatly outnumbered us in ships, their building of those ships was far behind ours. They had in their war with Spain got in the habit of constructing lightly built ships of shallow draught for navigating their own coasts abounding in shoals, and these vessels, while eminently capable of dealing with the cumbrous ships of Spain, were in nowise fit to face the heavily armed, stoutly built, and handy vessels of England. Moreover, as before hinted, the Dutch officers suffered terribly from political dissensions. It does seem ridiculous that in a fleet such a (deadening in one sense, exasperating in another) matter as politics should be allowed to cramp efficiency and open wide the door to defeat; yet so it was. The two Dutch factions, Orange and Republican, had their fiercest partisans in the fleet, and their hatred and jealousies were able to neutralise even the typical Dutch virtues of stubborn valour and splendid seamanship, cripple the highest endeavours of their admirals, and snatch victory from them when it seemed inevitable, impossible to miss. Most shameful are the revelations in the Dutch State papers of the way in which partisan spirit hampered and thwarted the work of admiral after admiral, and even when, in spite of all hindrances, some measure of success had been attained, prevented most effectually the meting out of any reward to those whose perseverance had made such success possible. Not that our hands were clean in the same respect. I must not particularise, but can just observe that several of Blake's greatest exploits were sorely marred by the defection, from political reasons,

of his captains at critical moments. But this treachery was vastly less marked in the English than in the Dutch fleets, and has even been attributed by some careful writers to the reluctance of the skippers of hired merchant vessels to jeopardise their property by coming to very close quarters with the enemy. A very plausible reason, but one which does not seem to be borne out by the State records. In any case, such a reason could not be given for more than a very short period, for Blake insisted upon the Navy being officered by naval men over whom he had more direct control, and of whom he had more knowledge; and, as with the rest of his wishes, it was carried out as soon as might be.

Both fleets now made strenuous efforts to prepare for the greater struggle impending, and the shipyards of England and Holland hummed with activity. But the Dutch, although they undoubtedly were contemplating stealing a march upon us for a long time, were evidently unprepared for so vigorous a resistance—they committed our usual mistake, that of underrating the enemy. Very dearly they paid for it too, payment for which their extraordinary success in the next reign could in nowise recoup them. While they were striving night and day to prepare a mighty fleet that should sweep the English from the sea altogether, came proudly sailing homeward from the West Indies Sir George Ascue with his fleet and joined Blake, who was already at sea again, the twain then devoting themselves to a species of grandiloquent privateering. Lying in wait for the swag-bellied Dutch East-Indiamen, and

making no account of the protecting ships, they pursued a most lucrative course for all concerned except the Dutch, who could not know what a hornet's nest they were calmly sailing into. And meanwhile the natural protectors of Dutch commerce, the Dutch men-of-war, were being refitted or built. It was a gloomy time for the Netherlanders, and must often have made them desire that they had not so lightly unleashed those wolves of the Northern Sea, or deceived themselves into thinking that England had been so drained of blood and treasure that she would be an easy prey. But that mistake has often been made, and by Englishmen too.

Meanwhile Dutch wealth was pouring into England. It was a demoralising time, as such times always are when much treasure may be won by mere slaughter, and a sort of legalised piracy may be carried on. The purlicus of our great seaports were not in anywise puritanical, for while the Commonwealth paymasters were honest and paid out prize-money, the seafarers were foolish, as seafarers usually are, and flung the money, so hardly and dangerously earned, in all directions, as if they had just gathered it from the dust at their feet and would be able as easily to gather all they cared for. Thus according to their sailor nature did the majority; but among the minority Martin and Tom found themselves able to lay by a store of gold that effectually prevented all danger of being left to a destitute old age. Of course they rejoiced in that it was now certain that Grace would never be left to starve. She was, as always, the guiding star of

both their lives, and ever higher, holier, and more inseparable grew the bond between the strange trio, albeit it was but seldom that they could refresh themselves with the joy of her sweet society. Her image, however, was always in the secret sanctuary of their hearts, a sweet, pathetic figure demanding and receiving most loyal, faithful service, and undoubtedly acting upon these two brave men as a magnet, keeping their hearts, as far as earth's desires were concerned, firmly fixed upon Lyme. She, poor girl, was in danger of sinking into a soulless automaton but for her thoughts of the twins. She spent her days in utter idleness as far as manual labour was concerned, by reason of her great loss, or walking pensively by the shore, permeated by the sombre melancholy of the sea music. She was driven to cultivate thought and imagination, so that in fancy she could see her beloved ones wrestling with the sea or withstanding the enemy, or in peaceful times pacing the deck thinking of her; projecting their wistful fancies across the intervening space, she felt, until in mid-ether they met hers and she became conscious of communion with them. Far-fetched? Oh no. We can and do commune with loved ones far way in this fashion, albeit the communication is not subject to our will as speech is, because its laws are not as yet understood. One day, I doubt not, two minds or brains or sensoria, whatever you like to call it, in full sympathy with each other, will be able to send and receive messages to and from each other half a world away. But not yet—that is, intelligently. Only all of us who

have had dearly beloved ones far away have had experiences that assured us that communication is possible, and that it only remains to be able to control such communications and to interpret their dim indications.

About midsummer Blake parted from Ascue and sailed up the North Sea on a most important errand. It had long been a source of greatest annoyance to our hearty fishermen that the Dutch fishing-schuyts, or "busses," forsaking their own coasts, would persist in poaching upon English fishing-grounds and arrogantly ignoring all peaceful representations made to them as to the illegality of their proceedings. The practice had gone to great lengths under Charles, who was too busy oppressing his own subjects to interfere in the matter of their being oppressed by the subjects of another country. So to-day foreign fishermen poach with almost perfect impunity upon our shores, to the great detriment of our hardly entreated fishermen—often doing, indeed, what our own folks are imprisoned for doing ; and when caught, as they seldom are, fined ridiculously small sums. But when our fishermen go fishing on the foreigner's coasts, even so far afield as Iceland, and are caught, it means confiscation of fish-nets and gear, *and* a heavy fine as well. Roundly, in the case of a poor owner, absolute ruin, and for the men the loss of a month's hardly earned wage. Two wrongs do not make a right, of course, but every fisherman on our coast wonders why the foreigner should be so tenderly treated, and he, the home-born, so hardly dealt with. And he sighs for the days of

the Commonwealth and even-handed justice, when the freedom-loving Puritan, fearing none but God, dealt with the foreigner as the foreigner dealt with us.

Now the tables were completely turned. The Dutch not only allowed their fishing-fleets to ravage the English grounds, but had a complete squadron of fifteen frigates to protect them while so doing. The force of arrogant disregard of international rights could hardly go farther even in these days, when foreign nations seem to flout England at their pleasure, and openly avow that she does not retaliate, because a very large minority of her citizens love the foreigner, of whatever brand, better than they love their own flesh and blood. But Blake came with forty frigates and made a clean sweep of matters, as was his wont. He drove the Dutch frigates off the coast or sunk them, boarded the fishing-vessels and flung their stolen spoils overboard, sending them off home unharmed but empty-handed to their own shores, as they well deserved. There was nothing splendid in this achievement; it was police-work really—good, practical service rendered without any romantic glamour about it, but its results enduring for at least a century. But while it was a-doing the Dutch, having almost completed their preparations for a renewal of the great struggle, sent Van Tromp to sea with one hundred ships. Blake was on the Scotch coast, well north, and there was only Sir George Ascue with a tiny squadron in the Downs to oppose the coming of this terrible Armada. Why it was that Van Tromp did not then sweep the sea we cannot tell. It seems

hard to believe that he was as energetic and forceful as he has been represented to be. Or was it, as some of us prefer to believe, that England, ruled by righteous men, was then under the special care and protection of God, who would not permit evil to befall her? Be that how it will, the fact is that Sir George took refuge under the guns of Dover, which was hastily reinforced, the Lord Protector himself coming down to oversee the operations, while Van Tromp's fleet met a flat calm, and lay lolling in mid-Channel, helpless to attack. Messengers were sent to Blake informing him of the state of affairs, but the despatches themselves evince no sign of perturbation at the presence of the mighty Dutch fleet on the English shore. Yet it may well be doubted whether England was in greater apparent danger from the Spanish Armada than she was at this time. No true Briton can help feeling a glow of exultation at the high and noble way in which these common men who then ruled England met crisis after crisis, sublimely indifferent to their magnitude and oblivious of their terrors, because feeling confident that God was on their side, and that He would not suffer their labours for His glory to be in vain. Our utilitarian age looks sneeringly upon such fanaticism, as religious fervour is always called, forgetting that while there is a real danger in fanatic zeal, both to the fanatic and his opponent, true religion has no relation to religious mania, and never does harm; is sane, and quiet, and determined, and successful even from a worldly point of view, although often temporarily set back.

When at last the friendly calm gave place to a south-west wind, Van Tromp sailed north. He had great hopes of meeting Blake and overwhelming him with ease. And, moreover, he had received intelligence that a number of Dutch East-Indiamen, having been warned of the danger of coming up the Channel, were essaying the "North about" route, and he hoped to meet them and convoy them home. Alas for his hopes! It was not written that Holland should control Britain, and every step taken by a Dutchman with that end in view seemed doomed beforehand to disappointment. He never found Blake at all. He did find the Dutch merchantmen, but at an awful cost of life and treasure. For the weather was terrible, abnormally so even for that stormy sea, considering the time of year. The Dutch merchant ships had safely weathered the very dangerous navigation of the Northern passage, only to meet with destruction when close home in familiar waters, from howling, unnatural summer gales. The men-of-war suffered equally with the merchantmen. "He blew with His wind and they were scattered." The disaster was complete as far as it went. The herring fishery was ruined, this alone being a national calamity for the Dutch, and the scenes at the Netherland ports, as smack after smack came in with the same dismal tale, were heart-rending. This calamity struck at the lower classes, the vitals of the nation. But the immense losses inflicted by the English fleet upon the homeward-bound Dutch East-Indiamen, and the crowning blow of those summer gales, hit the middle and wealthy classes as hard—brought

ruin and desolation into hundreds of comfortable families, and aroused a fierce spirit of resentment against those responsible, or to be held responsible, for arousing the English to so fierce a retaliation. Strangely enough, this popular anger focussed itself upon Van Tromp. Political animus no doubt had much to do with it, and astute stay-at-home politicians, quite impervious to all feelings of right or honour, would have small difficulty in blaming an absent man. Still it does seem strange that the Dutch should have made a man their scapegoat who, whatever his faults of lethargy may have been, was, by common consent of friends and enemies, one of the bravest of the brave, and was also a seaman of the very highest type known. But these qualities counted for nothing, apparently, against the salient fact that he was a partisan of the House of Orange, just then an object of the fiercest popular hatred in Holland.

So the great Dutchman, weary and sick at heart, resigned his commission, and evading the mob which was clamouring for his blood, imputing to him all the late disasters, retired into private life for awhile, making way for De With and De Ruyter, known partisans of the French faction. We may fitly close this chapter with an assumption. No proof can be brought for it, but the inferences all point that way. France was at war with Spain, a war with which we had nothing to do whatever. A Spanish fleet was besieging Dunkerque, and a French squadron of eight ships came to raise that siege if possible. Admiral Blake, being by this time back in the Straits from his Northern feats, his crews full of fighting zeal

and ardently desiring a foe, fell upon the French squadron and practically destroyed it. For this undoubtedly high-handed act Blake has been called some very harsh names, but it must be remembered first that international law was not then so strictly defined as it is now ; that France had been acting most treacherously all through the English struggle, never missing a favourable opportunity of doing us a shrewd turn ; and lastly, the assumption is that in the appointment of the two Dutch admirals, upon the supersession of Van Tromp, France had a very prominent share, and great hopes of doing us much harm. Of all these things Blake was undoubtedly well aware, and being statesman as well as soldier and sailor, with an absolutely free hand, he acted as he thought best, with results the most beneficial to the country he loved so dearly.

CHAPTER XII

VAN TROMP REAPPEARS

AUTUMN, with its maddeningly uncertain weather, found Blake and Ascue still engaged in watching the Dutch, and endeavouring to capture as many of their merchantmen as possible—a pleasant and profitable occupation for themselves and their men. There was little or no fighting, for neither of the fleets could get in touch with the other, but the loss was, of course, very great to the power that had given most hostages to fortune in the way of peaceful trading-vessels. Occasionally a convoy of Dutch vessels would give the watchful English cruisers the slip and get through, to the great joy of their captains and the chagrin of the English, but not often. For all practical purposes, the Dutch oversea trade was dead. Blake had done his best to bring De Ruyter to a decisive action, but had failed owing to lack of facilities for finding out where he was. The proverbial task of finding a needle in a haystack is a simple one compared with that of finding an enemy in an area like that of the North Sea, with no other means of looking for him than sluggish sailing vessels. In any case, the movements of both Blake

and De Ruyter during the month of August are wrapped in mystery; their own respective Governments even did not know of their whereabouts, and their log-books containing their positions and proceedings from day to day have quite disappeared. Nor does it matter very much. We know fairly well what those proceedings were—the steady round of duty, the constant strain of expectation from dawn till dark, and the relief brought by night except when on a lee-shore. For all this Blake's men had been well prepared during the previous strenuous years, years mostly employed in such work as the present, and now they rightly reaped the reward of their stern apprenticeship.

At last, when it appeared as if nothing more could be done to bring the *ignis fatuus* of the Dutch fleet to action, it suddenly hove in sight of the English fleet anchored in the Downs, as if challenging the Englishmen to battle. Overjoyed at the chance of doing something decisive at last, the English fleet weighed immediately and sailed in chase. The Dutchmen deliberately chose for the battle-ground the dangerous estuary of the Thames, which bristles with sandbanks, and is even now, when it is lighted and buoyed as perfectly as may be, one of the most difficult pieces of navigation in the world. Even then it was several days before the fleets got in touch with one another, so deliberate were the motions of those old vessels; but where both sides were willing, and only manœuvring for a vantage ground, the meeting could not be very long delayed. So eventually the action began off the Kentish Knock Sand on September

28th, at about three in the afternoon. The place was chosen by De Ruyter, in the hope that several of the English ships would be put out of action by going ashore, which disaster they were much more liable to than the shallow-draughted, flat-bottomed Dutch vessels, built for the navigation of a shoal-beset coast. The event showed the Dutch admiral's prescience, for both Blake and his vice-admiral, Penn, in the *Resolution* and the *Sovereign* respectively, with several other ships, did get aground on the Knock Sand. But they took no harm, nor were they long out of action, for being to leeward of the Sand they soon slipped off again on a rising tide.

Now it is no part of my plan to fill a chapter with technical details concerning the plan of battle, or a treatise on naval tactics which only professional men could understand or would care to read anything about. Whatever may be the practice in naval battles of the future, it is certain that in the past, from the time of Blake, a general order was given to attack in line, the flagship leading, and once the smoke of battle beclouded the scene every captain was to use his own discretion, with the understanding that he was to lay his enemy close aboard and fire as low as possible, so as to kill as many of his opponents as possible or sink his enemy's ship. All other details were necessarily left to the impulse or chance direction of the moment. The smallest reflection will suffice to show that it could not well be otherwise. The impossibility of seeing any distance, the difficulty of handling the unwieldy

machines that ships were then, and the necessity for keeping up an almost incessant cannonade, all should serve to show us how gloriously uncertain the naval battles of the period were, and also, though I have never seen this noted before, how much damage must have been done to one another by ships of the same squadron in the universal *mêlée*.

One general order we know Blake did give—to reserve all fire until very close to the enemy, where every shot should tell. And he was well obeyed. The Dutch, obeying the almost universal rule among the Continental nations, fired at their opponents' rigging, wasting much ammunition, but also doing much damage to top-hamper, and hindering the movements of the ships. But the result of our usual practice was seen in the fact that whereas we had only about forty men killed, and we did not lose a ship, among the Dutch fleet the slaughter was awful, and several ships, nine in all, were sent to the bottom. Then came kindly night and stayed the carnage, much to the chagrin of the English, who felt sure that with a few hours more daylight they could have made a complete end of their enemies. By the misty, tremulous moonlight both fleets could discern each other, apparently waiting for the coming day to renew the desperate struggle; but the scenes on board of those shot-torn and waterlogged vessels must have baffled description. Only a tormented imagination can faintly reproduce for us the horrors of the lower deck of one of the old frigates after an action. No painter could do justice to it. For even the terrors of the stricken

battlefield have the consolation of fresh air at least ; in the fetid atmosphere of a man-o'-war's 'tween decks, with the stench of blood added to the usual all-pervading effluvia, a new woe is added to the other physical agonies. Moreover, only those actually incapacitated might be let lie. Those great ship-machines, like the lesser men-machines, had been so brutally handled that every man, wounded or not, if able to move at all, must do his utmost to assist in getting things ready for the morrow's struggle, or in keeping their home above water, this latter in many cases a task demanding all the energies of all the survivors, to the exclusion of every duty.

Amid such scenes as these men like Martin and Tom moved serenely, upheld by their exalted faith and high consciousness of duty, cheering by their bright example and stimulating by their cheery words, as well as each of them doing a double portion of work. The twins especially seemed to bear a charmed life, for as yet no weapon or missile had so much as grazed their flesh. And not only did they lead the living in ways of urgent duty, but by the side of the dying they knelt and whispered words of purest comfort and consolation, closing the glazing eyes, and hearing the latest sigh with a sense of relief at the thought that the anguish of the sufferer was over, never to recur again. For in their simple system of theology there was no thought of their God punishing with infinite agonies the finite offences of His creatures. They had not so learned Christ.

The dull grey morning broke over those heaving

areas of sea and low, intangible-looking ranges of coast. There were the tossing, battle-worn ships, Dutch and English fleets being several miles asunder, Dutch to windward. To say that either side was eager to renew the fray would be absurd, but it is on record that Blake, feeling his task incomplete, did what he could to bring the Dutch into action with him again. And naturally, the more unwilling he found them the more desirous of forcing them to fight he grew. But it was in vain. The Dutch were beaten, and beaten so soundly that they did not even retaliate when chased right home to their own ports, whither Blake could not follow them. So he tacked and bore up for home, having this time not merely beaten off a superior force, but chased the remnant of that force home to its own shores. Of course, with the usual want of justice to Blake, attempts have been made to show that the honours of victory were as much due to Penn, his second in command, as to himself. It does not matter that every circumstance of his short sea career shows that he was a man who early learned to command, and that not from his equals or slightly inferior officers, but from his far inferior subordinates, and that in the day of battle he was the last man in the world to delegate his authority to another while capable of wielding it himself. In this respect his opponents have done him far more justice than his own countrymen have since. But that is only part of the result of the campaign of vilification carried on so venomously against all the Puritanical leaders. It has failed conspicuously in

the case of those warriors who led the invincible Ironsides, but Robert Blake, commanding at sea, has never received more than a bare moiety of his due meed.

So ended the battle of September 28th, 1652, and it would be hard indeed to find a more striking proof of the quality of the English fighting seaman than it affords. He was fairly evenly matched with the greatest naval power of the day, with a foe whose bravery, dogged staying-power, and nautical skill are beyond all question. And he signally defeated them. So complete had been the victory that it roused Holland to superhuman exertions. The Dutch realised that unless they were to die as a nation they must make every possible sacrifice. This growing naval power which they had so wantonly provoked would otherwise relegate them to a position at the bottom of the national scale, from which they might never again be able to emerge. And seeing this, they did a very brave thing. They acknowledged their grave error towards Van Tromp, reinstalled him in his old position with extended powers, and made him understand that to him and him alone the country, humanly speaking, looked for deliverance from its awful position. He magnanimously accepted the offer, and immediately began the work of rehabilitating the fleet, of getting together an Armada sufficiently mighty to crush by weight alone the daring squadron of England.

Meanwhile our naval authorities had not been idle. Many of the ships had returned to Chatham for repair, new ships were being built, and at the same

time the narrow seas were being guarded, policed, as one might say; for Blake, upon whom rested not only the chief command at sea, was for all practical purposes the Admiralty, planning, directing, commanding, and throughout backed up most loyally by the Council of State, who knew and trusted their man. There has never been an admiral before or since Blake entrusted with such powers afloat and ashore, and there certainly never has been one who so fully justified the confidence placed in him. And the sole secret of his power was the old one—a simple trust in God, a belief that to the work in which he was engaged he had been called by God, and an utter indifference to man's praise or blame as long as he, the inner man of him, was secure in the consciousness of doing his duty in the sight of God. Is it any wonder that his men adored him? Said Martin to Tom as they jogged along side by side on a visit to Lyme again during that interregnum of October: "What a marvellous thing 'tis, Tom, that our master doth never seem to get entangled in the miserable squabbling and janglings of the Parliament. He must needs mix with them and lift up his voice in their midst, but he doth not appear to belong to them, or at any rate only to a small portion of them. Our Lord Protector must value him mightily as being of much the same quality as himself."

"Ah, Martin," replied Tom, "our admiral has learned the grand secret of the single eye. I feel sure that he has no ambitions but to serve God faithfully and to do his duty. Thou knowest that

where he now is he came to be through no desire of his own, but by sheer merit has he been placed so high. None know better than we the simplicity of his great heart, the innate justice and truth that shine in all his dealings. More, did ever any one see such amazing certainty as he showeth in all his actions, as if never a doubt assailed him? I know not how to express myself, Martin, in this matter, being, as you well know, a man slow of speech and sluggish of understanding, but I speak sooth when I say that I would rather die with Admiral Blake than live with many a man I could name."

Just then there was a loud report, a cloud of smoke, and a slug chipped the bark flying from the bole of an adjacent tree just behind Tom. They were then in one of the by-paths of the New Forest, but had been riding somewhat carelessly, because under the Puritan rule the robbery of passengers along the public ways had so far ceased as to make it difficult to remember that it had ever been prevalent. However, here was an undoubted attack, whether for robbery or other motive mattered not. The two brothers were armed, of course; had each a pair of the old-fashioned clumsy horse-pistols, unhandy almost as a small cannon, but up to the full limit of their usefulness, clean, primed, loaded, and ready. And as each brother, inured to war's alarms, slipped from his horse on the opposite side to that from which the shot had come, he took a steady aim at the spot where the smoke still hung, and waited calmly for the onfall. But all was perfectly still—no sound even of retreating footsteps through the thick underwood

was heard, until with a terrible howling there burst out from behind the brothers half a dozen ruffians each armed with pistols and knives, a perfect armoury stuck in their belts, and flinging themselves upon the brothers, soon disarmed them, and led them away into the recesses of the forest. The brothers, however, were in nowise troubled. Men who live the lives they did could not be. To call them fatalists would be wrong, and yet there was a species of fatalism in their absolute indifference to all the happenings that befell them, so secure did they feel in the hands of God. And the desperate gang into whose clutches they had temporarily fallen could not help but notice this, could not but see how serenely their prisoners took this sudden change in their condition. Instead of bemoaning their hard lot, the fashion of their countenances was quite unchanged, and they conversed with one another in calm, even tones, even calling one another's attention to the exceeding beauty of their surroundings, the wonderful autumn tints upon the leaves, and so on, until the leader of the gang, his astonishment breaking all bounds, said: "What are ye—men, or angels, or devils? for never did I see captives so indifferent to their fate."

"Friend," said Captain Tom serenely, "we be twin brothers who serve the Commonwealth at sea under Admiral Blake, my brother as master and I as pilot of the flagship, and we were when ye captured us on our way to Lyme, to see our ward, the handless maid of Lyme, of whom ye have perhaps heard tell. Beyond and above that we serve the

Lord God, and are fully persuaded that naught can befall us save by His good will and pleasure, and are sure that all things work together for good to them that love God! So why should we be concerned about this trifling and temporary change in our condition?"

During this brief answer the robber's face was a study in conflicting emotions. Rage, shame, and sorrow showed there, chasing one another and fighting for the mastery. Presently he shouted, "Halt! Unbind these men." It was speedily done. "Now," he went on, "I pray you forgive us for our rough handling of you; and if you would return good for evil, come to our haunt and tell us more of yourselves and your deeds. We are not yet entirely reprobate, but being ruined by the late civil wars, and knowing not how to recover our lost estate, we have taken to the robber's trade, knowing well that sooner or later we shall meet with the due reward of our deeds. But we have never robbed the poor, deeming them sufficiently robbed by those from whom we desire to take full toll."

"Yes, we will come, and that gladly," answered Martin, at a look from Tom; and without more ado the cavalcade proceeded through the bosky paths, every member of it relieved from care except Martin and Tom, who, being care-free before, could feel no differently now.

In due time they came to an encampment in a dell in the densest part of the forest, approached by a bridle path so winding that, as Tom said, it reminded one of an eel that in dying had tied itself

into a series of figure-of-eight knots and had never come undone again. Here they were met with joyful outcries from a small colony of women and children, who evidently looked upon their occupation as being as fully legitimate as any other. And in no long time a bountiful meal of venison and other game, with plentiful beer and barley bread, was set before them, to which all did abundant justice. The meal over, all turned, full-fed, to the brothers and demanded their tale. Then did Tom, in his grave, judicial tones, recite unto these wild, crime-worn men the story of his life. Simply, straightforwardly, without any attempt at getting an effect or creating an impression, but with wondrous power such as none there had ever dreamed of before. Not even Martin—for although he could testify in his soul to the absolute truth of his brother's words, yet even he had not before dreamed of the exceeding grandeur of the work in which they had been engaged until now when it was put into words. The sun went down, the stars peeped out, the fire burned low and died, and still the wondrous tale went on, listened to in breathless silence by all, until the sudden end, when Tom said: "And so ye see how, my brothers, I could not fear ye, could not feel that ye would or could do me and my brother any hurt. But for yourselves, why longer lead this precarious life, to be ended suddenly, without doubt, on the shameful gallows tree? Come with us to sea, and, under the guidance of our great admiral, do your duty like men for the good of your country, and die, when you must, knowing how good and pleasant an end ye have made."

"Ay," answered the leader, "that sounds well, but what of these?" waving his hand towards the women and children.

"Fear nothing," said Tom, "I will myself guarantee that no evil shall befall them. If they and you will but come on to Lyme, we will there see to their safe bestowing; and although the wild, free life they have lately led will doubtless make the dwelling in a town irksome to them at first, there be many good friends of ours there who will help them endure until the drawing of the forest life and also its glamour hath worn away."

"It is enough," said the chief. "Let us to sleep, and to-morrow we will decide whether we stay here or go with you to a new and honest life. God be wi' ye. Good-night."

So each retired to his couch of dried bracken beneath the shade of the ancient trees, and in less than a quarter of an hour all were in deepest slumber.

The morning broke bright and beautiful, full of the splendour and freshness of creation. The air had the inexpressibly sweet aroma of autumn, and the sun turned every dewdrop clinging to twig or leaf into a flashing diamond. Almost before the dawn was fully spread all the company were astir, and the chief, calling his who'e following together, spent some time in earnest consultation with them. Finally, he came over to where Tom and Martin stood by the side of their horses, gravely expectant, and said: "Friends, go ye on before unto Lyme—we follow slowly for the sake of the feeble ones;

and make such arrangements as ye are able for their harbouring. When that is safely settled, we go with thee to sea. And may your God mercifully overlook our past offences and lead us into such peace as ye possess. Now let us eat, and then depart."

By this time a rough meal composed of the fragments from the overnight supper had been prepared, and the whole company fell upon it with great appetite, as befitted men who had a long day's journey before them. They were no sooner finished than at a word from the chief all began to make ready for departure. Martin and Tom, being already prepared, stood waiting until the chief came over to them and said: "Why do ye linger? There is no time so good as the early morning for travel. Get you gone, and the God you serve guide you and protect you. Farewell."

The twins needed no further bidding, but mounted at once and cantered off along the road they had come overnight, secure in their sense of locality that they would not miss the way back, crooked though it was. In due time they struck the main road again, and then Tom, without any preliminary, lifted up his voice in the grand old Psalm, "The Lord is my Shepherd," swelling and swelling upon the well-beloved words until the glowing woods rang again with the melody. This relief to their overcharged hearts having been indulged in (for Martin had joined in lustily), the twins jogged along soberly enough until they reached their well-beloved objective, and ascending the swell of Uplyme, saw the pretty town nestling in its valley, with the glowing sunset gilding

the lichened roofs and weather-stained walls. All downhill now ; and forgetting fatigue, forgetting their good horses' long trail since the morning, they raced down the steep approach like a pair of schoolboys, nor drew rein until they did so before the door of the house that held for them the dearest of all earthly treasures.

Over that sacred meeting we must, as usual, draw a veil—it was indeed full of the holiest love, the love of God for His children, the love of a mother for her defenceless ones. The first raptures past, they sat one on each side of their darling, telling her all their budget of news, while bonny Dame Pook busied herself in preparing the evening meal for those healthy appetites, proclaiming themselves as hungry as any shark. It was a long and exciting recital, and hungry though they were, they got so absorbed in it that it was but grudgingly they obeyed the call to partake of the wholesome, palatable food. For this reason the meal was somewhat hurried ; but during its progress they heard a rap at the door, and who should be there but the chief of the robber-gang, who unable to restrain his impatience any longer, had galloped on ahead of his company, in order to prove whether his whilom prisoners were as earnest as he himself. If he had ever any doubts, his meeting with the twins must have dissipated them for ever. He was received with glistening eyes and trembling hands, all that the house could produce in the way of refreshment was set before him, and altogether, so Tom reminded him, every effort was made to emulate the Divine reception of the prodigal. There is a

great deal of wicked cant emitted by those to whom the wish is father to the thought about the utter unreality of stories like these ; but, thank God, many of us know that the purest, deepest, sweetest joy that earth can afford is often tasted by men and women who set themselves at any cost to rescue a fellow-creature from physical as well as spiritual destruction. And why should there be any cant about it? Most of us know utterly godless men from whom the last trace of selfishness seems to be eliminated, whose greatest delight is to give, to see others happy. Is it then so hard to believe that among the servants of the Man of Galilee, whose chief trait was an utter absence of care for self, there should be a like sacred passion, intensified by the Divine source of its inspiration? Now the American critic will tell me I am preaching again, and so spoiling the sale of my book. Well, if this be preaching, I am, and feel, utterly impenitent. Furthermore, I would say that among communities like those found all over America, yes, even in spiritual or so-called spiritual associations whose motto is "Do unto thy neighbour as thou knowest he would do unto you, and do it first," such preaching is, as the doctors would say, specially indicated.

There was great overflowing joy in that humble dwelling that night, so much so that sleep would hardly come. Yet at daydawn Martin and Tom were abroad convening a meeting of the townspeople for the purpose of carrying out their promises of the previous day. As soon as all that could be collected had met, Tom mounted upon a tree-stump,

and in measured tones said: "Brethren and friends, knowing us as ye do, there is no need to protest that my brother and I will do what we say. So coming straight to the point, I ask ye to have a care of the wives and children of a band of New Forest thieves who have so far honoured us with their confidence as to promise that they will follow us to sea under the flag of Admiral Blake, giving up their lawless life and becoming godly sailors, if only their dear and helpless ones may be maintained for the time until they are able to send or bring money for their keep. Knowing ye of old, men of Lyme, I have declared that ye will see to it that none of these women and children want, and that if these newly gathered recruits should fail of their vows I will pay. Will our words hold good as they have hitherto done?"

"They will," came huskily from many throats; others were too full to speak, but the sense of the meeting was manifest. There was no need to take a show of hands. Details remained to be settled—such as in whose houses the newcomers were to be lodged, the rate of remuneration, etc., but there was no controversy, all were too eager to help, having received some of the sacred fire of enthusiasm from the twins.

Hardly had the matter been settled than the news ran round that the newcomers had come over Uplyme, and would be there anon. Almost all the town turned out to meet them. At first the poor folks were desperately afraid, fearing that they were about to be overwhelmed and made to pay for all the ills

they had ever done. But their fears were soon dispelled at the smiling faces, the willing hands stretched forth for the children, the pleasant words of greeting, until like the entry of some welcome potentate the visitors swept down the hill into Lyme, and were carried off almost bodily to their entertainers' houses to receive such hospitality as they had never known before. Not only so, but every one of them, except the children, could not help feeling that their reception marked the commencement of a new era in their lives, full of hope for the future.

CHAPTER XIII

ANOTHER GREAT SEA-FIGHT

NEVER before in their visits to Lyme, precious and profitable as they had all been, had the brothers felt such a fulness of delight as was now their lot. For not only had they the distinct and unmistakable approval of their own consciences, the unlimited approbation of Grace, and the hearty co-operation of the townsfolk, but they felt with a glow of satisfaction how welcome this small band of recruits would be to the admiral. For he had of late been much exercised in mind about the obtaining of men for the service of the fleet. With the extension of naval operations, and the revival of oversea trade consequent upon the cessation of internecine troubles, the number of seamen available grew less, instead of steadily growing as they had need to if the absolutely necessary demands of the fleet were to be met. There was no reserve of seamen, and no training-schools of men-of-war's men except the merchant vessels, which, unless the trade of the country just springing up again were to be suffered to fall back into ruin, must not be depleted of their crews. So the manning problem grew acute, and was in nowise solved by resort to the press-gang, a hateful method which had

largely fallen into disuse. But hardly as the problem pressed upon Blake, it was nothing to what will confront and weigh upon our Admiralty should we ever be forced to go to war with our fleet against any modern European nation. For while we have built up an Army Reserve of a kind, we have done nothing for the fleet, which is not merely our first, but our only line of defence. Alas that so much money and talent should be spent upon the ships, and the building up of their crews, without which they are so much useless metal, be so criminally neglected! So much so that even enthusiastic naval volunteers are continually snubbed, even worse than military volunteers, which is not saying a little.

But this, though it needs saying, even if opportunities must be made to say it, is not in our story.

After a blissful fortnight at Lyme, the twins, full of joy and confident anticipations for the future, left the little port for Chatham, taking their usual affectionate farewell of their ward, and followed by the boisterously expressed benedictions of the Lyme people. Again and again they had made the return journey accompanied by willing recruits, but this time their company numbered twenty-five, at least twice as many men as ever before. For every man who had gone from Lyme at the solicitation of the brothers, if he returned, spoke so highly of them, and of the conditions of things in the fleet generally, that there was no difficulty in inducing eager youths to believe that the British Navy was the service for them, and that there was no surer, more direct road

to honour, glory, and emolument to be found in the kingdom.

So on a beautiful morning in the latter part of October, when the hush of after-autumn was over the land, and the earth seemed to be gathering together her internal forces to face the coming winter, the brothers and their followers set out for Chatham, well mounted, well provisioned, and full of spirits. On the third morning they reached their journey's end, to find, to Martin and his brother's intense surprise, that a full half of the fleet was laid up and under repair, as if there could not possibly be any more fighting that year. But they soon forgot their chagrin on learning that their grand old ship the *Triumph*, in which they had first sailed with Blake, was being recommissioned to bear his flag, and with the ardour of schoolboys they hastened on board. Very graciously did their friend and admiral receive them, inquiring personally after many Lyme friends, and warmly congratulating them upon the fine accession to the ship's company they had brought with them. With that perfect confidence in them that he had always shown, he forbore to give them particular instructions, merely informing them of the rumours of Van Tromp being at sea with a mighty fleet, and of the trouble with Denmark, necessitating a further reduction of their already too weak force available to meet the great Dutchman burning to show his enemies at home that his friends were fully justified in restoring him to a position from which he should never have been driven. Full well did Blake know that his master and pilot would strain

every nerve to get his ship as fit for her arduous service as might be. Fully did he appreciate his good fortune in having a pair of such faithful and intelligent friends as well as servants; and leaving them to their heavy duties, he returned to London to point out to the Council of State the gravity of the situation if their information as to the number and size of the enemy's fleet should be correct. But he knew well that it was no fault of theirs, nor ever complained of any lack of most loyal support on the part of any of his colleagues ashore. None knew better than he the immense difficulties of the English position, as certainly none faced them with more undaunted courage, or more steadfast faith in the certainty of a triumphant ending to the great struggle in which they were engaged.

By the middle of November all the exertions of which the dockyard authorities and their men had been capable had only resulted in the furnishing forth of forty-two ships for Blake's flag, and of these less than half were fully manned. But still it was notorious that, weak in numbers and undermanned as Blake's fleet was, it was homogeneous as far as a fleet can be; the men had that high pride and confidence in the admiral and themselves that could not contemplate defeat as a possibility—a spirit which, though not reducible to statistical expression, counts for so very much in war, whether at sea or on land. In brief, the English Navy was now an entity, as it had never yet been even in the wondrous days of Drake. From henceforth it would have to be reckoned with as one of the greatest of all human

forces, and not even the shameful days of the last shameful Stuart could effectually stay its triumphant march towards its true goal as keeper of the world's peace.

So the fleet put to sea, and on the 29th of November was at anchor in the Downs, when Van Tromp appeared off the Goodwin Sands with ninety vessels at his disposal. Blake immediately called a council of his officers, about which Hannay finely remarks: "That a council of war never fights is a rule to which the whole history of the Parliamentary armies and navies is one long exception. Their councils of war always did fight." So the decision to meet the proud foe was almost immediately arrived at, and Blake's fleet weighed and went to sea to fight the overwhelming force of the enemy. Throughout that night both fleets manœuvred for the weather-gauge in that hampered and dangerous sea-field, and it was not until noon of the next day that they came within gun-range of each other. Blake, as was his wont, took his ship into the heart of the enemy's force, but this time he was not alone as before in the *Resolution*. He was accompanied by the *Vanguard* and the *Victory*, and the three vessels, surrounded apparently by half the Dutch fleet, fought as desperately as usual, aiming low, and disregarding entirely the enormous superiority of their assailants in point of numbers. At last the three ships drew clear of their assailants, and, as yet not seriously injured, bore down to where two of the English ships, the *Garland* and *Bonaventure*, had flung themselves, like wolves at the throat of a lion, upon Van Tromp's flagship, the *Brederode*.

One on each side, they grappled her and essayed to board. But before they could effect their purpose they were surrounded by the Dutch ships, and simply overwhelmed by the masses of men who swarmed on board. An attempt was made by Captain Akson, of the *Garland*, to blow his ship up, but it only half succeeded. An awful scene of carnage was witnessed, what with the hand-to-hand fighting and the explosion, and scarcely an Englishman survived. They died fiercely fighting, and Van Tromp exultantly took possession of the two shattered hulls. Down came the pitiful darkness, and under its shelter Blake retreated into the river, having lost three ships sunk and two captured, five in all, after a five hours' fight with more than double his force.

Now it is that Van Tromp is said to have hoisted his flaunting broom, as a sign that he had swept the Channel clean of those pestiferous English. But I for one, do not believe the story at all. I believe that he was far too brave as well as wise a man to descend to such a piece of paltry *blague*, more especially as he must have understood better than any one else how entirely unjustifiable it would be. No, I think it is one of those picturesque legends that grow up no one knows how, but having no foundation in fact. The greater probability is that Van Tromp felt very great searchings of heart at the cost of his dubious victory, and a feeling of sincere thankfulness that the English fleet was so weak. And he must have looked forward to the future with many serious forebodings. He might well do so.

At home the news of the battle was received as, knowing the iron temper of the rulers of England at that time, we might expect. A high sense of satisfaction pervaded all classes, and Blake was solemnly thanked for his incomparable services to the State. At the same time it was resolved that greater efforts must be made to have a fleet sufficiently powerful to meet the great Armada sent out by the Dutch. And so no expense of skill was spared to this great end, while Admiral Deane and General Monk were ordered to sea, the latter for the first time as admiral. Why this last appointment should have been made it is hard to see, except on the supposition that Blake, finding the incessant strain of his command becoming unbearable, had suggested relief of this kind. And this seems the more probable, in that Deane was appointed to the *Triumph* as a sort of admiral coadjutor, a post he would never have been allowed to occupy against the wishes of Blake. No, that great man was becoming very war-worn; in fact, only an iron constitution could have borne the immense burden he had been sustaining uncomplainingly for eight years. And it must be remembered that in point of accommodation, or any semblance of comfort, he was probably much worse off than the skipper of any dirty little 1,000-ton tramp to-day, while his sea duties had been almost incessant. Not a man in all his fleet but was less hardly entreated than he. On the other hand, he had no home ties, being unmarried; his work was his life, and he did not allow it to be distracted by any political leanings whatever. The heart-

breaking strife of faction never touched him. Attempts have often been made, but without the slightest foundation, to show that he disapproved of the execution of the King, that he disagreed with Cromwell—that, in short, he was the opposite of what he really was, the single-eyed, pure-minded servant of God and his country; but all of them have failed as ludicrously as they were bound to do.

But, as usual, the chief difficulty was to get men. So the Council of State, instead of acting as the naval authorities of a later day did—that is, make wholesale gaol deliveries and wholesale pressings of unwilling men—made more equitable rules of payment both of prize-money and pay, and instituted a system of half-pay to the families of seamen, which at once became popular. It was due to these humane means more than any other that the new fleet was manned, and by the early part of February was off Portland, seventy ships strong. That winter the brothers did not get home at all. They were far too busily employed, at the recommendation of Blake, in superintending the refitting of ships at Chatham, and between whiles employing all their persuasive powers to get men to join the fleet. Fortunately none of the recruits from Lyme had been seriously wounded, and each of them was as enthusiastic as the twins themselves, whom indeed they almost worshipped. In fact, it is my belief that in the generous rules made regarding pay and prize-money the influence of Martin and Tom may be distinctly traced; for while the admiral engrossed as he was with many cares, might reasonably miss such a thought, he would certainly seize

upon it and press it forward with all his power when, or if, presented to his notice by those whom he loved and trusted.

And now began Blake's last fight with the Dutch, the fiercest of all, and one that had almost cut short that great and useful life. Lying off Portland on Friday, February 18th, 1653, the look-outs of the British fleet descried the Dutchman shepherding a mighty merchant fleet of a hundred and fifty vessels up the Channel under all plain sail, the men-of-war numbering over ninety. The wind, being on the Dutchman's starboard quarter, was most favourable for his getting eastward, and distinctly unfavourable for Blake getting at him; and how the Englishman's mouth must have watered at the sight of so much wealth to be had for the price of a little fighting, while they fretted and fumed at the hampering breeze. Moreover, though this was a matter which never seems to have troubled Blake, his fleet was widely scattered, and could by no means be got together swiftly enough to intercept Van Tromp in force. So once again with a dozen ships Blake hurled himself at the main body of the Dutch fleet. This stolid Puritan bourgeois, as he has been called, always acted in battle as we have been led to suppose only a man like the fiery Rupert could act. Another instance of how wrong popular judgment generally is. And again the daring of the man was its own sufficient justification, although, as on a previous occasion, the little squadron of attacking English ships suffered terribly. But they did what they meant to do: they held the enemy

until the scattered members of the main fleet drew up and took part, so that the fight became general. And what a fight it was! The imagination recoils at the attempt to visualise the scene in mid-Channel on that winter day, when from daylight to dark that little company of ships held the whole vast Dutch fleet with a tenacity only comparable to that of a bulldog hanging on to a bear. They held the Dutchmen until the scattered English fleet came together and the fight seemed about to become general. But the kindly dark shut down and forbade further hostilities. It was time. The *Triumph* was still afloat, her flag was still flying, but her great commander, using the word in its popular sense, was out of action. Robert Blake's immunity from wounds and disease, which had long seemed almost miraculous, remembering how recklessly he always exposed himself, was broken at last. A huge jagged splinter had torn his thigh open, and only just spared his colleague Deane. A third of the crew were slain, or so severely injured as to be past all fighting again, and Captain Tom Penfold had lost his right leg and left arm. So sedately, one cannot write sorrowfully, after such a day's service as that, the *Triumph* bore up for Portsmouth, leaving the remainder of the work to the rest of the fleet, fresh and unwearied from their day of sailing to join in the fray. But whatever happened afterwards, here is the place to say that the supreme honour of that day's doings belongs to the little squadron that grappled with the mighty Dutch fleet and would not let it go until night or reinforcements came.

Before following our heroes, let us briefly notice the results of the battle. All night long both fleets worked slowly up Channel, the great Dutchman faithfully looking after his convoy, and Penn, Lawson, and M... as faithfully endeavouring to keep near enough to him to commence the action again at the first gleam of day. And as Saturday dawned the running fight began, and lasted, with scarcely any advantage to either side, until just before evening, when a great Dutch vessel, a rear-admiral's flagship, struck to Captain Lawson and was made a prize. Saturday night fell (oh, the slowness of those old ships, when with a strong, fair breeze it took two days to get from Portland to Calais!), and Sunday morning broke showing Van Tromp still doggedly hanging on to his great convoy. But by this time the English had become savage at the delay, and fell upon the retreating Dutchmen with such fury that soon five frigates of the enemy had been sunken or taken. Here, it is said, on dubious authority, that some of the Dutch captains turned traitor. Then Admiral Penn, making a tremendous dash, burst through the wavering line of protecting Dutch war-vessels and captured *fifty* merchantmen, which were immediately sent on to Portsmouth, in charge of prize-crews that could be ill spared, but were ready to do anything rather than relinquish their hardly won spoil.

Again night fell, Sunday night, for Penn's great deed had been done on the Sunday afternoon. Our men spent it in the most strenuous preparation for the renewal of the fight on the morrow, the Dutch as strenuously endeavouring to escape. Our men

were elate, jubilant; they were already reckoning up their enormous gain in prize-money from the capture of the whole of the Dutch merchant ships. An unwise thing to do, in view of the proverbial uncertainty of maritime warfare, and yet quite excusable and understandable in the circumstances. But they had to do with a great seaman who might safely be trusted to do all that, humanly speaking, could be done for his command, and who had, moreover, men under him, in charge of both merchantmen and men-of-war, whose ability as pilots was of the highest possible quality. So it is recorded of him that as the darkness closed in he anchored with his fleet on the French coast, near Calais, and sent orders to all his merchantmen to make the best of their way home under cover of the night, while he on the morrow would spend all his force in protecting their rear. Any one who has ever seen, as I have, the way in which the Dutch skippers handle their ungainly old frigate-built ships on the Javanese coasts amid baffling airs, bewildering currents, and maze-like reefs, will appreciate to the full the use that those grim Hollanders were likely to make of such an order. When day broke the enraged English scanned the sea for any sign of the Dutch ships. They had disappeared, gone beyond capture, and reached their port in safety—that is, the remnant of them! Still, remembering all the circumstances, it was really an exploit to have brought any of them home at all. And so ended the fourth naval battle between English and Dutch, and the last in which Blake really took part. But whoever has read this necessarily frag-

mentary and exceedingly brief précis of those four battles will see, and if he love truth be compelled to admit, that they decisively establish the claim of the English to be the best sea-fighters of the world at that time. It hath been said, and there is really no need to argue the point, that as regards seamanship Blake was a child to Van Tromp, yea, even to Penn and Lawson, his own subordinates. But what of that? We must judge him by his deeds, and they were so splendid, so intensely valuable to his country, that we may be forgiven for forgetting his short apprenticeship to seafaring, and remembering only the use he made of his experience and the assistance of those around him who did know.

Hitherto Blake had moved serenely amid the smoke of battle and the stress of his sea-career unharmed, and apparently unaffected by any of the cruel diseases which in that day were the common lot of the seaman. But now that apparently his work against the Dutchman was finished, Nature's arrears fell due, and were pressed for payment. The grave, almost stoical man laid down under his ugly wound and was unable to rally. It is supposed that he caught cold in it, but the greater probability is that, from lack of antiseptics, proper nursing, and in consequence of the laceration, a sort of blood poisoning had set in, which rendered him helpless for a long time. He was landed at Portsmouth, and we must suppose attended as well as could be, which is not saying much, for nursing, the mainstay of curative medicine, was then hardly understood or practised at all. Fortunately for those of us who are at all tender-

hearted, or mean-spirited as some call it, we have no popularly detailed accounts of what men suffered in those days who were wounded in battle on board ship. The amazing thing is not that so few recovered from serious injuries, but that anybody ever recovered at all. For long after a great naval battle a ship must have been like a neglected slaughter-house, with unnameable horrors of filth and stench. And it is no wonder that it was next to impossible to get the sailor to believe in the Calvinistic idea of hell. He reasonably enough felt that his hell was experienced here below, and that a just God would surely, whatever an offender's crimes might be, take into account what he had endured on board ship.

Whatever the cause, it is certain that his wound obstinately refused to heal, his health to rally; and a month after his landing we read that his doctor writes to the Council of State gravely stating that his (Blake's) age made the issue of his recovery doubtful. He was then fifty-four. But in fact, as Mr. Hannay so beautifully remarks, there was yet another reason why Blake's recovery was so long delayed. He was one of the kindest and most sympathetic of men, and he knew how many hundreds of his brave followers lay in loathsome dens untended, uncared for, with wounds to which his was a mere scratch, perishing hopelessly for lack of the commonest necessaries of life—not even a drink of fair water or a bit of clean bread; and, horror above all, in many cases the prey of harpies who put a high price upon the smallest service to

the sufferer until they had robbed him of his all, and then flung him out to die in the street. In those *good* old days, of which some are so fond of bemoaning the passing away, preparations for war were carefully made, everything done that could be done in order that men might slay one another, but no thought was given to those who should fall, yet, unhappily for themselves, not die. No hospitals, no organisation, no attempt apparently to provide against the inevitable consequences of war. And therefore I feel that Mr. Hannay's remark is most abundantly justified, when he says that Blake's recovery was hindered by his anguish of soul over the sufferings of his men, which he was powerless to alleviate.

The *Triumph* having been so terribly knocked about, she was perforce handed over to the rebuilders for a long time, and her remaining crew who were able to go were paid off. Consequently Martin had the great satisfaction of being able to devote all his time and attention to his brother, to remove him to a comfortable lodging outside the foulnesses of the shipping portion of the town, and in every way possible to prepare him for the journey to Lyme, whence it was doubtful if he would ever return. And, oddly enough, Martin found one part of his brain busy with speculations as to how much better it would have been for him if only he had been maimed instead of Tom. He pictured himself, not without any sharp pangs, as far away on the sea fighting his country's battles, while Tom, perfectly sound in health, sound in all but the loss

of his limbs, was enjoying the fruits of a well-earned leisure, and, best of all, was enabled to bask in the loving smiles of Grace, who would be the more intensely sympathetic because of her own great misfortune. It was a terrible time for him. He was torn with conflicting emotions, and often in the night woke suddenly to wonder whether he was not a murderer in the eyes of God, because he felt sure that he hated his brother. And the worst of it was that his brother had done him no wrong. That was just it, he felt. If his brother had injured him in any way, he would have had the supreme delight of forgiving him, which would have gone far to nullify the wound he might have received. What could he do? Why was he subjected to so fiery a trial as this? How had his love for Grace, which he had fancied quite changed in character and become distinctly paternal, so suddenly blazed up again, when he had believed it all settled long, long ago? Poor Martin, he had not yet learned the lesson which awaits every one of us: that in the most perfect man, spiritual or material, there are weak spots which only reveal themselves when the blow falls.

Happily, of this mental struggle of Martin's Tom was entirely ignorant. He was perfectly satisfied. The loss of his limbs in early middle life troubled him not—he felt grateful that he had been spared so long amid so many dangers; felt, too, that pleasant sense of having been counted worthy to suffer for the cause he deemed holy, and although he would not have admitted it, did not let it define itself in his mind, he had also the satisfaction of feeling

that his part in the great work was done, and had been well done. And he could not help looking forward with a quiet pleasure to happy days spent in Lyme in the midst of beloved associations, with Grace near to listen to his recounting of past heroic deeds at sea, all the storms of life passed away, and the golden sunset of a blessed old age glowing in mellow splendour before him. And in his satisfaction he forgot his sharp pain of body and did not think of his brother's pain of soul.

CHAPTER XIV

TOM'S RELEASE

I N the early days of April, when the smell of spring was in the air, and a few hardy little points of green began to show in the hedgerows, Martin shipped his brother in a small coaster bound for Seaton, whose skipper promised to land the brothers at Lyme. Before doing so he had an interview with the admiral, who was still very low, and, with the natural pessimism of an invalid, showed no hope of ever commanding at sea again. He spoke very freely to Martin, as to an old friend, but he gave him clearly to understand that in his (Blake's) opinion they would never sail together any more. He expressed himself as deeply concerned over Tom's mishap, and promised that a substantial sum should be forwarded to him to supplement his savings and preclude the possibility of his ever coming to want. And he added: "But that I dare not do so selfish a deed, I would gladly avail myself of your services, Martin, as a bodyguard. It would seem quite like old times," he said wistfully.

"Admiral Blake," replied Martin earnestly, "my brother will not need me now, and if he did I could not spend my days in such idleness as tending him

would be for me, when I can get good, loyal service for him in Lyme. Moreover, there be reasons why I do not wish to stay in Lyme; and, as your honour knows, it would not be easy for me to get another command of a merchantman, while service in the fleet under another admiral would seem impossible. Therefore if your worship will but accept my services as of old, it will make me happier than aught else could do, and I shall still possess the enormous privilege of being near the man I revere most in the world next to my God."

For all reply Blake put forth his thin hand, which met that of Martin's, and the bargain was sealed. Henceforth it was decided that nothing but death should part them.

I do not want to moralise here upon the love of man for man, or belittle the different love of man for woman by comparing the two; yet I cannot help saying that of all the beautiful things a kind Father God has provided for the joyous uplifting of His children, there are pre-eminently two: the love of two men for each other, David and Jonathan like, and the love of a mother for her child. I speak feelingly, for it has been my happy lot to be loved by men who would, I know, have cheerfully given all they possessed—to say nothing of life, which indeed so many men, seamen especially, hold in slight esteem—if they knew I needed it. Hardly can I bear to think now of the love I have enjoyed of the love I have seen lavished by men upon men—men who had little else to recommend them to the refined, and were unable to express what they

felt, but who nevertheless fulfilled in the most superlative degree the Divine command to "love one another."

So Martin sailed with Tom for Lyme feeling as if he had received a Divine solace for his afflicted mind. He felt all jealous doubts and fears removed, and his face fairly shone with the deep joy he had within. Ah! he could not have really loved Grace. I hear some fair reader say. Yes, lady, even more than he thought; but according to natural law the greater had included the less, and for the time being had even over-shadowed it—which thing may be a mystery to the female mind, but is none to me. However, let us not tread upon such debatable ground, but record how Martin, with infinite solicitude, after shipping his disabled brother in the ketch, attended upon him continually, lest any chance lurch of the lively craft should hurt the sorely stricken warrior. And as Martin sat by his side in the dim little cabin, Tom drew all sorts of bright plans for Martin's future, encouraged thereto by the bright look of perfect content upon his brother's face. At last he paused suddenly, saying: "Dear lad, why art so silent? You look happy enough, but have naught to say to all I feel compelled to plan for thee. What is in thy mind?"

And Martin, smiling gravely: "Only this, brother Tom: that man proposes and God disposes, and even while thou art talking away of what I shall do as if my day of service was over, thou knowest not that as soon as I have safely bestowed thee at home, I am off to attend upon our beloved master,

nor ever leave him again except for a brief recess occasionally, to visit thee and Grace, till death us do part." And Martin's smile was now perfectly dazzling.

For a little while Tom lay perfectly silent, in communion with his own thoughts. Then he put out his remaining hand towards Martin, and said: "Dear lad, art right, hast been undoubtedly guided of Heaven in this thing. And thou wilt surely reap thy reward, beyond all that thou couldst ask or think. And—oh! brother dear, I am so glad for thee that I would fain weep. How good and pleasant hath the Father been to thee and me! But there, we may not let our feelings overcome us like a parcel of women or children. We have sterner work before us. Only it is pleasant to yield a little to the sweet weaknesses of affection now and then, and I cannot find that I am less of a man therefor."

Thereafter the twain spoke very freely one to another of their hopes and plans for the future, and Martin noted with some surprise, and some compunction also, that Tom did not appear to set much store by the undoubted privilege he would enjoy of seeing Grace every day and all day long, but spoke of it nonchalantly, as if it were the most ordinary thing in the world. Nor did this subtract aught from his sense of comfort, but rather added thereto, for now he felt that indeed he was blessed. There was no lover-like love in Tom's heart left for Grace—only paternal affection, of that he felt sure; and he, having gained the great desire of his life to be near his beloved commander, could now afford to wait

patiently--for what? Well, he would not be too introspective, but wait, doing his duty the while, and surely all things would work together for good to him.

And Grace, who had never given any sign that she preferred either of the brothers before the other, did not do so now, but gave herself up, as her custom was, to the pure contentment of having them near her. After her first burst of sorrow at seeing Tom's mutilation, and her fervently sympathetic condolences, she alluded to it no more, but seemed glad to walk with him leaning heavily upon her shoulder. But again and again she would say, "How happy, how happy am I! Was ever woman so blest, or so abundantly repaid for the loss of her hands?" And really for pure contentment it would have been hard to match that tiny household in the kingdom. Every need they felt was supplied, they were happy in each other's company, yes, happier than anywhere else, and over the trio brooded Dame Pook, like some docile mother hen with her young brood filling her heart with tenderest love.

Swiftly the days fled by. Winter melted into spring, spring was ripening into summer, and still no summons had come from the admiral for Martin; only an occasional bit of news that he was slowly regaining all his old strength, but was devoting it to administrative and Parliamentary work, leaving the final operations of the Dutch war, the clearing up as it were, to his colleagues, Monk, Deane, Penn, and Lawson. Then came a letter bidding Martin rejoin his chief, not for active service, but merely as a

guard in the river while the bulk of the fleet under Monk and Deane sought to bring Van Tromp to battle off the coast. They succeeded on June the 2nd, and inflicted so severe a defeat upon the Dutch admiral that it became a rout. Blake, as might be expected, could not lie still at anchor when there was a chance of doing good service, so he made all speed to sea with his eighteen ships, arriving in time to join in the pursuit of the scattered Dutch vessels, who were chased right home to their ports. During this short cruise it was abundantly evident that the admiral's health was far from established, his weakness being exceedingly apparent. Martin was his very shadow, watching him with almost the solicitous care of a mother, and relieving him of every possible care and anxiety. For Martin no longer held the position of master ; he had voluntarily relinquished it, and its executive powers, in order to be more closely attendant upon his friend and hero. But in spite of his devotion, the admiral drooped, and in little more than a month of cruising he was obliged to relinquish his command, being again seriously ill. He returned to his native town for a season, taking Martin with him, for, as he said, Martin was now so indispensable to him that he would as soon think of parting with an arm or a leg as of letting his faithful bodyguard go. And doubtless, in addition to the innumerable services which Martin so deftly rendered, his hearty, bright companionship must have been a great boon to so lonely a man as the admiral. Without wife or child or relative to keep him company, he was now, though

a wonderfully self-contained man, far too ill and dependent upon others to be left to merely hireling ministrations. Therefore it can hardly be wondered at that he should grow to esteem Martin as part of himself, and feel that God had indeed been gracious to him in providing him with so good and faithful a servant.

After a couple of months at Bridgwater, during which he improved but slowly, Blake returned to London. Even in his then poor state of health there was much administrative work that he could do better than any one else, for no living man had his all-round experience of naval matters both ashore and afloat, even though many could have been found to equal him in probity and industry. The Commonwealth was exceptionally fortunate in its freedom from drones. And now Martin found himself in strange water indeed. London he knew a little in its baser portions, the purlieus of Wapping and Shadwell, but his experience of Whitehall was about to begin. With the ready adaptability of the sailor he soon knew his way about, soon took the measure of those parasites which even then, under the discouragements of so pure a form of Government as that of the Commonwealth, hung about great men's offices and cultivated the acquaintance of their lackeys, in the hope of turning a dishonest penny now and then, or crawling into a place they were totally unfit for. Of course he was absolutely incorruptible; but, to the disgust of those who, having tried bribery, "boarded him on another tack," as he would have said, neither was he simple. His native

wit stood him in good stead, and he was often tremendously amused when, the stolid look upon his face as he listened to the tempter giving way to a broad grin of sheer enjoyment, he would tell such a one exactly what he thought of him and his errand in "straight flung words and few." The admiral reaped much benefit from Martin's faithful tendance in this new capacity ; for not only was he kept entirely free from those gross annoyances which troubled even his high and serene spirit aforetime, but he had after business hours the companionship of a man in whose simple, honest company he could take great delight and receive much refreshment of soul—a man, moreover, whom he knew to be absolutely unspoilable by any favours shown him.

So, for the space of about nine months, Martin and his great patron lived this, to them, artificial life, realising fully its necessity and importance, but longing to get back to sea again away from the strife of tongues, the continual discovery of intrigues against the State, and all the innumerable dishonesties and disheartening discoveries which apparently must be found at the seat of Government of any nation, no matter how pure. Occasionally Martin had a budget of news from Lyme, where, to his great satisfaction, he heard that the families of his *protégés*, the New Foresters, were living in peace and rough plenty. Some of the men had returned, owing to the slackening of warlike operations, and had settled down as farmers and fishermen ; others were still away at sea, but all were of good report for honesty and courage. Also the news of his brother and Grace was satis-

factory. They seemed to be maintaining easily the relations of brother and sister, and to devote the major part of their thoughts to Martin. Tom indeed wrote gravely warning Martin to beware of the gins and pitfalls of city life, and of intercourse with the great ones of earth, knowing, as he said, the innately volatile character of his brother. At the which Martin was wont to smile hugely, contrasting, as he could well do, the great extent of his own knowledge of such matters with the meagre acquaintance with them possessed by his stolid brother.

Then, to the admiral's great relief, no less than that of his henchman, came work at sea again. And that too in familiar employment, that of policing the Channel, chasing and capturing the French privateers which preyed, like pirates almost, indiscriminately upon any defenceless merchantmen, but of course preferred the English to any other. It was an exciting occupation, and profitable withal, since the prize-money was not only liberally shared, but was promptly paid, under Blake's watchful surveillance. But it was undoubtedly severe labour, if not attended with such carnage as the actual naval battles had been; and that Blake was able to keep his position at sea during a whole year, with quite infrequent visits to London to see how naval affairs were progressing, argues that he had thoroughly recovered from his long spell of disablement.

In fact, his duties were sufficient to wear out any ordinary man, and certainly would have done so. Dockyard activity in England was very great, for there was every reason to suppose that we should be

attacked by France and Spain, in which case there was an immediate possibility of the Dutch stepping in to try to recover something of what they had lost. And under such conditions it was absolutely necessary for Blake to keep in touch with administrative matters, from his high, almost absolute, position at the Admiralty. He was now admittedly the greatest naval authority in the country, if not the greatest seaman. But under these threatening conditions it is inspiring to see what sort of a front these Puritan worthies presented to the snarling statesmen of the Continent. There was no suggestion of humility, no paltering with words. Cromwell's despatches are models of conciseness, clarity, and courage. He says what he wants to say in as few words as possible, and makes it abundantly obvious that he intends having his will, under the good Providence of God. I like his demand from Spain for free trade with South America, and the exemption of Englishmen from the operations of the infernal Inquisition. How severe a blow this was to the haughty Spaniard may be gathered from the reply of the Spanish Ambassador, Don Alonso de Cardenas, "My master has but two eyes, and you ask him for both." This amounting to a refusal, Cromwell promptly replied by despatching a fleet under Admirals Venables and Penn to the Spanish Main with six thousand troops on board, and Admiral Blake for Southern Spain and the Mediterranean with five-and-twenty ships.

But we are getting on too fast. It is necessary to pause a while and see how rapidly the country

recovered from its deadly disruption so that it could now actually despatch a small army and a powerful fleet to attack Spain in her most vulnerable and valuable possessions. The briefest consideration of such an act so soon after the ending of the Civil War, and a remembrance that it must have weakened our coasts in their defensive power, shows what manner of men Cromwell and his Council of State must have been. And the lesson taught by the despatch of these expeditions was not lost upon either Holland, France, or Spain. They were apparently too stupefied to attempt any attack upon England, but, as if fascinated by the spectacle of this Phoenix-like nation dictating to Europe, did practically nothing at all. Many glorious periods there are in English history, but none more so, none where the prestige of England stood higher, than under Oliver Cromwell. I make no apology for any reiteration of this great fact, believing that we need to have it dinned into our ears in these lethargic times, not lest we forget, but, alas! because we have so culpably forgotten whence our liberties sprang.

Feeling sure that all was going well at Lyme, and knowing how indispensable he had become to his master, Martin sturdily refused to take any leave at all, preferring to remain with and assist, as only he could, the admiral in his arduous task. And so it came to pass that Martin sailed with the admiral for the longest cruise of his life without saying good-bye to those so dear to him, because he loved his master almost as much, and because where he felt his duty called him even his home love was not allowed to

interfere. But before he went he was abundantly certified that all was well with them in Lyme; and that they should know how unchanged was his heart he forwarded to them the whole of his prize-money and pay before he sailed, not reserving any, since his everyday needs were well supplied. When Tom received this last letter and remittance he was sitting with Grace and Mrs. Pook in their cosy parlour by a blazing fire, for it was nearly mid-winter and very cold. And looking up from its perusal, he said to Grace: "Poor lad, I feel as if it was the other half of me going down Channel this bitter night. Pray God he may have a fine passage. At present there's a leading wind to lie a mid-Channel course, but I don't know where he is." Grace, watching, as she was wont to do, the expressive countenance of Captain Tom, noted the far-away look in his eyes, and said, "Tom dear, try and tell me if you can what he would be doing if it is his watch on deck now." "Doing, my dear. Why, he would be striding, in his fear-naught coat and thick cap, swiftly up and down the forepart of the poop of the *George*, occasionally stepping to leeward and giving an eye to the sea-outlook on that side. He would not be in charge of the deck, but would feel that the well-being of the ship rested upon him—course, sails, conduct of men, everything. Yet would his voice be cheery and his manner pleasant, as if no care was upon him at all. Of course this attitude of his would be sometimes different, according as the ship's officers were good, capable men or not. But I forget. According to what he tells us, he is now the admiral's personal

attendant, doing all sorts of private things for him confidentially, and so I may be quite wrong. He may be seated at the admiral's table taking his orders for the morrow, and utterly unheeding the working of the ship going on over his head, since he was ever one to centre himself upon the work in hand."

But in neither of his forecasts was Tom correct. At that moment his brother was writhing in bodily agony on the couch in the admiral's cabin, having received a deep and most dangerous stab with a long bayonet-like knife. He had been going his customary round of the ship after eight bells, to see that all was well, and suddenly happened upon a fierce quarrel between two newly enlisted men. And he had just time to fling himself upon them when one struck at the other with a long knife, which missed its object, and entered Martin's side. The men were clapped in irons, and Martin was conveyed to the admiral's room to have his wound dressed, where for a long time he hovered between life and death, to the exceeding grief and anxiety of his master, who could not help feeling, amidst all his solicitude for his dear servant, that he had been of late depending too much upon the services of this faithful man, and not keeping himself sufficiently free from any leaning upon fleshly aid. Thus are we constituted, and so are we taught by those who should know better, that instead of being full of gratitude for these aids to life, we are led to blame ourselves for using them as if it were a dishonour to the Provider of them. So, in like manner, we

shall hear parents who grieve over the loss of a dear child reproved for making idols of things of clay, instead of being sympathised with for their great sorrow over the loss of a choice gift from God. The blindness of priestcraft, however it may label itself, makes for the hardening and deadening of the Christian's character, instead of the softening and broadening influence it should have, and would have upon the heart if left to do its gracious work unhindered by man's impious interference.

Many a fervent prayer for Martin's recovery went up from his shipmates all round the fleet, for he was well-beloved, but none, we may be sure, of more heartfelt interest than those of the admiral. At last those many prayers were answered by Martin's return to the land of sense and interest in surrounding affairs, and the first use he made of his returning intelligence was to ask for the man who had unintentionally stabbed him. The man, a foretopman whom he knew only as joining the *George* at Chatham with the last shipped crew, came to his side under guard, full of penitential remorse. "My lad," said Martin, "you have been saved from a great crime, for if I had not been there you would doubtless have killed your shipmate, and been hung at the yardarm therefor. For what you have done you must suffer punishment, since whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap, and only the coward would shirk payment of a lawful debt. But I would have you know that I have forgiven you freely for my pains, and that what punishment you must undergo is not to gratify any desire of mine, but

because of the law which you have broken. Farewell, and God help thee to be a better man—brave thou art already, I know well." Next morn the man was flogged, but far less severely than he would have been in Nelson's time for the comparatively venial offence of drunkenness. He bore his punishment like a man, admitted its justice, and thenceforward was a credit to the ship.

Once Martin had turned the corner he recovered very rapidly, and by the time the fleet was about to enter the Straits he was able to resume his duties, though strictly forbidden by the admiral to exert himself. He was intensely interested in the present cruise, for it was an entirely new departure for England. Hitherto the great middle sea had been a bloody battle-ground for all the Italian Republics, the French, the Knights of St. John, the Turks, and last, but certainly greatest in point of crime, the African pirates from Tunis, Barbary, and Algiers, who, like the Ishmaelites, their forebears, had their hand against every man, and should have had every man's hand against them. Blake was about to make history in a very special sense. He was about to teach these everlastingly warring sections of humanity that henceforth a new power—making for righteousness and fair-dealing between man and man of whatever race—was to be reckoned with in the Mediterranean. I do not suggest for one moment that Blake was at all conscious of the grandeur of his mission, or foresaw the day when his great successor would sweep that sea from end to end in his operations against the great European tyrant. He,

Blake, was just doing that which his hand found to do with all his might, with no after thought, except, perhaps, that the ultimate results were in the hand of God. So in almost every case has it been with the really great men of this world—a single eye and a willing heart to do their duty, and for the rest no care.

CHAPTER XV

ENGLAND IN THE MIDDLE SEA

IT is, I think, intensely interesting for any Briton when considering our position among the nations to pause for a while and meditate over the wonderful spectacle presented by our command of the Mediterranean Sea. Calmly, serenely we go on our way, dominating that entirely foreign-bounded area of salt water, and holding three points in it without paying the slightest heed to the snarling and growling of every power interested except Italy. Gibraltar, Malta, and Cyprus—and it might almost be added Alexandria—attest the hold of Britain upon the Mediterranean; and while there be many among us who continually advocate our giving up our present position there, withdrawing our fleet and leaving the Suez Canal to be kept open for us by the good-will of France and Russia, and perhaps Germany, no thoughtful man can doubt for a moment that for us to do so would mean the death-knell of our oversea trade. Besides, it would be a sign of decadence quite as easy of interpretation as would have been our yielding up South Africa to the foreign friends of the Boers at the solicitation of those small-minded

Englishmen who do not care who is benefited as long as their own country is put in the wrong.

Not thus thought Cromwell and Blake and their coadjutors. Unexhausted by the mighty task of freeing their country from an abominable yoke at the cost of a terrible civil war, and beating back in utter defeat the greatest maritime nation in the world at the time, these heroic men actually undertook to make the might of their country felt in the Mediterranean—so far from any naval base of ours as it was then, and so bordered by enemies at once ferocious and unscrupulous. It was a grand conception of highest statesmanship, energised also by the highest motives, and one would expect all Britons to feel a glow of pride in the recollection that from the time when Blake first carried the English flag from shore to shore of that great inland sea until now we have been there, a paramount power making for peace or doing international police-work.

But it was fortunate for Cromwell that he had such a man as Blake to carry out his wishes. Wise diplomatist, valiant admiral, fearless and devout Christian, in whom truth and justice were veritable passions—no one could have been better fitted to deal with the wily schemers and treacherous foes of Europe. And especially was Blake fitted to deal with the greatest foe of all, the Romish Church, whose dearest wish was to see this nation of heretics hurled from its high estate and doomed to destruction for daring to worship God in its own way, and daring too to raise its sacrilegious voice against the wholesale torturings and martyrdoms of the Holy Office on the

Continent itself. This one can freely say while fully cognisant of the fact that Puritan hands were not clean from religious persecutions. The blessed lesson of the Master, "He that is not against us is for us," had not yet been learned by the Puritans as their descendants have generally taken it to heart. It is indeed one of the last lessons learned by men who profess and call themselves Christians, not to persecute those who for any reason cannot see eye to eye with them in matters of faith, and to remember that they are as likely to be right as their oppressors. Also that the most fierce, cruel persecution of Christians by Christians has been on questions quite unessential, on minor points having no effect upon ethics or morals.

Blake's instructions were quite sufficiently wide in their range to afford him that discretion in dealing with them that he deserved, but some of them were also quite definite. He was to keep an eye on Spain to see that no help was afforded the Colonies across the Atlantic, which, had Spain been what she was during the time of the Armada, would have been employment enough for his squadron without undertaking anything further. But as we were not at war with Spain, except as far as her West Indian trade was concerned, he was not to attack any Spanish ports unless in his judgment it was necessary so to do. Such an order may seem vague in the last degree to those who know not how loose were international relations in those days, and how many things might be done on the high seas by ships of two countries to one another without precipitating a

general war between those countries. Then, as if to emphasise the fact that though the day of reckoning between the Commonwealth and those who had aided its enemies might be long in coming, it was sure to arrive eventually, the Italian prince who had aided and abetted Rupert and Maurice when they fled from Blake in 1650 was now to be brought to account and made to pay for his misdoing.

This necessary duty finished, a great international piece of justiciary work was to be taken in hand and, if possible, completed, viz. the crushing of the infamous pirate hordes on the southern shores of the Mediterranean. It is an elevating thought—remembering that even now British ships are engaged in combating the slave trade wherever carried on at sea—that so long ago as the middle of the seventeenth century, and before the conscience of the nation had been fully aroused to the iniquity of slave-trading, no matter what the colour of the slaves were, England should have led the way in a fierce attack upon the slavers so far from her own shores as the northern coast of Africa, and that too for the benefit of no one nation in particular, but for all who had suffered from the depredations of these wretches. And embracing all the rest of Blake's instructions, cementing them as it were, was the grand object-lesson he was to give to all whom it might concern, that from thenceforward the sea-power of England was to be one of the greatest factors in the world's history.

Now it is safe to say that never on any of Blake's previous voyages had so much enthusiasm been

aroused among his men as now. He had long ago fully established his title to be called a great and fearless Christian leader, and had completely changed the character of the British seamen of those days, speaking generally, who had been brought to love him for all those high qualities which a Christian should possess ; but now in the eyes of his men, who placed their own construction upon the meagre reports that filtered through to the lower decks of the squadron, he loomed gigantic, as the archangel Michael going forth to do battle with the devil. The lower deck of every ship in the British fleet then rang every evening with hideous tales of the cruelties inflicted upon hapless Protestants by the cowled fiends of the Inquisition, which to an English sailor was synonymous with Spain—and with good reason, for had it not been upheld by all the power of Spain, the so-called Holy Office could not have existed for a day. Some of the men could show hideous scars of torture they had undergone ; many had lost dear ones by burning at the stake, by all kinds of unthinkable cruelties inflicted upon them in the name of the gentle Saviour who went about healing and blessing the people ; and others spake with bated breath of gentle maidens and little children done to death with lingering agonies for the glorious upholding of Holy Church !

Blake, in the eyes of his men, was going to put an end to all these horrors. Not only so, he was to exact vengeance for them, reparation where possible, and stretch out the strong arm of England to save such, whether of our race or not, as were still in the

power of the Man of Sin. Beside this, the purely mercenary incentive—namely, the leaps of prize-money to be gained by the intercepting of the plate ships, the galleons bearing treasure from New Spain—was counted a small thing, so high was the feeling of religious fervour in the fleet. There was also, but in a minor degree, enthusiasm over the rumour that the Algerine pirates were to be destroyed, for here again many a sailor had personal reminiscences to give of miseries endured at the hands of these ruthless Moors. Yet high as the feeling ran against them, there was always the saving clause inserted, that they were savages professing a savage creed and only acting conscientiously according to its dictates. They were therefore not nearly so much to blame as these so-called Christians professing to worship a God of love and blasphemously maiming and slaying all those upon whom they could lay hands who did not profess agreement with them, alleging all the while that they were doing God's service. I was much interested some time ago, when crossing the Atlantic in the company of a missionary priest of the Romish Church, to hear his defence of that Church. He did not attempt to deny or palliate the abominable cruelties perpetrated by the Inquisition, the Jesuits, and the mediæval Popes. He admitted nearly all the nameless atrocities committed during the Spanish war with Holland. But he stoutly insisted that they were not the work of the Church as a Church. They were, he said, the work of individuals or societies in defiance of the Church's teaching, and even the Popes, who were of course

infallible, could, according to him, in some mysterious way become fallible as far as the doing of evil deeds was concerned. But I shrewdly suspect that all this was but for the purposes of argument. And as argument, serious argument, that is, I felt sure, as I told him, that it would not hold water for one instant.

So with this great wave of fervour among his crews, Blake swept proudly through the Straits to begin his great work. And first he sailed north to Leghorn, where he anchored and presented his bill. The Duke of Tuscany was naturally unwilling to be fined for showing hospitality to Rupert more than four years before and incidentally turning an honest, or dishonest, penny by purchasing his prizes from him. He pleaded ignorance of the issues at stake, and asked how he could be expected to know the difference between one political party in England and another. But he had to deal with a man who would have treated Machiavelli himself as the cutlass-armed English blue-jacket treated the French *maitre d'armes* on the sands at Boulogne. By sheer strength of arm and headlong courage he beat down the Frenchman's guard, and after about ten seconds left him with a cloven skull, to the lamentations of his comrades, who cursed the English ruffian for disregarding the finesse of the game. Blake, with his downright, dense honesty, his single purpose, and perfect straightforwardness, could not be imposed upon by any Continental diplomatist however accomplished, and he cut short the conference by a threat to bombard Leghorn within twenty-four hours

if the money were not paid. Then the duke played his trump card, the Pope. He said that he could not possibly pay all that Blake demanded, for the sufficient reason that he had not got it ; and, moreover, as to sixty thousand ducats worth of the plunder, the Pope had bought it and not he. That was enough. Blake immediately agreed to take what was offered, and at once sailed for Civita Vecchia, whence he sent messengers to apprise the Pope of his demand. If, he added, the money were not paid forthwith, he would come to Rome and fetch it himself. It is pleasant to add that the money was paid almost immediately, and, still more curious to note, that it is the only sum of money on record ever paid by the Sacred College to this country as a Protestant institution. Of course the sailors in the fleet were profoundly disappointed. They had reckoned on the Pope's obstinacy, and would have been overjoyed at the order to bombard Rome and sack it afterwards in emulation of the Goths.

But that pleasure was denied them, the rulers of the Eternal City being wiser in their generation than their pagan predecessors. This duty done, and well done, Blake remained on the coast for a season aiding with the silent menace of his fleet the negotiations which were proceeding between the Council of State at home and the representatives of those States which owed allegiance to the Pope, for the amelioration of the condition of Protestant sufferers in their midst. And moreover the English admiral was doing his country signal service in another way. While we were at war with Holland, a Captain Badiley in charge

of a few ships was blockaded by the Dutch Commodore Van Galen in Leghorn for some time, and one of his vessels, the *Phoenix*, was captured. The English recaptured her, and then, to their infinite dismay and disgust, the Duke of Tuscany compelled them to put to sea. In vain did they represent to him that he was violating his neutrality by so doing, and that he was practically condemning them all to destruction, from the paucity of their numbers as compared with the Dutch. He, having been either bribed or threatened by Van Galen, and believing the Dutch to be masters of the sea, made answer that the violation of neutrality was theirs, not his, and that go they must. They did go, and were crushed by superior forces. Now this kind of thing had to stop, and Blake's mission was to stop it. How he succeeded is a matter of history, and no doubt, though so long after, Nelson often reaped the benefit of Blake's work upon the Western Italian littoral.

In this campaign Martin found the greatest delight of his life. For, deeply imbued with Protestantism and toleration as he was, he hated the cruelties and oppressions of the Romish Church with a most vigorous hatred. Also, Englishman as he was, he detested the grossly dishonest and underhand methods pursued by the Latin powers of Europe with a hatred tinged with loathing. And as coil after coil of the tangled skein they wove with intent to cajole or deceive his master was roughly cut through or unwound, Martin, who by virtue of his position was cognisant of it all, was supremely delighted, and felt more than ever satisfied of the Divine character of the mission

they were carrying out. In a lesser degree the men were also delighted. Secrets are almost impossible to keep on board ship. They seem to ooze through one's skin, and I have often wondered to find with what rapidity any item of news runs from man to man until every soul on board is seised of the information. I will guarantee that should the sentry outside the captain's cabin on board, say, a first-class battleship of 15,000 tons, overhear an important piece of news, in less than fifteen minutes it would be the property of the seven or eight hundred men comprising the ship's company, and that too without any conscious attempt or desire to spread it. From the stokers at the bottom of the ship to the men in the fighting tops, all would be discussing it within the time mentioned except perhaps the quartermaster at the con and the man at the wheel, whose work is far too onerous to admit of any such distraction as the passing on of items of news. In consequence of this exalted feeling, the cruise of the English around the coasts of Italy and Sicily really partook of the nature of a triumphal progress. Everywhere they went they found the same surprise at their advent, the same curiosity and subsequent scepticism as to their motives, the same readiness to fall in with the admiral's views. Apparently, that is; but, of course, to trust to the word of any Continental representative whatever in those days would have been the height of folly. It is not much better now

Still, such was the alarm and surprise with which this new departure of the mysterious island Power was viewed that diplomacy was for a while nonplussed,

and Blake's straightforward representations were perforce assessed at their face value. Therefore when with the sublime audacity of truth and honesty he applied to the Spanish viceroy of Sicily for water and provisions, on the ground that he was about to do a work which would benefit all Europe, he was granted his request as if the two nations had been upon the most friendly terms instead of being to all intents and purposes at war. But it must be admitted, while giving the Viceroy of Sicily full credit for his manly action, that any European representative in the Mediterranean could not have been ignorant of the value or necessity of the work which Blake was about to undertake, although he might and probably would be sceptical of his intentions to carry out his avowed object honourably. So it came about that the great English admiral obtained the supplies which he needed, and went on his mission of mercy.

Here I feel that it is absolutely necessary for me to make a short digression. In spite of the fact that so much has been written about the doings of the Barbary Rovers; notwithstanding the fact that almost every English child of reading years will at once recall the Rover of Sallee who captured poor Robinson Crusoe and from whom he made his escape in company with the boy Xury, we have generally grown so absorbed in other interests, so satisfied with the secure state of sea-traffic to-day, that we are apt to forget how terrible was often the fate of our countrymen who went trading in the Mediterranean and happened to get within reach of one of

those enemies of the human race, the Moorish pirates. It was brought very vividly to my mind a couple of years ago when I was a guest of Sir Edmund Verney at Claydon. In showing me his treasures we came to a full-length portrait of a very handsome man in black armour, who, Sir Edmund told me, was a Sir Francis Verney. Tiring of the peacefully monotonous life of a Buckinghamshire squire, he went to sea, and in some mysterious way drifted into the position of a Moorish pirate commander. Probably he was captured by Moorish corsairs, and being of a somewhat reckless and unscrupulous disposition, judged it better to command a pirate galley than to be chained to the oar on the lower deck amid all the unnameable horrors of that employment. History does not tell us that; we only know that this Bucks squire dropped his bucolics and became one of the fiercest and most unscrupulous of all the Mediterranean corsairs—he and a naval renegade from the same old country, named Ward. But we must not dwell upon this exceptional lapse from the national honour too much, as if we were the only European people who furnished leaders to those enemies of the human race, the pirates of Northern Africa. They were officered by renegades from every European nation, themselves being seldom able to furnish men fit to command. They could, and would, and did fight, but could not lead, wanting the intelligence and the coolness necessary. It is a shameful thing to have to admit, but it is true, that nearly all the horrors of piracy have been perpetrated under the leadership of Europeans. Even

the unmentionable atrocities of the China Sea pirates have almost all been carried on under the leadership of Portuguese.

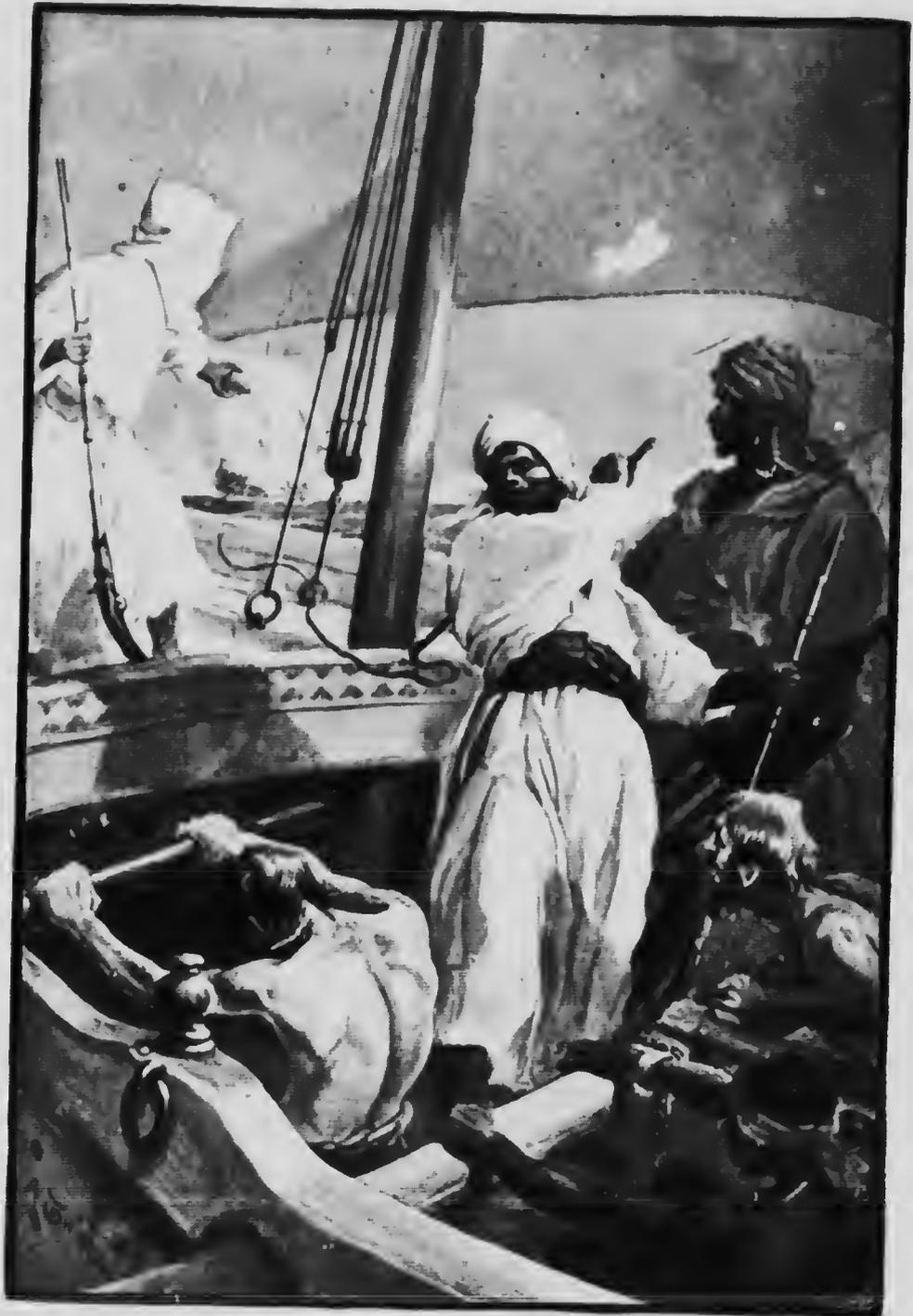
But to return. Had Verney, Ward, and their coadjutors been content to be merely thieves of merchandise, the iniquity would not have been so great. But their chief, their main object, was the theft of men and women and children of European rearing, who were handed over to the absolutely conscienceless Arabs and exposed naked in the market-places of Algiers and Tunis to be sold for what they would fetch. So far had these renegades fallen that they could behold such abominations unmoved. No ship was safe, except a man-of-war, that ventured down the Mediterranean. Did the wind but fall, surely there would appear upon the horizon, like some overgrown beetle, a long snaky craft propelled by a hundred oars, at each of which two or three hapless white men would be chained naked and compelled to tug at their unwieldy beam of wood under the lash of some gigantic negro task-master who took a fiendish delight in scoring the backs of the white slaves and hearing their agonised groans. From this terror of the sea the only escape lay in the springing up of a strong breeze, enabling the hunted trader to carry on all sail and soon distance her pursuer. But in most cases the galley ranged alongside, the peaceful merchantman was boarded by a howling mob of the worst of human beings, men from whom every good trait of humanity had departed, and in a few minutes all her crew were prisoners, her cargo, if valuable, was transferred, and

she was set on fire. Then, with clamorous rejoicings, the ruffians would start for their headquarters to convert their horrible plunder into money, squander it, and start afresh for another bloodthirsty campaign of the same kind.

And not only did these scourges of the sea prey upon passing ships, but growing bolder they dared to attack towns and carry off the inhabitants, since to the filthy Moors human beings were the most desirable form of merchandise. Indeed it is on record that one deep-dyed but daring villain actually landed at and plundered Baltimore on the south coast of Ireland. Only to think of the sum total of misery caused by these villains makes one sick at heart. Of the thousands of hapless men and women and children suddenly haled to a fate worse than death—to remember that, apart from the general feeling of insecurity for property and life that obtained in those good old days, there could be no premonition of a terrible fate like that, makes one profoundly grateful, if the capacity for gratitude be not entirely dead that the good old days are gone, never to return. Few indeed were the families who, having relatives at sea in those days, could not tell some harrowing tale of loved ones held in bondage in Algiers or Tunis, of impossible demands made for ransom, accompanied by impassioned appeals from the enslaved for some effort to be made to release them from their awful slavery.

And now came, like some Heaven-appointed deliverer, a stolid, unimaginative Englishman, armed with a perfect sense of Divine justice as with a panoply

of proof, and prepared to deal a death-blow to the whole accursed system of slavery upon the North African coast, to be in one sense a universal benefactor—not for any hope of a reward, but because it was a good thing to do. Fresh from the attack upon the Hydra of Rome, he came to the assault upon the Cerberus of Algerian and Tunisian and Barbarian piracy, and all Europe looked on with silent amazement as he did so. For they, the Continental folk, had long acquiesced in the present state of affairs, deeming them incapable of alteration, and only making feeble and half-hearted remonstrances when some hapless town upon their coasts was sacked and its inhabitants carried off or held to ransom. Yet such is the inherent depravity of mankind in certain directions that I doubt very much whether any one of those nations about to be benefited by the entirely philanthropic action of England did not hate us more bitterly than ever because of our taking such action. How dare we thus expose their weakness, and flauntingly advertise our own altruistic strength? A crime impossible to pardon, nay, one that never has been pardoned. It is a sad truth, that the reason why Britain is so hated among the nations to-day is not because of her faults, but because of her virtues. By becoming the champion of the oppressed everywhere, by setting an example of freedom among her own people that is gall and wormwood even to such flauntingly free republics as America and France, she has aroused a feeling of hatred against her that can only be quenched by her ruin. But she will not be ruined. Her work is not yet done. It is



" Fresh from the attack upon the Hydra of Rome, he came to the assault upon the Cerberus of Algerian and Tunisian piracy " — PAGE 246.



proceeding on the old lines, making for the uplifting of mankind, the casting adrift of the lashings of superstition, of militarism, of tyranny of all kinds; and until some nation arises fit to take her place, Britain will endure.

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CHAPTER XVI

THE DOWNFALL OF THE CORSAIRS

IT is on record that there was always a goodly number of English slaves in those North African ports, usually from two to three hundred. And since they were held to ransom, every facility was given for news of them to reach their bereaved ones, who if they were poor had then an added anguish, that of knowing the plight of those dear to them and being unable in any way to help them out of it. A lurid commentary upon what was then the ordinary every-day occurrence of life is supplied by the fact that there existed until quite recently a charity known as "Smith's Poor Kindred," whose object was to supply funds for the ransom of Englishmen held in bondage by these bestial pirates. We read that during the reign of the Maiden Queen, when Englishmen had made their name to be dreaded in many seas, and there first began to loom up a probability that these Islands of ours would yet play a great part in the maritime history of the world, "negotiations" were carried on between these barbarous potentates and ourselves for the release of poor English slaves. James Stuart actually sent a

fleet, but, as might be expected of such a monarch and such a period, the time of collapse after the Elizabethan era, it only covered itself with ridicule and did not free one slave. Of course in Charles's time nothing was done. The Martyr King was ever too busy establishing the Divine right of kings to devote any time to the redressing of subjects' wrongs.

It seems almost incomprehensible to-day that even in Cromwell's times and with the fleet under Blake, that was apparently ready to defy all the maritime nations of the earth combined, there should have been any suggestion of negotiations between a Christian power and such an utterly abominable State as any one of the North African States was. Yet it is true. These Barbary pirates had succeeded in impressing the whole of the civilised world with a sense of their awful power—succeeded so well too that even the Council of State of the Commonwealth had commissioned Blake to try all the intricacies of negotiation first (fancy trying negotiation with such an unspeakably atrocious barbarian as the Dey of Algiers!) before proceeding to stern measures. And yet I do not know. Have we not to-day a similar state of affairs obtaining? Do we not endeavour to negotiate with the Sultan of Turkey, a barbarous savage if ever one lived, speaking to him in the language of diplomacy, and gently suggesting to him that it might be as well if he would endeavour to restrain his zealous Kurdish brigands from slaying, from torturing, from——? But the pen may not put into words the methods of Turkish suasion. And he, the unspeakable one,

smiles grimly and orders one of his Western-educated secretaries to make suitable reply. What then can we say to the Council who asked Blake to negotiate with the Dey of Tunis?

Fortunately Blake was not at all likely to place any restricted interpretation upon his powers. Truly he knew well that slavery was looked upon as a venial offence against the laws of God and man. Full well he understood how unclean were Britain's hands on this very question, and how no one could as yet be found to look upon slavery in its right light. But that did not matter one jot to Blake or his men. Here was an outrage upon Britons and Europeans perpetrated by the followers of the thrice accursed Mahound with impunity for many years, and his great soul fretted at being asked to negotiate at all. Therefore it needs no stretch of the imagination to suppose that he was glad in a sombre fashion when his demands upon the Dey of Tunis were refused with an insolent effusiveness characteristic of the Mussulman, who was fully assured of the superiority of any Moslem over any Giaour dog. It gave him the opportunity for which he had been longing, an opportunity which any Christian warrior of those days would have given much to obtain, of dealing suitable chastisement to the most accursed infidel.

And yet Blake's approach to this Mussulman potentate was suave and pacific in the extreme. He came as a visitor prepared to purchase those two staple needs of the seaman, bread and water, but also fully assured that but for his being in too

formidable a force to attack he would not have been allowed to be in the harbour one hour unmolested, and that in any case his reasonable requests would be rejected' with every possible epithet of scorn of which the copious Arabic vocabulary was capable. He was not in any wise disappointed. But for all rejoinder, we are told, he remarked that bread and water were the common heritage of humanity. Then finding, as he was assured he would, that the Dey and his advisers were impregnable to reason or any other form of argument but the ultimate one of all, he sent a warning to him to look well to his forts and fighting-vessels.

Those who cast doubt upon the historic assertion that Blake did try to awaken some human sentiment in the breasts of the Dey and his advisers by reminding them of the elementary qualities of bread and water, and the right of all humanity to partake of these rights, must either forgo their contention upon this head or else give up the assertion that Blake gave the Dey warning of his intention to enforce his claim. Only the man who could say the former would do the latter. A less scrupulous, more astute man would have drawn off silently and begun his bombardment, deeming it utter folly to warn an enemy of the human race of his intention. And I do not know that public opinion to-day would have greatly condemned him for so doing. It has, however, been at once our weakness and our strength that we have endeavoured to fight the unscrupulous with the weapons of scrupulousness, and occasionally, but not often, we have reaped a

decided advantage thereby, since our opponents could not, would not believe that any foe would be so foolish as to tell them the truth, and were convinced that our transparently simple statements were in reality deeply diplomatic and framed with intent to deceive.

In the latter end of March, then, Admiral Blake, having exhausted the resources of reason, drew off with his fleet to arrange matters. He knew full well that he would have no holiday task before him. A glance at a good atlas will show how difficult any sailing-fleet must find an attack upon Tunis (the ancient Carthage) to be, even if, as was most unlikely, the wind should change at the proper time. The city, highly fortified, lies at the bottom of a triangular-shaped bay whose seaward points are Cape Bon to the east and the wonderful harbour of Bizerta on the west. And before a fleet could get at Tunis with hostile intentions there was first Porto Farina, on the Cape of that name, stretching out a long arm into the bay from the west, and, farther in still, Goletta, with its vast fortress ready to dispute the entrance with any mariner fool enough to fancy that he could attack a Mussulman stronghold. It is perhaps hardly necessary to say that each of these places was strongly garrisoned with an entirely piratical horde, entirely convinced of their Divine commission to prey upon the infidel, enslave him or slay him, whichever paid the best. Consequently Blake's action in making every preparation that caution could dictate for his great enterprise was entirely commendable, although it must have seemed to the superficial observers of

the Dey that he had repented him of his challenge and had sneaked away, wisely enough.

But it has been suggested, and I am willing to leave it so, that Blake had in his mind the suzerain of Tunis, the Sultan of Turkey, whose countenance withdrawn from our traders in the Levant would mean a very serious loss to them. The Sultan might be offended by a bombardment of Tunis; a peaceful blockade of the port would not trouble him. So it is supposed. Personally I do not believe, first, that either Blake or Cromwell would have considered the Sultan of Turkey for one moment where right was to be done, and secondly, I am sure that if they had done so Tunis would never have been bombarded at all. At any rate it seems to be fairly well established that Blake, having detached a few ships to keep an eye upon Tunis, sailed for Sardinia, quite close at hand, there to re-provision and water, both of which essentials had been denied him at Tunis. Meanwhile his watching squadron would keep him seised of all the news of interest to him.

He returned on the first of April to find that so far from the Dey being at all overawed or rendered timorous by this ominous delay, he was more arrogant and obstinate than before; and thus his belief from the first that strong measures would be necessary to convince this haughty savage of his great error was confirmed. The time for negotiation was past, and that for decisive action had come. On the morning of April 4th the fleet sailed into the classic bay in two squadrons, the object of their attack being Porto Farina with its heavy batteries, and in addition

the Dey's nine pirate cruisers moored close under the guns of the fort ready to aid in the cannonade. But if the Tunisians had calculated that this bold front of theirs would have the effect of daunting their coming foes, they must have felt that they had been wofully deceived, as in perfect order, quietly as if on an ordinary parade review, ship after ship sailed right up to within musket shot of the batteries, and anchored each in her allotted position. Truly, as Clarendon says, "He (Blake) was the first man who brought the ships to contemn castles on shore, which had been thought ever very formidable, and were discovered by him to make a noise only and to fright those who could rarely be hurt by them."

But really this action on the part of Blake was characteristic of Puritan warfare all round. Having done all that reason and prudence and ability could prompt them to do, they went straight for their enemy with perfect confidence, since they believed that they fought under the immediate protection of God. This, allied to their innately military qualities, accounts for their wonderful successes on land; while at sea a third factor came into play—the unquestionable genius for naval warfare possessed by the race. Still we must never forget that some man must lead the way, no matter what his training and qualifications may be, and it should not at all modify our praise and appreciation of Blake that his environment was entirely favourable to his development upon the lines in which he excelled.

So the ships took up their allotted positions, and when all was ready opened fire upon the devoted

fort and the vessels supposed to be protected by it. Meanwhile a constant cannonade from the fort and the pirate ships had been carried on, but with scarcely any effect, the aim of the Tunisian gunners, if aim it could be called, being so very bad. Nevertheless, good or bad, it was equally unheeded by the English ships, who, reserving their fire until ready, then replied with such terrible effect that the forts were completely battered to pieces, and the armed piers or moles hammered out of existence. One thing in aid of the good cause must not be forgotten: the sea-breeze, or wind blowing shoreward, which had brought the ships in so steadily, still blew, wafting the dense clouds of smoke belched forth by the Moslem guns back upon the gunners, who thus were unable to make any pretence at aim at all. At last the fire from the shore ceased entirely, no gun being left to answer. And the terrible English, leaving their cannon, lowered their boats, grasped their boarding-weapons and rushed upon the pirate ships full of the desire of righteous vengeance. It was no longer a battle; it was a rout. From the quarter-deck of the *George*, the admiral, closely attended by his faithful Martin, watched with grave satisfaction the onslaught made by his brave fellows upon ship after ship manned by the unhallowed scum of all the Mediterranean ports; saw them driven overside pell-mell, heard the explosions as magazine after magazine blew up, and at last, with a great sigh of relief, noted his flotilla returning, leaving behind them nine furiously blazing hulks to show the completeness of their just execution.

When all had returned, and the muster-rolls were called, it was found that this great deed had been done with scarcely any loss to the English fleet. A service of thanksgiving was immediately held, and we may be sure that no man who was able to attend failed to do so. It was an occasion to move the most hardened and bring him to believe that God did rule. Then, when all was ready, the fleet got under way and returned to sea as it came, almost unscathed, with every man on board of every ship full of high satisfaction. Yes, even those who had died, only twenty-five in all, we may be permitted to think, were quite satisfied to have given the highest price of all and to have received full value.

I make no apology for quoting a portion of the admiral's letter giving an account of the action to the Lord Protector, since it affords us a photographic glimpse of Blake's mind. "It was resolved at a council of war to endeavour the firing of their ships at Porto Farina. The better to effect the same we drew off again and sailed to Trapani (in Sicily) that they might be the more sure. After a stay of some days there we set sail back for Porto Farina, where we arrived the third instant in the afternoon, and met again at council of war, at which it was resolved by the permission of God to put in execution our former intentions. Accordingly, next morning, very early, we entered with the fleet into the harbour, and anchored before their castles, the Lord being pleased to favour us with a gentle gale off the sea, which cast all the smoke upon them and made our work the more easy; for after some hours' dispute we set

on fire all their ships, which were nine in number, and, the same favourable wind still continuing, we retreated out again into the Roads. We had twenty-five men slain and about forty hurt, with very little other loss. We are even now setting sail to go to Algiers, that being the only place that can afford us a considerable supply of bread and flesh if they will."

This I think affords us, as I said, a glimpse into the homely mind of the great admiral, and his invariable way of accounting for all success by attributing it to the direct intervention of Almighty God. But I should be doing my faithful friends but poor service if I did not here reproduce a letter of Martin's to his brother and Grace, forwarded by a swift frigate which returned to England bearing despatches from the admiral and letters from the fleet generally—another innovation. I translate and respell because, after all, dictation and spelling are largely matters of the day, and it is poor sport mocking at the quaint orthography and orthoëpy of our forebears.

"DEAR BROTHER TOM AND SISTER GRACE,

"Much as I would be with you at Lyme, I would not have bartered this present cruise for aught the world could give. For behold, the Lord hath given us the pre-eminence over all peoples, insomuch that wherever we went princes and potentates of whatsoever magnitude did humbly bow themselves before our dear admiral and await with bated breath his commands. Yea, even the Man of Sin, whom we have been led to regard as so full of pride and power, was fain to give quick heed

to our demands lest a worst thing befell him ; and so we bore away with us from Civita Vecchia much coined gold, tribute from the Pope, of all men born. Where now, I wonder, is his boast that he taketh tribute of all the sons of men and giveth none? And afterwards, ranging from port to port along the coasts thereabouts, we were everywhere received as if we bore monarchs on a visit. The royalties came bearing gifts and uttering mighty words of praise and civility—for in sooth they had rather we were gone, so far had our fame preceded us. Oh, Tom, shouldst have been there, lad, 'twould have given thee most exquisite delight to see how the wickedness that had ruled so long fell prostrate before the feet of a plain, good man. Moreover this was but the beginning of our triumphs. You know well, Tom, albeit Grace does not, of the scourge which the Algerian corsairs have been to the world generally. Well, our master, whether by instructions from home or by the working of his own great mind I know not, ordered that we should to Tunis to teach these enemies of mankind a lesson they might not readily forget. So it befell that in March we sailed for Tunis and there certain preliminary questionings and answers passed between us and them, of the which I say nothing, being, as thou knowest, in somewhat confidential relations to the admiral. However, all was of no avail, and so it came about that on April 4th we sailed up to Porto Farina, heeding nothing the fire of their cannon, anchored our ships there before it, and destroyed both forts and fleet. Of the captives we set at liberty I say nothing, in case any should die before

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reaching home—as is most likely, so reduced are they from their ill-treatment and starvation. But I believe, nay, I feel sure, that this raid of ours upon Tunis is a death-blow to the corsairs in the Middle Sea, especially if, as I surmise, our admiral intends to follow up his blow at Tunis by more of the same sort all along this truly devilish coast where so many of our poor countrymen languish in uttermost affliction. For myself, dear ones, truly I have never been better. I am the admiral's shadow, accounting myself happy if he call me by day or by night—I love him so. The health of the fleet also is good. For you I pray and hope, since I may not hear, that in your quiet home at Lyme all is as well as it is with,

“Thine continually,
“MARTIN PENFOLD.”

Picture to yourself, if you can justly, the quiet heartfulness of joy that the receipt of this letter brought to the waiting pair at Lyme. The sense of prayer answered for the loved one, the abundant satisfaction of knowing that still the usefulness and recognition of good service held, and in such a manner as to be known of all men, made them both very happy. Only Tom, with a great sigh, said: “The Lord keep me from being dissatisfied, seeing He hath been so full of goodness and mercy toward me, but I cannot refrain from wishing that I could be by Martin's side as of old. It does seem so hard that, while yet my thews are hard and my heart young, I should be made to lie here a useless trunk, a burden upon

my country and no help." "Nay, brother Tom," answered Grace, "art surely ungrateful to God as well as, what thou dost not intend, I'm sure, unkind to me. Hast never felt how drearily lonely I have been here awaiting thee and Martin through the long days and weeks and months and years? And now that the Lord hath granted me an answer to my many prayers, and given me you to keep me company, I have felt nearly satisfied. And you, have you not had your fill of fighting, earned honourable respite from the toils of war, and a comfortable livelihood for the rest of thy days? Oh, Tom Penfold, do not tempt God to give thee trouble, who art now in the quiet haven that most men sigh for." And Tom, only half-convinced, was fain to be silent, knowing nevertheless how true she spoke.

Returning to the fleet we find the admiral reaping the full reward of what he had so valiantly accomplished. The barbarously piratical leaders suddenly descended from the haughty eminence they had hitherto occupied and showed themselves willing to do something to make amends for their atrocious conduct. What is not easy to understand is that Blake should have been willing to treat with them in the matter of ransom of captives and acceptance of promises, since they were all obviously outside the pale of civilisation and deserved only to be treated as vermin, the foul enemies of humanity in general. Yet that is what this high-minded Christian man did, with almost Quixotic tenderness to a beaten foe, and such a foe. Nothing whatever was taken from them without payment therefor, and for every captive

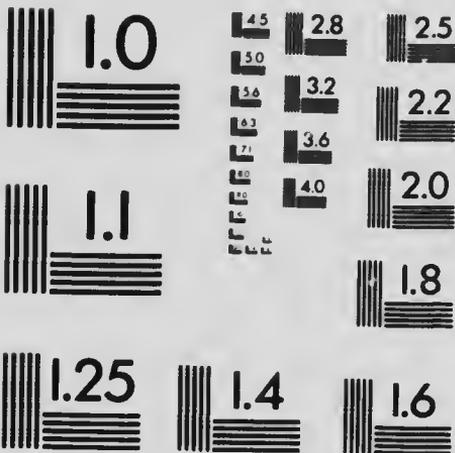
released a ransom was paid, reduced certainly from the exorbitant demands hitherto made, but still a ransom. A wonderfully beautiful story is told of an incident occurring during the visit of the fleet to Algier. Some *Dutch* sailors held captive by the Algerines made their escape and, greatly daring, swam off to the fleet, where they were hospitably received. There was certainly no question of giving them up, and no doubt Blake would have fought till not a ship or even a man was left rather than have done so. But it certainly is hard to understand why he should have shown such lenience to these accursed beings as to allow of his sailors subscribing a dollar each throughout the fleet to buy the freedom of their late enemies. This, however, was done, and surely it proves conclusively how grand a spirit was abroad among the English sailors of the Commonwealth. Not only was this romantically righteous deed done, but it is on record that Blake endeavoured to purchase the freedom of some Arab captives, slaves in the hands of the Knights of Malta, who, in spite of their quasi-clerical character, nay, perhaps because of it, were slave-holders quite equal in guilt to the Turks against whom they fought with such excellent results for the whole of Europe.

And now, having done superlatively well the work that he had set out to do, having proved to all Europe that henceforward if they would meddle with English merchant ships and English merchants they must expect to reckon with the long arm of the English fleet whoever and wherever they were, Blake turned his ship's head towards home. It was



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a memorable year. It laid the foundation of Britain's position among the nations as the redresser of international wrongs, as the one force in the world that might be relied upon to do good, not for pay or power, but for the sake of doing it ; and established for her the reputation she has borne ever since as the one power incapable of malice or cruelty towards a fallen foe. A power indeed that might be relied upon to treat a beaten enemy better even than she would treat her own sons who had helped to bring that enemy to his knees. True, this attitude of hers has ever been accounted gross folly ; true, it has always been scoffed at and taken advantage of by the Continental peoples who have benefited thereby. True also that those who have been most holpen, who have even been kept from perishing by Britain's disinterested efforts on their behalf, have been her bitterest enemies and detractors ever since—as witness the behaviour of Holland and Belgium during the Boer war, two countries that but for Britain's lavish expenditure of blood and treasure during the Napoleonic wars would now have no separate national existence whatever—but what of that? Surely it is a truism not now to be gain-said that, whether in men individually or nations collectively, the practice of virtue is its own exceeding great reward, and is not assessable in terms of finance.

Britain is called by the jaundiced tongue of envy all round the world, and especially in America, the hypocrite among nations—the one race all the world over who make the ostentatious practice of pseudo-

righteousness pay. And even these lines will be quoted as evidence of the fact in the limited sphere wherein they may circulate. But again—what of that? The records of this country's magnanimity and truthful righteous dealing cannot be erased. The malignant tongues of envy can never lie away the ineffaceable results of her beneficent work in the world, and to those who speak of her decadence an word of comfort may be given. God needs a Christian power to work for Him in the world as well as individual Christian men and women. Such an one apart from Britain cannot be found, therefore while God is, Britain will endure, unless she voluntarily abdicate that proud place.

CHAPTER XVII

RECKONING WITH SPAIN

AFTER that last outburst of patriotic pride, for which doubtless I shall receive my due meed of sneers and jeers, I must return to the sober jog-trot of my story, first pausing a moment to point out that from the time of Blake's cruise in the Mediterranean the Navy and the Merchant Service have been ever two distinct Services, and that it has always been the first and most important function of the former to protect the latter. This may be said without for one instant forgetting the splendid services rendered by the East-Indiamen of last century, who so nobly maintained the traditions of British merchantmen. On the passage home the great admiral had an opportunity of showing the world how very much altered for the better was the position of England as arbiter of peace. It cannot be too often insisted upon that the never-ending attempts of the Romish Church to upset, to reverse, the dictum of Christ that His "kingdom was not of this world" have ever been provocative of much blood-shedding and misery generally. Catholics, of course, will dispute this in the face of all the evidence, and assert that it would be a good

thing for an Italian priest resident in Rome to sway the destinies of all the ruling races of the world; but wherever there have been found *good* men in power, there have also been found men brave enough and strong enough to withstand and beat down this monstrous contention of the Popes, and through them of Romanists generally. Blake's opportunity came in this wise. He had occasion to call at Malaga on the way home, and for a great wonder, considering the real relations which subsisted between England and Spain, was treated with courtesy. Yet at this very same time our admirals in the West Indies were making desperate war upon Spain in her colonies. However, we need not lay too much stress upon that, seeing what was the condition of communication facilities in those days. The probability is that the Malaga people knew nothing whatever of the condition of affairs between England and Spain.

However, the fleet was well received, and international amenities were so far good that the seamen of the fleet were given liberty. That is always fraught with risk, even in a most friendly port, because out of several hundreds of men, suddenly released from the close confinement of shipboard, there is almost certain to be some who will overleap the bounds of good behaviour. Very well do I remember how in Sydney, thirty years ago, when the Australian fleet was in harbour and one watch had liberty, the shopkeepers would close early, fearing what the exuberant spirits of the tars might lead them into doing. Well, one of Blake's sailors did

something which annoyed a priest, who urged on the easily excited populace to revenge upon the blasphemer. There is no need to ask what it was the sailor did, or whether he did anything at all. There was such a fierce fanatical hatred of England and all her sons obtaining throughout the whole Romish priesthood in those days, coupled with such an utter disregard of the first elements of truth and fair dealing, that it needed but the slightest opening to draw on some zealous servant of Holy Church to a furious tirade against the doubly damned heretic who dared to cross her path. So this particular Puritan sailor, who may have had no earthly right to the prefix, was attacked, beaten, and would have been flung into prison, but, fortunately for him, succeeded in making his escape, all mauled as he was, and reaching his ship. Here, and the circumstance really goes far to show that he was no merely drunken brute insulting a religious function, he complained to the admiral, and must have furnished him with all the facts; for we find Blake boldly presenting a demand to the Governor of Malaga for the punishment of the priest or monk who had dared to instigate a Spanish crowd to maltreat an English seaman on any pretence whatever. He received the reply which he probably expected—that is, that the civil powers had no jurisdiction over ecclesiastics, who were exclusively ruled from Rome. So accomplished a diplomatist as Blake would have no difficulty in recognising this as the lie it really was; and it took him but a very short time to make his answer, which was to the effect that unless the

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" He would have all monks and Spaniards know that Englishmen should only be judged by Englishmen "—PAGE 267.

offending monk was delivered up to him forthwith he would bombard the city. After a due interval, in the course of which Blake had cleared his decks for action, the monk was brought alongside, and handed over to the English admiral. It was a great triumph, the greater because of the way in which it was received. Having the monk under his hand Blake told him that he was quite satisfied. He would not hang him, as the monk fully expected, but he would let him go free, having vindicated his right to punish such offences himself. Thereupon he read the astounded ecclesiastic a lesson in the right administration of justice, which, we will hope, lasted him all the rest of his days. He told him, for the benefit of his superiors, that had they made complaint of the seaman's behaviour, and substantiated their complaint with dependable evidence, he would have seen that sailor effectually punished. But he (Blake) would have all monks and Spaniards know that Englishmen should only be judged by Englishmen. And so the monk was set free.

It is said that when Cromwell heard this story he was overjoyed, and that it was then that he uttered his famous dictum, "I will make the name of Englishman to be as much dreaded as ever was the name of *Civis Romanus*" Alas that Cromwell's spirited exposition of his great policy should have been so discredited as it has been since! Especially to-day, when in many countries professedly friendly the fact of one's being an Englishman is sufficient warrant for any indignity and insult to be heaped upon the unfortunate bearer of a classic title. As usual,

and doubtless under direct orders from a body which has ever sought tortuous ways of dealing with inconvenient truths, this story has been discredited, denied, termed apocryphal, and so on. But it is based upon good evidence, it is inherently probable, it is of a piece with the whole of Blake's work, and there is not the slightest reason for doubting its truth, unless one were a Roman Catholic and forbidden to believe it.

And now the great admiral, after what he would doubtless have termed his "pleasure cruise" in the Mediterranean, was to take a step back into the previous century, and taste the stern delights of war with what was still, by reason of her colonial stores, the wealthiest of all the European Powers. It sounds strange, remembering the pitiful position of Spain among the nations to-day—"None so poor as to do her reverence,"—to say that only so short a time ago she was the milch cow among the European nations for roving Englishmen who wished nothing better than an opportunity to fall out with her, and fall in with one of her galleons laden with gold and silver from the El Dorados of the West. Hannay gives a little table which states that the four frigates *Naiad* (Capt. William Pierrepont), *Ethalion* (Capt. James Young), *Triton* (Capt. John Gore), and *Alcmene* (Capt. Henry Digby) arrived at Plymouth with the Spanish register ships *Thetis* and *Santa Brigida*, and the prize-money was apportioned as follows: Each captain received £40,730 18s., each lieutenant £5,091 7s. 3d., each warrant officer £2,468 10s. 9d., each petty officer £791 17s., and each sailor or

marine £182 4s. 9d. When we remember that the purchasing power of money was then about four times what it is now, we shall be able to understand what a lucrative business war with Spain was to the bold English seaman, and how it was that he never seemed to consider disparity of numbers any bar to his immediately attacking any vessel under the yellow-barred flag of Castile. Scruples of conscience he had none, for he had only to remember the perfectly diabolical chicaneries of the priests in league with Spain to find every justification for any action, no matter how indefensible generally.

Now I do not for one moment suggest, nor do I think such an idea feasible, that Robert Blake held such an opinion as that given in the previous sentence, because it is so foreign to all that we know of him. But that he hailed with a stern delight the prospect of despoiling these conscienceless Dons, that he felt it would be a good and praiseworthy deed to take from them the treasures they had wrested from the hapless Indian, treasure bedewed with blood and bitter, hopeless tears, I am reasonably sure. And since that treasure could not be restored to its original possessors, or the unspeakable wrongs of the Indios who had died to place it on board Spanish ships set right, it could not be better bestowed than upon honest, God-fearing Englishmen, who, gold or no gold, spared not their blood to bring down the power of that most evil people, the Spaniards of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, buttressed as their villainy was by the worst tyranny the world

has ever known—the tyranny of priestcraft centred in the hands of unscrupulous men. Such I believe, if differently expressed, was the mind of Admiral Blake and his men upon this great matter, and I have no word, no thought of condemnation for them in that they did think so. For some deeds the altruistic spirit of this age provides no adequate punishment. It has atrophied the stern decrees of justice, and one often sighs for a return to the old Mosaic laws by virtue of which brutality was punished by brutality.

If all that was needed was to fill a chapter, it would be quite easy to let the pen run on in the wondrous but thousand-times-told tale of the Spanish treasure ships, their marvellous lading of bars and ingots of gold and silver, the mystery attendant upon its absorption by a country ever growing poorer because of this flood of easily obtained wealth, the strange law by which it appeared to be, while upon the high seas, the, not to say lawful, but obvious prize of any man bold and brave enough to seize it; but I refrain. Merely in passing it seems necessary to point out that wealth so obtained, whether by individuals or nations, does no lasting good. As it comes so it goes. Even the Puritan seamen were demoralised by it, and, forgetting all their board-ship discipline and self-restraint, allowed themselves to behave in the streets of Wapping and Shadwell and Stepney as badly as ever seamen, even pirates and buccaneers, did, which is saying much. It has been my lot to see in Australasia men, flushed with easily gained gold from the mines, eating ten-

pound notes between bread-and-butter, hurling champagne out of buckets at their horses' legs—champagne which had cost them twenty-five shillings a bottle—and playing ducks and drakes with a hatful of silver watches on the waters of Auckland Harbour. But none of these extravagances go beyond those practised by the sailors who fought like demons to take from the Spaniard his evil gains, and then vied with each other in senseless ways of dissipating them.

Some such incentive as the prospect of unlimited plunder was doubtless needed, even with so well-disciplined a company as that manning Blake's ships, to compensate them for the disappointment of having to patrol the coasts of Spain and Portugal after their long Mediterranean cruise, instead of going home. When, however, they were informed of the new duty that awaited them they were quite satisfied, and immediately began to calculate their prize-money, after the fashion of the British sailor of all dates. So the weary blockade began—from Mogador to Lisbon, up and down that storm-beaten coast, those sturdy ships were sailed, every man on board feeling his responsibility, and determined, as far as in him lay, that no Spaniard should get home with any of their ill-gotten gains. To many of Blake's old comrades, like Martin, the work, if not entirely congenial, was quite familiar. And in the old days there was only honour to be gained; no treasure ships were likely to appear on the horizon and furnish forth a fat list of prize-awards.

It must have been a terrible time in Spain, for

those, that is, who in every country are the first to feel the distress caused by war. In Spain too, a larger class would suffer than elsewhere, because, as I have before hinted, a very large proportion of the moneyed folk, the idle parasites who toiled not, neither did they spin—did naught, in fact, to justify their existence—depended upon the arrival of the plate ships for all their means. But now this awful Englishman kept so stern a watch upon the Spanish shores that nothing might go out or come in; and, heretic that he was, he heeded not at all any fulmination of the Church against him, that great weapon so freely and unscrupulously used in all national conflicts of those days. What probably was more difficult for the Spaniards to understand than anything else was the pertinacity with which Blake and his men stuck to their posts. We are totally unable to realise the stern heroism of these men sticking to their duty as they did, under every possible discouragement and circumstance which would rob a cruise of even the simulacrum of glory.

"Monotony" is far too commonplace a word to use in connection with such work as theirs. Day after day, night after night, without apparently the slightest prospect of any alteration in the weary round, they went to the same duties, ate the same food, listened to the same talk. Of recreation, whether in the shape of reading or sports, or of music, such as is so abundantly provided in the Navy of today, there was no trace; and we can only suppose that the men of the seventeenth century naturally possessed that comatose condition of mind which

enables us to endure in dull apathy, to let the days and nights slip over or under or past us without heeding, and discomforts of whatsoever kind to cause us no astonishment, or indeed resentment, since they make up the normal conditions of our life. This will sound strange, very strange, to some who read these lines; but to others it will come most vividly as an echo out of the past, a reminder of days when they felt that for them the word "comfort" had become meaningless, a foreign and untranslatable term. Yet the present generation of seafarers, even though their experiences may have been far more varied than my own, can hardly form an adequate idea of the hardships endured by the sailors of Blake's fleet cruising in the Atlantic—even of those endured by the admiral himself. Rightly, as I always hold and sincerely believe, we invest the sailor's calling with a halo of romance; but oh the sordid dreariness, the miserable, miserable sameness of those interminable days and weeks and months! For their splendid loyalty and ready obedience under those unspeakably hard conditions of food and lodgment, these long-dead, nameless worthies deserve our most grateful remembrance of them to-day, and surely we shall not begrudge this small meed of recognition to them in view of what they unknowingly did accomplish for us.

We had no port in those days on all those coasts wherein our ships might refit, no market where their commanders might purchase the commonest necessities of life. With crews rotting with that direst of all sea-scourges, scurvy, our admirals could never

reckon upon getting a few vegetables, a little fruit, unless they were prepared either to fight or so violate the law of nations everywhere operating, against Englishmen especially, as to lay the foundations of a fight to be waged presently—if possible, when our men were least prepared for it. Therefore, whoever considers the naval operations of those days should never forget for one moment that, while the actual fighting done was heroic in the extreme, and very well worthy of all that has been sung or said about it, the quiet, solid work of watching the enemy's coasts, of just holding on bulldog fashion, was after all that which demands our highest praise, our full gratitude.

From May, then, to September, 1655, without one interlude which could vary the deadly monotony of the service, Blake's fleet kept steadfast watch and ward over the approaches to Spain. And then relieved by Lawson, the admiral was allowed to return to his dear native land, which, ardent patriot and faithful servant of his country though he was, never failed to afford him the most poignant pleasure. Without any of those dearer ties that usually serve to bind men closer to their homeland, he had that pure love of country which is one of the most beautiful traits observable in mankind. And we need no great straining of the imagination to picture him sitting in apparently stolid immobility upon the quarter-deck of the *George* as she bowed to the favouring breeze and in stately fashion passed headland after headland, but really with an over-brimming heart and lips ready to burst into a song of praise

to "God, for He is good, and His mercy endureth for ever."

Into Plymouth Sound the good ship came and anchored. All hands were given a week's leave, upon their honour to return then, since the getting of men for the fleet was more difficult than ever. Martin prepared to accompany his chief to wherever he was bound; but, with that thoughtfulness for others which so endeared him to all with whom he came in contact, Admiral Blake forbade him to do so. He said: "Thy brother and sweetheart" (how curiously the old pretty word affected the sailor, making him tremble in every limb) "will be so weary of waiting to see thee; go and see them, good lad—go and see them. Moreover, although thou hast said naught to me, right well I know how full of anxiety thou art to know how those two dear ones fare. Get home to Lyme, Martin, and have thy holiday in great peace. Then when thou returnest shalt tell me all the news. For me, I go to my ancestral home and set my affairs in order, for I feel that for me is fast approaching the end of earthly affairs. And since matters are now in such good train, I care not how soon it is. I am very tired, and look forward to the 'rest that remaineth.' Farewell, Martin; we meet again, God willing, in about ten days' time on board the *George*."

So they separated, and Martin, with a heavy heart, since he could not help feeling the truth of his chief's prophetic instinct, made the best of his way towards Lyme. Very soon the peaceful beauty of that autumnal scene brought him great serenity of

mind. He again realised how high above the petty changes and chances of this mortal life he stood, dwelling as he did in the secret places of the Most High. No longer the light-hearted, careless Martin of old, yet still with the same bright, merry smile, the same childish laughter as of one utterly free from all care. And as his good nag plodded peacefully along the lanes, bordered by trees and hedgerows glowing with the sweet tints of the falling year, his joy became impossible to restrain, impossible to keep silent, and he lifted up his voice in songs of praise until the old woods rang again. Every person he passed felt the better for seeing him, all caught some reflection of the joy that was his, and if ever man felt happy upon this earth that man was Martin Penfold.

No adventure befell him upon his journey whatever. On the afternoon of the second day from his leaving Plymouth he rode into Lyme, greeted on every hand with shouts of welcome, but also with a strangely obvious air of restraint, which affected him so that he pushed on smartly, nor drew rein until he was outside his brother's door. Rolling from his horse in sailor fashion, he lifted the latch and strode into the little parlour, to find his brother, wan, emaciated, and propped up with pillows, listening to Grace, who was painfully compelling her way through a chapter of the Bible. With one stride Martin crossed the room, and, dropping to his knees beside his brother, said, with a painful catching of the breath, "Tom lad, my other half, what is—what can this mean? Thou art ill, and I never knew."

For all answer Tom smiled in beatific wise, and pointed to Grace, who was looking with yearning, brimming eyes across at Martin. With a pang at his heart, Martin rose and sprang towards her, clasping her in his arms and kissing her, while she nestled like a tired dove in that dear embrace.

Then releasing her, but fully conscious of the gaze of perfect satisfaction on Tom's face, he burst into a torrent of questioning. What had happened? How long had Tom been ill? Why had they not— But there he paused. He was about to ask why no news had reached him, forgetting for a moment the impossibility of such a thing. And then he paused for breath, flushing darkly for very shame as he remembered how different was this frame to that which he had enjoyed on his journey. As he paused thus abashed, Tom's voice, steady and clear, was heard. He told his brother that very soon after he had settled down quietly to enjoy, as he supposed, the evening of his days in peace, he became conscious of a failing of strength, a loss of interest in life, a fretful desire for activity, while unable to be active because of his loss of limbs. Everything that loving care could suggest was done for him by Grace and Mrs. Pook, but all was of no avail. Even the good fellowship manifested towards him by the elders of the town could not rouse him, he could not be active vicariously. That great hardy body of his, he knew, needed vigorous employment as well as the somewhat slowly working mind, and with the inability to do aught but listen and wait and try to be patient, he found his stamina

going until he was—"what you see, Martin. Dear lad, don't think I've fretted my strength away intentionally or rebelliously. If I know myself in the light of the Lord's teaching, I am quite resigned and grateful for all the goodness and mercy that has followed me to this snug haven and abides with me even now. But this falling away of bodily strength, this loss of power, is quite outside of any ability of mine. I know not what it is or how I might alter it. I only know that I can say, and do say with all my heart and soul, God's will be done. Now let us change the subject, and do you, Martin, tell us your news. You must know how hungry I feel for full knowledge of the stirring events that have taken place since I have dropped out of the race. But you did not get up to the Scarlet City as you had hoped."

That started Martin, and from thence until midnight the steady tide of his telling never faltered. His hearers were full of intense desire to hear, which breeds narrative power in the dullest, once the ice is broken; and Martin was far from dull. "Oh, Tom, lad," he cried exultantly at one time, "shoudst have seen the fleet sailing from Leghorn for Civita Vecchia, with a fresh northerly breeze filling every sail, and a hope in every heart that at last we should be able to avenge upon Rome some of the iniquities she has perpetrated upon the Lord His people. And then, when it was found that our demands were fully granted, and that we should have no excuse for doing justice upon the evil ones, how deeply, sorely grieved were all, from the admiral downwards!

For myself, I would very willingly have given all my share of the prize-money, and my wages to boot if only I could have seen that awful city levelled to the dust, and its wicked inhabitants driven to the four winds."

"Peace, brother, peace," said Tom gently. "When like me thou comest to the contemplation of eternal things close to thy soul, wilt grieve that thou hadst not felt more charitably. Truly our trade has been warfare and blood-shedding, but I do not rejoice in that I have been what the world calls a successful warrior. Rather do I feel now the operation of the law of love, as expounded by Him who said, 'Forgive them, Father, for they know not what they do.' We must needs be angry at the wickednesses of men, and especially their cruelties towards the helpless; but I continually feel more deeply the significance of the words, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.' But tell us of the pirates, Martin, the ruthless followers of Mahomet. How didst thou deal with them?"

"Well, brother, since you have so steadily rebuked me for my desires of vengeance upon those whom I take to be the enemies of the Lord, I hardly know how to go on. I would not, for a great deal, hurt thy feelings, or harrow the soul of our gentle sister, to say nothing of the worrying of our dear old friend, Dame Pook, who sits there ready to be horrified."

"Oh, dwunt thee mind me, Martin," said the dame, tossing her head. "Methinks, if I had chance enow, I could strike a shrewd blow or twain at they nasty

Ayrabs myself. Didst not know that my father and my two brothers were prisoners with them, and my two brothers died at the oar in their dreadful galleys? I cannot bear to think of it."

"That is how I feel, dame," replied Martin; "and when I boarded one of those galleys under Porto Farina, and helped to drive her crew of villains overboard (those who escaped being slain by the sword and pike), methought my heart would have burst for very shame to see my fellow-men in such an utterly abominable plight. Yea, and not only fellow-men, but fellow-countrymen; and one man, Israel Pengelly, with a lad, William Philpotts, both of whom I knew well of old—Israel indeed having sailed with me in the *Rebecca*, and William being a little lad playing on the shore at Fowey, when I put in there: these I found in such a guise to make my heart bleed. The irons had eaten into the flesh to the bone; they had naught to hide their nakedness but the dirt which caked upon them, and their hair hung down like black twine over their seamed and scarred shoulders. Hardly could they tell when I spake comfortably to them, busying myself the while in smiting off their fetters, whether it was a language they had ever known. And what hurt me most to see was the way in which they shrank if one did but so much as make a movement. Poor wretches! their lives had been passed amid incessant beatings, and at last they could not imagine a free man moving except to give them stripes and blows. Twenty-eight Englishmen did we release from that foul

Futteh al Barry, the Nakhoda of which, I praise God, I slew with mine own hands—his horrible head leaping from my cutlass blade as if eager to be quit of its association with his foul body. And we saved all those dear lads, nursing them round to humanity again, and enrolling them upon the ship's books, where they made a splendid addition to our complement. But I would ask thee, Tom, couldst thou expect them to feel towards the Arabs, who had thus used them, as thou wert just now saying we should feel towards our enemies?"

"Martin," said Grace, before Tom could speak in reply, "you know that Tom is right, and Tom knows that you are right, and I know that you are both right. The wickedness of man worketh not the righteousness of God, and I, poor foolish one, cannot understand why men should be so wicked. But, thank God, I know how good men can be; I know by full experience how the love of God has worked in you twain to be to me father and mother and sister and brother. And may I not therefore forget the bad men, and remember only the good, especially to-night, when we are a reunited family? The Lord bless thee, Martin, and thee, Tom. Good-night." And she retired to her own chamber.

CHAPTER XVIII

MARTIN'S REWARD

WITH the dawn Martin was astir and renewing his close acquaintanceship and genial intercourse with his friends of Lyme. He learned with deepest satisfaction that the wives and children of the New Forest bandits had all settled down happily into the every-day life of the quaint little port, also that the men had never failed, though scattered among the fleet, to do their duty most bravely and to return to Lyme whenever opportunity afforded. More than that, they had abundantly proved their honesty and their desire to lead good lives, by sending almost all their hardly earned pay and prize-money to their homes, not only to keep their dear ones, but to repay the debt which they considered they owed. Thus a very pleasant morning was spent, the time flying until breakfast, when, suddenly aware of the hour, Martin hurried homeward. There arriving, he found his brother dressed and downstairs, but was fairly horrified to see in that revealing morning light what a spectre Tom had become. The truth could no longer be concealed from himself—brother Tom was going home, and that fast. Whatever the cause, the effect was obvious—Tom Penfold

was soon to die, and seemed to all appearance as if the mere prospect of that greatest of all changes would be rather welcome than otherwise.

After greetings the family sat down to breakfast, Martin involuntarily contrasting the meagre picking of his brother with the plentiful provision he was wont to take aboard so short a time ago. Grace and Dame Pook ate healthily, as people do who have no cares, a good constitution, and sound digestion; while Martin, although he choked over his food occasionally as he looked at Tom, paid fairly good attention to the bountiful meal provided.

Breakfast over, and family worship, conducted by Tom, finished, Martin led his brother out, and with infinite care and patience brought him down to the Cobb, where sheltered under the sea-wall from the keen westerly breeze that was blowing, the brothers sat and talked of many things. But principally their conversation ran upon the future, and Tom urged his brother almost vehemently to marry Grace. "Mine eyes have been opened of late to see many things, dear lad, but never have I seen aught clearer than that the maiden loves thee better than life. Me she loves, but as an elder brother or a father. Never could our love have ripened into that warmer, richer love of husband for wife. For myself I say nothing. Whatever dreams I have cherished—wild, impossible to realise most of them were, and I will not recall them—this last six months has shown me most clearly what the will of the Lord is concerning me. It is that I shall go hence and be no more seen, having done my work. But I go not until I

have seen thee and our precious one united in the bonds of holy matrimony. I feel that I cannot must not go until then, however long it may be but I pray that it may not be very long. Then shall go gladly, fully satisfied."

Martin could not speak; for it seemed as if what he had so long ardently desired, now that it had come, had lost its savour. Not that he loved Grace less, or felt any doubt as to the accuracy of his brother's observation; but the price he was paying he felt, in the loss of that dear brother, was cruelly high, and feelings of rebellion arose. He was really very human, was Martin Penfold. And although at first it may seem a monstrous idea, he had a certain sense of resentment against Grace, as being in some mysterious way the reason why he was losing his brother. That she could by no possible means have had aught to do with that loss he did not consider; he only recalled how ardently he had desired her for his wife, the dread feelings of envy, almost hatred, which had germinated in his heart against Tom on her account, needing all his prayers and faith to keep them from springing up into poisonous weeds, which should choke out all the good life within, and his remorse was extreme. Bewildered beyond measure, he caught his brother's tender gaze fixed full upon his face, and with a rush of tears he flung himself down by the invalid's side and told him all his heart. And while the broken words of confession, self-reproach, and sorrow poured forth, Tom's thin hand lay lovingly on his brother's head, its touch conveying, as no mere

words could do, the knowledge that his heart held naught for Martin but fullest sympathy and love and trust.

"Ah, lad," said Tom, when Martin paused for breath, "thou wert ever full of impulses, ever hadst a lack of the quiet, judicial temperament which thou knowest is my birthright. Shouldst not condemn thyself in this wholesale fashion for that thou, in common with us all, hast had sore temptation from the evil one. How can temptation be sin? Yielding to it, yes; but God, He knows that thou didst never, but in all thy ways, since thou didst seek and find Him on board my pink, thou hast ever been a hearty and consistent follower of King Jesus. This self-accusation of thine is but a morbid condition of mind arising from thy deep grief at the thought of losing me—grief such as I should surely feel were thy position mine and mine thine. And now let us have no more of thy railings against thyself. If thou wouldst make me happy, be happy and let Grace be happy. For I am now come to that sweet place in my life when naught has any value in mine eyes but love. I begin to see dimly how that God the Father doth rule in love, how love is the fulfilling of all the law and all the prophets, how love is the full expression of the Highest, and I repent me sorely that ever in the din and smoke of battle I have hated the enemies of my country even, and sought to slay them. I do not dote—I know how it must needs be that offences come, and that while the world lasts it will be necessary to repress evil-doing by force; but for

my part in that necessary work, I would it had not fallen to me, I would I had lived in love and amity with all men."

This long speech from Tom had exactly the effect upon Martin that Tom had both expected and wished. Impressed deeply by every word of it, he was naturally more so by the last; and sitting upright, he said, with a deeper flush upon his bronzed face: "Tom, Tom, do not say so. Who is there that coming under thy command, has not had to bless God therefor, and has not come to understand what a really good man is? I will not hear thee so disparaging thyself, especially as I know of all men how wrongly thou dost represent thine own sweet nature."

"Very well," replied Tom with a sigh, as he sank back wearily upon his pillows, "it shall be a bargain. Thou shalt not run thyself down, and I will refrain from doing the same thing of myself. We will devote the rest of thy stay here to getting as much peaceful enjoyment out of life as may be, and, Martin"—Tom paused for a moment, timidly almost, as he gazed into his brother's brown eyes—"let me see thee make love to Grace. Poor lass! full well I know how hungry her heart is for thy love, not that love which she has had in overflowing measure, but the love of lover for mistress, of husband for wife. Methinks it would give me most exquisite pleasure to see you both entangling thyselfs fully in the sweet bonds of matrimonial love."

But Martin, blushing like a schoolgirl, laid his hand upon Tom's mouth. Having stopped the flow of his speech, Martin fled, and got him down to the

beach, where for an hour he strode the shingle, hatless, hoping that the keen salt breeze would subdue the riot in his blood. Then having somewhat subdued himself, or at any rate become calmer, he returned for Tom and brought him home, seeing, as he neared the house, the form of his beloved in the doorway, framed like a gracious picture. His heart beat furiously, his legs trembled beneath him; all the transports of a lover in the heyday of youth were his. But he held them all in leash, and with beaming face came up the garden path, seeing that yearning look in her dear eyes, and at last interpreting it rightly. He led Tom in without a word; then returning to her, caught her in his arms, drew her to his breast in the first lover's embrace he had ever given, and between his fervent kisses murmured, "Dearest,—how—I—have—longed—for this!"

Faintly she struggled to free herself, saying at last: "Martin, dear Martin, let me go. What is this? 'Tis most unseemly, and at the door too!"

"What is it, beloved? It is that at last, after all these years, I know how I love thee, know how free I am to love thee, and believe that thou lovest me the same. Is't not so? I know it is, but I would fain hear thee say so with thine own sweet lips."

"Martin," she panted, her face aglow with conflicting red and white, "hast forgotten that I am a helpless cripple, a maimed thing that can never be aught but a burden? How can I be to thee what I should?"

For all answer he drew her within the house, into the little parlour where Tom lay peacefully watching

the glory of the sun setting. Up to Tom's side he led her, and said: "Tom, lad, this naughty maid dares to question my right to woo her for my wife, because of her maiming! As if that could do aught but endear her to me. Scold her, Tom; tell her how ill she is behaving. For me, I can only tell her that I would rather have her with no hands and penniless, than any lady in the land with all her members and a great fortune to boot, and that ever since I have known her I have loved her beyond all earthly things."

"Yes, lass," said Tom, "that is indeed sooth, as well I know. And, dear one, do not let anything come between thee and my brother—I mean any scruples of the kind you hint at. I know well that thou canst put the coping-stone, the crown, upon his earthly happiness as no one else on earth can do it. And more than that, dear one, thou canst make me happy before I go hence with the thought that the two beings I love best in the world are made one, not only in the flesh, but in the spirit—one for evermore." As Tom ceased speaking he held out his hands to them, and, clasping each, drew them towards him, murmuring, "Thank God!"

For about a minute's space they remained thus; then were suddenly startled by the advent of Dame Pook, who screamed, "What is the matter? is he worse?" And as the trio turned their bright faces towards her, she took on an air of mock offence, saying: "I don't know how ye can ha' the heart to flurry a poor old woman like that; I thourt surely he was worse again. But what's the matter. Y'all look as if ye'd found a fortune."

"I have, at any rate, mother," said Martin blithely. "See, here is the lass that is to be my dear wife: what dost think o' that 'en, mother?"

"Th' blessed lamb, th' blessed lamb!" sobbed the old dame, flinging herself down on the nearest seat and burying her face in her apron, "a'am so glad, I feel I mun wail a bit, for ma heart's overfull to bear all. She's been so patient, so loving and tender and kind, that whiles I have felt my heart breaking to see her, and to think she might never know the joys of wedded life. Now I can die happy, and I won't ask thee," glancing archly at Martin, "why thou hast been so long in comin' to the point. It's enough for me that thou hast come while my bonny girl is in her prime."

That was a happy little household that night. The universal joy made it impossible to remember the grim shadow which overhung them, for Tom brightened up so that he looked like a new man. Martin sat by Grace's side, with an arm round her waist, and the dame sat opposite by the side of Tom, who spread his beneficent glances all around like a sunset glow. And again they talked of old and well-remembered scenes during the siege of Lyme; they recalled the hair-breadth 'scapes which each had experienced; they sang songs of praise; and at last, wearied out with excess of joy, they retired to rest, but not before family worship of the truest and best kind had been indulged in, to the immense content of every one. And so they slept in uttermost peace.

Thenceforward the days fled swiftly by, each

full of interest, and it was not without a pang of self-reproach (poor Martin was always prone to that) that Martin noted the coming of the day when he must leave all this delightful interlude to battle again with storm and sea and human enemies. But no sooner did the call of duty sound in his ears than he cheerfully obeyed it, helped thereto by the dear ones who prized his company as much as he did theirs. For in those days patriotism was by no means a mere name, a word without realisable meaning, as, alas! it has now almost become, or is quoted with Dr. Johnson's scathing dictum as being "the last refuge of a scoundrel." Everything that could be done to fit him for departure was done, and punctually at daybreak on the date appointed he started for Plymouth to rejoin his ship. He arrived without any adventures, for the countryside was now not only peaceful, but enjoying a return to prosperity; and immediately upon reaching his ship, found himself plunged into arduous duties, for the admiral had left word for him that for the present he was to resume his duties as master, and, with such men as he could command, do his best to get the ship ready for sea. With characteristic energy he plunged into his work, but found himself sorely hindered by positive dislike on the part of the newly appointed captain, and scarcity of men to do the work, many having forgotten their solemn promise to return, or deliberately broken it—as indeed they might have been expected to do, nor could they be honestly blamed for so doing. But Martin had now need of all his fortitude, need of all the strength and peace of mind w'ich

his late period of special joy had stored up in him. He was between two fires: an incompetent, overbearing, and ignorant man commanded him, and under him were a group of discontented men, quick to note any friction between the officers, and make the worst possible use of it for the furtherance of their own ends, or indeed end—that is, the doing of the very least portion of work possible.

Humanly speaking, Martin was now quite alone. He had never mixed very much with the officers—who had naturally looked upon him as much too close to the admiral for their comfort—and the best of his men had not returned to the ship. And if they had, he could hardly have associated with them when off duty. I know of few things more calculated to produce bitter despondency and lowness of spirits than such a position as this on board ship, especially for a companionable, warm-hearted man. I speak feelingly, having myself known something of the miserable business, and, while assured that I was doing my duty to the full satisfaction of my captain, been condemned to utter loneliness when off duty, to have no one to whom I might speak, or with whom I might exchange ideas. To some natures, of course, this state of things would be no hardship; to others it would be almost intolerable. It was so to Martin. Never in his whole career had he felt the burden of his duty heavy before, or realised that, could he have his wish, he would get out of it at once. And again and again he found himself vigorously striving to overcome this growing distaste for his service, recalling his

love for his master, and chiding himself for his longing to be out of all trouble and settled down with his dear one at Lyme.

Relief came at last in the shape of a letter from the admiral, commanding him to take the first ship that was sailing for London, and come back to his old position of bodyguard to the admiral.

"It hath been most forcibly brought home to me of late how much I need thy loyal and devoted attendance," the letter went on to say. "Meseemeth that none may be trusted to serve as if they loved the service, or as if they cared one jot for the man for whom they worked. But enough of that. Sufficient that I need thee much. Just now there is a piece of work toward that will demand all our energies, and especially thine, for I know of no man better able to cope with such a business than thou art. Briefly, there are rumours of mutiny in the fleet. The press-gang methods of recruiting thou knowest I have ever hated, although unable under present conditions to recommend that they be discontinued. But I felt sure that some day they would bring us trouble, and I think that trouble is upon us now. Come then, Martin, as speedily as may be, and assist me to deal with this matter before it grows to such a head that there may no longer be any dealing with it.

"Thy friend,

"ROBERT BLAKE."

Martin's heart responded to this appeal as does the high-mettled horse to the crack of the whip.

He was all eagerness to be gone, and not only because he dearly desired to be by the admiral's side again, but because he felt such a growing disgust at his present position that he feared he might be tempted to throw it up altogether, and thus lose the companionship of the man in whom his very soul seemed bound up. Now that danger was past; and so, bidding a cordial farewell to the men with whom he had been working under such grave difficulties, he got him on board of a sloop-of-war, the *James*, and sailed for London as a passenger. Her captain was a man after Martin's own soul, a rough tarpaulin to all outward appearance, but a heart of gold—a man wedded to his profession, tender-hearted as a maiden, though a lion in battle. Withal he was a Christian of the proper stamp, who grappled Martin to his heart as with hooks of steel, and entered into closest communion with him over his late troubles.

They had a pleasant but tedious passage up Channel, for the Indian summer was over the sea, the light languorous haze and the gentle airs full of balm that oftentimes mark the close of autumn. At last their pleasant little passage ended with the rattling down of the anchor off Blackwall, and Martin, with many fervent protestations that he would not forget his gentle host, got him a wherry, and was rowed to Whitehall, where the admiral awaited him. After salutations brief but sincere, the admiral told him that matters on board the fleet in the Downs were growing serious. Mutiny was in the air, and it had even been suggested that the

whole of the fleet was disaffected toward the Commonwealth, and was ready to revolt and bring the son of the late Man back again. That Blake flatly refused to believe. But he knew, he said, that the seamen's grievances were many and legitimate and that they needed to see a man whom they could trust, armed with sufficient authority for the redress of those grievances. Therefore it would be necessary for him (Blake) to sail as soon as might be, with all the ships he could muster, for the Downs, and there to hold an inquiry into the matters in dispute, and settle them, if settled they might be, right speedily, because the fiercest and most lucrative part of the war with Spain was about to begin.

Thenceforward all was haste, haste, haste. Admiral Blake and his henchman were ubiquitous, leaving no stone unturned to get the fleet to sea. And such was the value of a good name that no difficulty whatever was found in manning the flagship; men fell over one another and fought in their eagerness to ship with Blake, and even those who sneeringly said that admirals, good or bad, made no difference to them, relented when they heard that Martin Penfold was to have his old position. Then Martin took to inviting crowds of sailor-men down to the waterside, and haranguing them upon the many and great advantages the present shipping opportunity offered. "Why, lads," he cried, "once the present difficulty of manning the fleet is settled, we have the whole wealth of the Spanish Main at our disposal. These sallow Dons have become so

lackadaisical, by reason of the wealth poured in upon them without effort of theirs, that one has but to show them the flag of Britain to make them disgorge, as does the booby when the frigate-bird flying above her sounds his hoarse note. Come, boys, let us away and share in the plunder of the Spaniard, who, having plundered himself for a century, has now neither nerve nor tenacity to hold on to his ill-gotten gains, but is ready to drop them on the first call from us. There is wealth, and, what is better, honour, to be gained in the present conflict with the Dons. But we must be united, resolved and confident also that in our present rulers we shall find honest men. Some of ye know Admiral Blake: I turn to you, and ask, Is he not the most honest man you ever knew? Not merely honest by law, but honest to his own hurt, willing rather to be ten times defrauded than to do one poor man a wrong by mistake."

In suchwise did Martin assist in the manning of the fleet, so that when at last they put to sea there was a fairly goodly company of high-mettled men, most of whom felt the honour of their position as much as they did the prospects of pay and prize-money. But when they learned their first destination, many of them were filled with surprise. They were to sail for the Downs, where a fleet lay at anchor whose men were ready to destroy the nation's prospects of success because they had been, as they thought, slighted by a favourite admiral being removed from commanding them. The common sailor is never very logical, and no ordinary reasoning

will account for his doings. I was once, to quote a small experience, only valuable because person in a barque sailing from Havana to Mobile, Alabama and thence for home. The master was an elderly man, full of amiability; but although he had of course once been a sailor, he had long ago forgotten about the methods of carrying out a sailor's duties and responsibilities. All hands realised this, and in the forecabin all sorts of lurid remarks were passed about his incompetency, and the blessing it would be to all hands if only he would die, or fall overboard, or something. Yet when, on arrival in Mobile, he called us all aft and informed us of his decision to quit the ship, having realised that he was no longer fit to command, those aforetime loud-mouthed grumblers broke down entirely, some even shedding tears, and some shouting that they would not mind sailing round the world with him. And when at last he did go, one would have thought that he was the beloved father of us all, so great a demonstration was made. Not only so, but muttered curses upon the supplanter who was coming were quite the rule; and it was not until some days after, when the new master did arrive, that the crew suddenly realised that they did not care so much after all.

So Blake, when he sailed for the Downs to pacify the mutiny-muttering crews of the ships there gathered, was prepared to act in human fashion. Had he refused all discussion, and simply commanded, the bloodshed must have been terrible, or the men were wrought up almost to fury. But

instead of acting in that high-handed but senseless manner, he sent round to each ship a message to the effect that, protected by his solemn word that nothing harmful should befall them, representatives from the disaffected men should come to the flagship and hear what Admiral Blake had to tell them—the man whose word no one in the fleet had ever known to be broken in the smallest detail. They came, and it was a grand meeting. In his plain, blunt language the admiral set before them the facts—told them that Admiral Lawson was removed from his command for State reasons, principally because he was urgently needed elsewhere, and that, they all knew well, must occasionally be the case with commanders, whether on shore or at sea. Moreover, he gave them to understand that now was approaching the very crux of our quarrel with Spain, and for them, who had borne the burden and heat of the day in getting the fleet ready to go anywhere and do anything, to relinquish all those splendid possibilities of plunder and prize-money for the certainty of prison, and the probability of ignominious death, was not merely suicidal, it was maniacal.

The effect of this common-sense and kindly address was electrical, instantaneous. Only one or two daring souls ventured to inquire what their prospects for the cruise were supposed to represent. And Blake answered without hesitation, "At least £100 prize-money each." That settled the matter. Wild shouts and cheers for Admiral Blake arose, and every man there was anxious to return and spread the

joyful news that all was for the best in the best of all possible worlds for the sailor. They returned to their various ships full of enthusiasm, and by the order of the admiral every crew had an extension of time for retiring granted in order that the good news might be fully communicated before the men slept.

But in the quiet of his cabin, just before retiring Admiral Blake wearily discussed the present position with Martin. All his officers had presented their reports and gone each his own way, with their orders to execute at once or on the morrow, and now the admiral was free to talk over private matters with the plain man in whom he placed the fullest confidence. "Martin," said he, "I am very weary. It has pleased the good Lord to give me place and power, neither of which I craved nor love; and so I cannot but feel that, since I did not seek them save by the plainest doing of the present duty, He must have seen that I was the fit and proper man to be trusted. Yet it is, as old age creeps on especially, a weary task. Emphatically such a business as today's. Those hot-headed men, had they not believed me, and refused to listen, what a terrible matter would have emerged! I might have been exonerated from all blame—but my dear country! In very deed I am tired of dealing with men so full of feeble notions, so unstable, so prone to follow the last parrot-call; and in sooth the more senseless it is, the harder to persuade them that it is not the final word of wisdom on the matter."

"Dear master," said Martin in reply, "as you said

just now, you are weary and unstrung. Let me just only say one word then, and retire. The Lord hath chosen thee to do a great work. He is not disappointed in thee, and until that work be done He will not suffer thee to rest. *Then* thou shalt rest in glory. Good-night, master." And he was gone.

CHAPTER XIX

THE BEGINNING OF THE END

IN such quietude was the threatened mutiny averted, and the Navy restored to its proper state of effectiveness. And it is pleasant to be able to say here, and at once, that never again under the Commonwealth was there any question or symptom of insubordination among the seamen of the fleet as a whole. Having once trusted to the word of the admiral, they found never any reason to doubt it, and went steadily, if somewhat stolidly, about their duties, as men perfectly satisfied. This was well; for even now, when it might have been supposed that the Royalists would have been thoroughly disheartened in that they were so soundly beaten on every side, they, with the pertinacity of the British bulldog, calmly ignored defeat, and went on corresponding and intriguing with every foreign Power who would have aught to do with them, in the hope that some day, somehow, things would turn their way again. It was entirely due to Blake's hold upon the fleet that the Restoration, with all its concomitant evils, did not happen before; and surely it is permissible to suppose, even with the knowledge of the hold that

his great chief Cromwell had upon the minds of men, that, had he (Blake) been spared another decade, there would have been no Restoration, no shameful humiliation of Britain by Dutch fleets sailing up the Thames. But in the face of facts long past such speculation is but idle.

Meanwhile, the difficulty of getting men generally was more acute than ever. The hateful expedient of the press-gang was resorted to, and many peaceful seafarers were torn from their ships or their homes to serve, much against their will, in the fleet. Truly the liberty of the subject was mightily slow in growing from a meaningless phrase into a fact beyond dispute. Strange too that the more popular service of the two should have longest been manned by nothing less than legalised slave-stealing. And even then, with every power possible granted to them for the impressing of seamen, it was found necessary to ship soldiers to fill out the scanty ranks of the seamen, thus laying the foundation of our present service of Royal Marine Light Infantry and Royal Marine Artillery, both of which it seems probable will ere long be merged in the ship's company as blue-jackets, and so end the long anomaly of sea-soldiers.

At last, in March, 1656, Blake sailed from Torbay with a fleet of forty sail under his command, and with Admiral Montague as his colleague. As usual, his instructions were in skeleton, which he was empowered to fill out and clothe upon with his usual consummate ability. There was very much to do upon Spanish account; for we were now, after

long blinking the fact, at open and acknowledged war with Spain, and consequently all the operations of war with any part of Spain itself or her overseas possessions were in order. Moreover, there was a long-standing account to settle with Portugal, hapless Portugal, who was in the pitiable position of being between the upper millstone of England and the lower millstone of Spain, and was also possessed by an insane complacency, a disabling pride that forbade her to see that her only chance of safety lay in submission to the strongest Power demanding it, and then craving protection from that Power. If ever there was a people living in a dream of the past and blinding themselves to the fact that they were no longer able to speak with any enemy in the gate, that Power was (and is) Portugal—a nation that has shared the common fate of all those nations which have owned allegiance to Rome. Like some deadly miasma the shadow of the Popedom envelops any country which, as a whole, acknowledges its sway, and there all progress ceases, all development is arrested, and a dull apathy succeeds, amidst which the sleek priest and sordid-looking monk move supreme, lording it over the bodies and souls of men.

I have no quarrel with individual Catholics, nor would I place one hindrance in the way of their worshipping God in their own fashion. But I dread, I have a shuddering horror of, the priesthood, of the power of Rome, and view with profoundest misgivings the influx of exiled monkish communities to this country from France. They come to a land of liberty, of freedom for all to worship each in his

own way, and their aim, never lost sight of for one moment, is to bring every one with whom they come in contact within the entire domination of their autocratic chief, by any means in their power to employ. So for this reason alone I long for the Commonwealth method of dealing with the power of Rome. Open-eyed opposition to it as a world-power, no compromise with it, no losing sight of any of its dealings for one hour.

For Lisbon, then, Blake sailed, whither the ambassador of the Commonwealth had preceded him, in order that he might, as he had done in the Mediterranean, lend the weight of his presence with the fleet to the arguments of diplomacy. It was a case of the Duke of Tuscany over again, only more so. For Portugal had given hostages to fortune in the shape of her Brazil ships, soon to be homeward bound with much treasure and other valuable cargo. Our claims upon the unfortunate monarch were many and high-handed. He was calmly asked to pay an enormous indemnity for the benefit of those merchants whose ships had been seized at sea by Rupert, brought into the Tagus, and sold. His plea that he could not know which of the conflicting parties in England had right or might on their side, though a very reasonable one under the existing circumstances, was utterly ignored, the law of the strongest being practically the only law invoked, as usual in time of war. £50,000, representing at least four times that amount now, was demanded of him, and no abatement was so much as considered. Then he was asked to grant

freedom of religion to those Englishmen who business called them to reside in Portugal, and refuse harbourage to such deserters as called themselves Roman Catholics. Here he was between two fires. He was literally unable to grant these demands without making a terrible enemy of the Power that was far greater than him in Portugal—the Church. Besides, he would also be doing extreme violence to his own religious opinions. Beyond all this, he was required to grant certain privileges of harbourage, water and food supply, such as were absolutely necessary for the prosecution of the long blockade of the coast which was just beginning, seeing how weak the fleet was, and how soon it might be put out of action by sickness in the absence of fresh food and water. In vain did the King plead that he was now asked to put himself in exactly the same position with regard to Spain as he was about to be heavily fined for having taken up towards the vessels of the Commonwealth. The plea was sternly refused. Then it was pointed out to the British plenipotentiary that Portugal had already paid heavily, by the loss of her Brazil fleet in 1650, for any mistake she had made in entertaining Prince Rupert. This was ruled irrelevant, begging the question, etc.

Then the King made a fatal mistake: he offered to submit the points at issue to the arbitration of the Pope. In this he *may* have been sincere, although it sounds like a very bad and poor joke. The thing is almost unthinkable. As reasonably call in a receiver of stolen property to arbitrate between a

burglar and a householder as to the ownership of goods just stolen from the latter's house. But not only so—only the invincible ignorance and haughtiness of the Portuguese could have prevented them from knowing that to the Puritans the mere suggestion of the Pope of Rome being asked to interfere in their affairs was an insult of the deadliest kind. It did, moreover, hasten the negotiations, for Blake immediately put to sea, divided his fleet so that he could watch for the Spaniards and the Brazil fleet at once, and commenced the blockade. This prompt action on Blake's part brought home to the King as nothing else could do the grim, calm earnestness of the men with whom he had to deal—men who refused to be scared by the bogey of Rome, or to be hoodwinked and cajoled by diplomatic trickery. And undoubtedly commercial pressure was also brought to bear upon his Majesty. It was represented to him that if this devilish, heretical Englishman were not satisfied, he had it in his power to ruin Portugal, temporarily at any rate, since upon the advent of the Brazil ships rested the solvency of not only the Government, but of the merchants, who were all more or less dependent upon the cargoes borne homeward by those rich argosies.

Therefore, after his long wriggling, the King at last consented to become the ally of England, to pay the indemnity demanded—to yield, in fact, all the points in dispute, and to receive in exchange all the benefits that an alliance with what was rapidly becoming the greatest Power in the world could bestow. These were neither few nor cheap, as history shows. In

fact, it is not too much to say that but for England neither Portugal nor Spain would now have a national existence. Napoleon would have completed his designs as to absorbing them in his vast European empire, with what results to humanity in general we can only faintly imagine. The immediate benefit England was that on June the 5th the *Colchester* went into Lisbon and shipped the £50,000 for transmission home. But better than that—and of no small interest at the time of writing, when the mightiest fleet the world has ever seen, flying the white ensign of Britain, has been anchored there during the August manœuvres—was the offer of Lagos Bay as a permanent rendezvous for our fleet: a valuable privilege which we have enjoyed ever since, although the addition of other and more convenient Spanish ports has somewhat dulled our appreciation thereof.

It is useful to note that among other blessings for which we have to thank the rugged seamen and soldiers and forceful diplomatists of the Commonwealth, stands out most prominently the recognition of the right of the trader to protection by the armed forces of his country. For many centuries the trader had perforce to be a fighter, nor could he ever hope for aid from any one but his own strong arm and stout heart. True, the convoy system had been practised by Holland, but it was only used in the narrow seas. Abroad, the merchant seaman must fend for himself, fight his own battles, suffer his own losses, as well from his own countrymen as from the enemy. For it was no uncommon thing to see a tall merchantman denuded of her crew by the press-gang,

and left to the mercy of harbour pirates, as was the alien trader in a foreign country, who carried, metaphorically speaking, his life in one hand and his wares in the other. Cromwell's Government changed all that, made it known that in the future the ægis of Britain's flag was over the humblest trader as well as over the proudest ambassador, modified of course by exigencies of State. But the principle was laid down, never to be abrogated, that the merchant, be he seaman or laudsman, going forth upon his lawful occasions and conforming to the laws of the country in which he traded, had a prescriptive right to be protected by the whole power of his country from any public wrong, upon no matter what excuse. As the herald of kings was sacrosanct, no matter how high warlike passions might rage, so the herald of trade was henceforth to be held sacred, and the heaviest penalties exacted for any wrong done to him.

Thus auspiciously had begun this great undertaking. Something of brutality, of high overriding, of rough adjustment of rights, there undoubtedly had been; but judged by the usual standards of warfare, it had the highest justification—that of complete success, and without the loss of a man or the firing of a gun. The way was now clearly open for the successful prosecution of the great object—the seizing of Spain's sinews of war, and the humbling of the haughty Spaniard in so thorough a fashion that he would never again dare to lift up his heel against Britain, having learned that all the Pope's blessings of him, and cursings of his enemies, were

of absolutely no avail against the stolid courage and indomitable tenacity of these base-born islanders, this spawn of the devil, whose chief end in life seemed to be blasphemy against Holy Mother Church. All the crews were in high fettle. They had early learned of the success of that portion of the negotiations which related to the establishment of a rendezvous in Lagos Bay, and this at present outweighed in importance all other considerations in their minds. For well they knew the misery of a protracted blockade, with no harbour of refuge and refreshment near. Some of them had been with Blake during the long blockade six years before, and vividly recalled their sufferings then, recounting them with a certain gusto for the benefit of the youngsters, as who should say, "Ah, lads, you think you are hardly dealt with, but let me tell you that in 1650 we knew what hardships meant, when our meat was mostly stench, our bread was more vermin than good product of wheat and barley, and our water was a crawling witches' broth of strange wrigglers. Now we shall fare sumptuously on fresh beef, and even on occasion fresh vegetables. We shall get wine and sweet water, and—truly our lot is cast in pleasant places this summer blockade—with a fat wad of prize-money dropping in every now and then, as a foretaste of the rich haul at the long haul, when the admiral closes his net, nor lets one fish escape."

So did the old sailors discourse and fire the youngsters' blood, until it was almost difficult to restrain their ardour. They wanted to be doing something,

no matter what ; but in the leisurely and patience-breeding fashion of those days, they were compelled to cruise up and down the coast between the Straits of Gibraltar and Ushant for a long half-year, before aught could be done but make occasional dashes after the daring privateers of the Biscaynos, who were doing a fair stroke of business among the English merchant ships coming up Channel unprotected. But this was more by way of a cheap interlude wherein little honour and less payment were to be obtained, and it may easily be imagined with what impatient rage the seamen learned that quite a fleet of merchantmen had succeeded in sailing from Spain for the west, and that four galleons had reached home in safety. It must have been no ordinary task to keep those fiercely impatient and disappointed men from breaking out under such annoying circumstances. Almost all sailors are ready to blame their officers for everything that goes wrong. While they themselves will refuse all responsibility or initiative until it is thrust upon them, they expect their officers to be omniscient, to have the gift of prophetic insight, and never to make a mistake. We do not read, of course, of the thorny way of the officers of Blake's fleet on this memorable blockade, but it is not hard to imagine that it must have been an exceedingly difficult and delicate one.

Meanwhile, the lot of the Spaniards was pitiful. Fleets of ships lay rotting in their harbours, with ruined merchants gazing wistfully upon them, or listening to the monotonous reports of the look-out men, who had ever in sight a white speck or two

on the horizon, the inshore scouts of the heretic squadron. No one was paid, for there was no money to pay them with. The whole countenance was comparable with a great house with troops of servants and hosts of guests, where lavishness and luxury reigned, but whose means to pay for all this came only week by week. Suddenly the income came ceased; and as all, purveyors, servitors, and consumers, were alike improvident, ruin fell upon all alike. And the watcher at the threshold showed no signs of weariness or relenting from his fell purpose. Gales blew, seas ran high, provisions fell short, ships became so slow, by reason of the sea-growth upon them beneath the water-line, that they could hardly crawl, yet by night and by day, in foul weather or fair, there he was to be found at his post, hanging on in bulldog fashion, and with apparently an inexhaustible fund of patience to draw upon. The only semblance of excitement which entered into the dull monotony of the blockaders' lives was the occasional feeble attempt at a sortie made by the galleys at Cadiz, when the wind had died away and they might perchance catch one of the smaller vessels of the squadron by herself. It was their only chance of doing any damage, for with their scores of great oars, wielded by hundreds of slaves, they made fairly swift way through a calm sea. But if a broadside from a fairly well-gunned ship struck them, the scene on the rowing-benches must have been unspeakably dreadful. In fact, it is difficult to suggest any of the dark places of cruelty of old that could compare with the lower

deck of a galley for horror. We need not go into any details, especially as we do not read that the galleys of Cadiz did our fleet any harm. They apparently had a wholesome dread of the accurate gunnery of Blake's men, and so did not dare to run any risk of being sent to the bottom. But indeed the day of the galley was happily nearly done, although they lingered on, as affording an opportunity for the indulgence of cruelty by the Latin nations towards prisoners, whom it would be somewhat of a relief to see destroyed *en bloc*.

One service the galleys did render Cadiz: they made it so highly dangerous for any boat-work to be done by the English ships in the harbour itself that the admiral wisely did not make any attempt. Yet he must have been sorely tried, even in his colossal patience, by the receipt of despatches from home, wherein even his great chief showed symptoms of fretful impatience at the length of the blockade and plentiful lack of results. Doubtless Cromwell was wonderfully wise and far-seeing, but he was no sailor, and hardly able to understand the trouble which his interference, however well meant, in matters of sea-detail was likely to give his great admiral. In one matter, however, Cromwell showed his prescience wonderfully. He suggested that Gibraltar might be "attemptable," and if captured would render it easy to hold the Spaniard in dread while protecting our own Mediterranean trade, adding, with true Puritan thrift, that it might be done with a much smaller fleet than was now employed, to the great easement of our own charges.

To all of which Blake assented with a sigh as being perfectly true and reasonable, if only the men were forthcoming, and the ships were what they should be. Meanwhile, he must just hang on doing his duty and keeping his men up to theirs. Then the Council of State decided to recall half of the already weakened fleet, and we read that ten ships, under Admiral Montague, afterwards Earl of Sandwich, were ordered home, leaving Blake with twenty on the coast. Just what in the meantime had become of the other ten is not very clear, but it is probable that they were watching the Straits under Stayner. Then at the last moment, almost before Montague's departure, the long period of waiting came to an end, the Spanish treasure ships were sighted. Of course it is hardly possible to take other than a one-sided view of this matter, but really we can spare a thought to the chagrin of those anxious Spanish commanders, who having their port their home harbour, in sight and having even fired a salute, a joyful volley of exultation for that they had eluded their savage foes should suddenly find those foes upon them. All that skilful navigators could do to minimise the chances of capture they had done. Instead of sailing straight in from the Atlantic they had made the African coast well south, and, well concealed by the haze that is almost always the rule on that shore, they had crept north with utmost ease. They must have known of the desperate straits in which their home Government found itself, and been led to trust that they would be able to get into Cadiz unseen, or, if seen, too late to be molested. And it must be

confessed that they had good grounds for so hoping. First of all, the seasonal gales were now due, in which it was intensely difficult to maintain a blockade; and next, all seamen know how very short a distance, how slight an accident or alteration of course is sufficient to hide even two great fleets from one another at sea. Then when in sight of San Lucar de Barrameda, with the port of Seville under their lee, and Cadiz only a few miles farther on, they felt safe, and fired that fatal salute.

There were eight galleons of them, laden as usual down to the scuppers, and hampered shamefully by deck cargo, but still well manned and armed, so that possibly when they saw Stayner's three ships bearing down upon them they were not very much alarmed. But the Englishmen apparently considered that, judging by their late experiences, disparity of numbers was no bar to English success, and they came right on. They attacked the hapless Spaniards with all the accumulated fury that the remembrance of Spain's many crimes, her vast ill-gotten gains now floating before them, and their long, weary wait on the coast had engendered. The fight, if it could be called so—where from the moment of attack all seemed to be going one way, and that against the superior force—was very brief. Stayner had sighted the galleons at dawn, after hearing the salute, and by noon all had been either captured or destroyed but one, which managed to escape into the nearest port. It was a noble haul, and it included the viceroy of Mexico, the Marquis of Badajos, who, with all his spoils and his family, was returning to Spain. As

was customary, Stayner engaged the *Capitana* gallantly for himself, and met with the most stubborn resistance of all. But it appeared as if no amount of heroism on the Spanish side could counterbalance the valour and fury of the English, for the *Capitana* soon went the way of all the rest—the way of defeat. Yet the English gain nothing thereby but honour, for the gallant Spaniard, disdaining to yield himself or his ship as prisoners to the hated heretics, set her on fire. At least so it is believed, but in any case she was completely enveloped in flames, from which the marquis refused to escape, having first cast his children into the sea in the hope that they at least might live. His hope was fulfilled. They were rescued and well treated, but the Spanish hero was burnt to death, having lost everything but honour.

Then came the pleasant task of reckoning up the spoil. Apart from the usual West Indian and South American produce with which the galleons were crammed, there was found a treasure in crude sugar and loaf-shaped ingots of silver, valued at £600,000, considerably over £2,000,000, if reckoned in value of to-day. Those were busy days when the rich rewarded tars were fitting their prizes for the homeward journey, and transferring the bullion to Admiral Montague's ship for conveyance home. And leaving Blake, who modestly retires into the background as usual when the showy and more profitable part of the business is to be done, and Stayner, who bore the brunt of the actual fighting, to recommence the weary round of the blockade, Montague sailed for Portsmouth. He had a beautiful passage home

and an amazing reception; all the welcomes and thanks which should have been Blake's and most certainly Stayner's being showered upon him alone.

The bullion was discharged and carted to London, where under guard it was conveyed to the Mint, amid the acclamations of the citizens, who saw in every ingot a visible sign of the decadence of Spanish and Catholic power, and an increase of the might of England. Then honours and praise began to flow again towards the only available admiral. Montague must have felt occasionally as if he was being fêted under false pretences, but more probably he consoled himself with the euphémism that the whole fleet was receiving honour through him. The thanks of Parliament were voted to him, and he and his men were lionised to their hearts' content. Especially welcome was the now well-established fact that the blockade had been entirely successful, and also that the old-time superiority of English seamen over Spaniards was as well marked as ever. The poet Waller presented a short poem in which only Montague is mentioned, Blake and Stayner being quite ignored. It was a pity, but it was quite usual. Nevertheless, it could not hurt Blake, whose laurels were full, and who in any case did not strive for the praise of man.

CHAPTER XX

THE MIRACLE OF SANTA CRUZ

WHEN the news of Stayner's splendid victory reached Blake's squadron, there were many murmurings. The old seamen said, as usual, that it was just their luck; the younger men with more experience muttered that the admirals arranged the things between themselves, without care for the men under their command. Amid such growlings and grumblings board Blake's flagship *Martin* moved like an anchor of peace, while hot indignation was filling his heart that any men who had experienced the rule of Admiral Blake could so speak of him. But he stifled his wrath, and made his influence felt among the men in suchwise that the feeling of discontent rapidly died away, and disappeared altogether when once the grumblers were persuaded that they would share in the prize-money equally with those who had actually taken the vessels. Then *Martin* gently reminded them of the character, power, and influence of the man under whom they served—a man whom they were in danger of forgetting, yet one of great importance to them, as being their best and most valuable guarantee for just and equitable treatment.

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Martin's labours were specially needed now. The action just over had so unsettled the men's minds, made them so eager to quit the monotonously miserable work of the blockade, that it was hard indeed for them to settle down to it again, as he knew they must. Fortunately the real truth about their prospects could only be known to a few; had it been common property, it is more than doubtful whether even Blake's great and commanding influence would have sufficed to keep the men under control. And it is most difficult to condemn them. Again and again it has been pointed out how utterly miserable and disheartening were the conditions of those long blockades. True, they were absolutely essential; the work had to be done, even though there was no glory to be gained in the doing it, and much pain and suffering, without any relief, were its inevitable concomitants. All endured great misery, from the admiral downward, and it almost passes imagination to comprehend how it was possible ever to entice men to sea again who had spent a year in blockading a foreign port. Yet so curiously is man, and especially sailor-man, constituted, that there never yet was found any service, however full of danger, difficulty, and suffering, but that men to perform it are always forthcoming. Witness our service to-day as regards the torpedo craft. To those who have been accustomed to live sheltered lives ashore, even under humble circumstances, the mere baldly truthful recital of the daily round of life on board a "destroyer" at sea must sound like a canto of Dante concerning one of the infernal

circles. But there is no branch of naval work more easily manned than this. It is a mystery.

But the one pre-eminent need of men in the Navy while blockading was patience, boundless, exhaustible patience, never-waning hope, or—where minds were dense and dull—the cultivation of that attitude, mental and physical, of passive endurance. To plod through the same dismal round of duty day by day, under every circumstance of physical discomfort, amid surroundings to which any good accommodation is luxury, subsisting on food of such foul a character that only a sailor or a hog could eat it, to feel the dread scourge of scurvy eating into bone and marrow, and to know not when respite would come, called for much of the bulldog tenacity with which we have always been credited, and did not call in vain. It is characteristic of the race too that the one event which was discussed continually, looked forward to with an eagerness almost maddening in its intensity, as being the way out of the present distress, and the consummation of desire, was a bloody battle, a sea-fight with the Spaniards—ten to one, twenty to one if need were, only let us get at them.

Of Blake's endurance of these hard times, in which he was the mover and director of all, we cannot speak with any certainty, except that we know that he never failed in his duty to his country, even at the bitter cost of long bodily pain. He had never fully recovered from his ill-dressed wound received in his sea-fight off Portland, and the life he was now leading was the worst possible for such a con-

dition of body as was his. But we never hear of him complaining, asking to be relieved of his too arduous duties, returning, as he might easily have done, to a well-paid, comfortable post on shore, and leaving such terrible work as the blockading of the Spanish coast was to younger men. Other men might take a rest, not he; other men feeling that some compassion was due to their own bodies; but Robert Blake, steadfast, stolid, and staunch, held on. In the old Christian fashion he endured as seeing Him who is invisible.

So all through the stormy winter, from October till March, Blake with his ships patrolled the coasts, waiting, waiting always for the advent of more Spanish ships, and inciting the superstitious Spaniards to the belief that these awful watchers on the threshold were not human—were veritably in league with the devil. But never a Spanish ship came near. They had received voluminous warnings of the state of affairs at home; and in spite of the deep distress and utter need of the people in Spain, they dared not make a dash for Cadiz, and risk another catastrophe. But at last news reached the admiral that twenty-two treasure ships from the New World had reached the strongly fortified harbour of Santa Cruz in Teneriffe, and there were lying in perfect safety, under the guns of the forts, anxiously awaiting an opportunity to dash across to Spain. If only Blake would relax his vigilance for a few days, or take his fleet into some Portuguese harbour to refresh his sea-worn men, they might get a chance. But no, their scouts (by whom they were kept

wonderfully well informed) never brought them hopeful news of that kind. Presently they receive tidings from some Dutch shipmasters of Blake, but they were of so alarming and inconceivable a nature that, after the first shock of surprise had passed, the Spaniards flatly refused to credit the information at all. The governor of Santa Cruz laughed the report to scorn, for it was to the credit that Blake was about to attack the Spanish fleet in Santa Cruz harbour. He (the governor) might well be pardoned for his levity, remembering what a sort of place was this redoubtable bay. It was a deep-set harbour, with a narrow entrance, and the sides of the strait passage were then fortified very strongly. To all ordinary thinking, for an enemy to attempt to enter would be to court absolute destruction; for if he could by any chance escape, being sunk while going in, he must inevitably succumb to the iron hail which would be rained upon him from all the eminences around, between which he would be held like a rat in a trap. And it should also not be forgotten that the attack of ships, if such could be found, must be entirely dependent on the wind for their volition, never so treacherous and unreliable as under high land like this. There is always the greatest possible risk of carrying away masts when sailing along under high land, down the gullies and ravines which rush, without any warning, tremendous gusts of wind, striking a becalmed ship with such force that if she be under full sail she is almost certain to lose some of it, and probably the masts as well.

This, of course, does not apply when the wind is blowing dead on shore ; but then, what commander could be so utterly devoid of all prudence as to run his vessel or vessels right before the wind into utmost danger, where, unless the wind changed at the right time and into the right direction to suit him, he must remain and perish ?

No, the Spaniards simply could not entertain the idea. Bold and brave they knew Blake to be, but they did not at all imagine him so reckless as to court certain destruction. Some people cannot learn even from indefinitely multiplied experiences. Such people were the Spaniards. With all their past knowledge of the deeds of Englishmen in conflict with their own race, they were now unable to believe in the possibility of such a daring action as that which they were told was contemplated by Blake. And they told the Dutchmen so, with many sonorous apologies for their disbelief and explanations why. To all of which the sturdy northerners replied, in effect : "Apparently, you do not yet know Blake. He not only plans impossibilities, but he accomplishes them also. You will, of course, do what you feel disposed to do with our information ; but if you are wise, you will prepare for his coming, and that right speedily. For our part we are going to leave the harbour at once. It will be no place for us during the coming fight." And away the Dutchmen sailed, leaving the Spaniards still haughtily incredulous, but secretly perturbed in case the rumour should be true after all.

Now it is noteworthy that in this, the greatest

action of his life, as when he first fought the Dutch. Blake was unhampered by the presence of any other officer of almost equal rank with himself. He had no one to consult but God, was left entirely to his own genius and daring, and the result— But he must not anticipate. The Dutchman's information to Don Diego Diagues, the governor, was correct in every detail: Blake was coming. And in deciding so to do we must believe that he had weighed the risk, had made up his mind, after taking all the factors into consideration, that his plan was feasible, and that he had a great prospect of doing that which he had purposed to do, completely. Of course he knew that much would depend upon the wind—he must have known fairly well the disposition of the vessels in the harbour by report, but in any case he was for the attack. Therefore on April 20th, 1657, the Spanish look-out was almost paralysed with astonishment to see Blake's fleet under all canvas, coming direct for the harbour under a press of sail before a strong home-blowing wind. It must have been a shock to all the Spanish officers, but probably, borne up by their invincible pride, they comforted themselves with the thought that while he might get in, he would never get out any more.

Vain hope. They might have known that a man who could dare such an encounter as that must have good reasons for believing that, if he could get in, he could also get out. And meanwhile he was coming nearer, nearer, ever nearer. Sixteen of the smaller Spanish vessels were moored close in shore,

while the six large galleons were anchored broadside on to the entrance, thus completely sheltering the smaller vessels, but also masking the batteries at the bottom of the bay, to the silent satisfaction of Blake, who saw at once how he was being aided by his enemies. He had hoisted his flag in the *Swiftsure*, and had altogether twenty-five ships at his disposal, with Captain Stayner as a sort of acting admiral. When Blake sent in to attack the ships, taking upon himself the assailing of the forts. One more factor in the situation must be mentioned, as having no doubt been thought of by Blake—the exceedingly poor gunnery of the Spaniards, making a hit an accident, as compared with the accurate fire of our own men.

The English ships entered the bay in line ahead, firing steadily at the batteries on the heads of the bay, and then, as they passed out of the line of fire from those fort guns, taking up their position each as ordered broadside on to the galleons, which they overwhelmed with their fire. As at Porto Farina, so here: the strong sea-breeze blew the smoke from us to them; and while it hindered what little aim they might have had, it did not prevent our gunners from firing with utmost precision. One by one the galleons caught fire and blew up, filling the bay with débris of vessels and dead bodies, while the atmosphere became a thick fog of gunpowder smoke. Even in the heat of battle much bitter disappointment was felt at the thought of the immense loss of prize-money. But all knew that there was no help for it: it was impossible to bring those

unwieldy vessels away; they must be destroyed. And destroyed they were, every last one of them, and then the still unsatisfied Englishmen attacked the half-moon of smaller vessels in their turn, and served them the same. Now was the time of danger for there was no possibility of the Spanish gunners on shore doing any harm to their own countrymen on board the fleet—there were none left there. That the forts at the bottom of the bay were not able to open fire upon the English ships, except for the providential circumstance that the wind blew all the smoke arising from the burning vessels full in the faces of the Spaniards, and made their always poor aim now perfectly haphazard. A few shots took effect, but the firing soon ceased as the futility of it became apparent. It was an awful scene, the harbour full of wreckage, overhung by dense smoke as to one half of it, a thick fog stabbed through and through with spires and sabres of fire, and ever growing thicker as magazine after magazine blew up.

The work was barely completed when the ebb-tide made, and the English ships, getting under way with great rapidity, began to glide seaward. There came the crowning mercy of the day—a shift of wind to the opposite point from which it had been blowing. It was no mere flaw either, a cat's-paw from the hills, but a strong, steady breeze, which filled the sails and wafted the ships out on top of the tide as rapidly as they had come in. Men like Blake and Martin—like-minded, that is—received this almost miraculous happening as a direct sign of the blessing of Heaven upon their efforts, and

manifested no astonishment. Had not their whole career been replete with miracles? One more or less could not surprise them, or add to the fervency with which they thanked God for all His wondrous mercies toward them. But those who had not hitherto regarded God as having much to do with them, who had Him not in their thoughts except to murmur against His decrees and take His great name in vain, were profoundly moved. It could not fail to strike them as a directly Divine interposition in their favour, and for the time prevented any grumbling at the loss of the treasure.

So the English ships sailed away safely, the heavy shot from the forts at the entrance whistling harmlessly over the mastheads, as if—which might well have been the case—their muzzles could not be depressed sufficiently to strike a ship unless she was out of range. Which sounds like a bull, so in explanation I would say that at a certain distance off a ship would be in the line of fire, but then the guns would not propel their shot so far. And Blake, having seen all fair for the station off Cadiz again, sat down to write his modest despatch :

“After spending several days at Cadiz, and not finding the enemy forward to come forth, it was decided to go to Santa Cruz, where we arrived on the 20th of April, and found that the West India fleet was in the harbour, five or six galleons, three being flagships, and sixteen others, some laden for and some from the Indies, having brass ordnance and their full complement of men. We resolved to attack them, though they were moored close along

the shore, which was lined with musketeers, and commanded by the castle and six or seven forts. Yet in four hours they were beaten, and all the ships driven ashore except the admiral and vice-admiral which resisted most, but by 2 p. m. one was fired and the other blew up, and by evening all the rest were fired except two that were sunk, and only their masts appeared above water. To complete the mercy, our own ships got off well, though some were maimed and had to be warped off, and the wind blew right into the bay, and the forts and castle continued to play upon us. We had only fifty slain and one hundred and twenty wounded, and our ships so soon repaired that in two days we sailed to our former station, near St. Mary's, where we arrived on the 2nd of May. To God be all the glory."

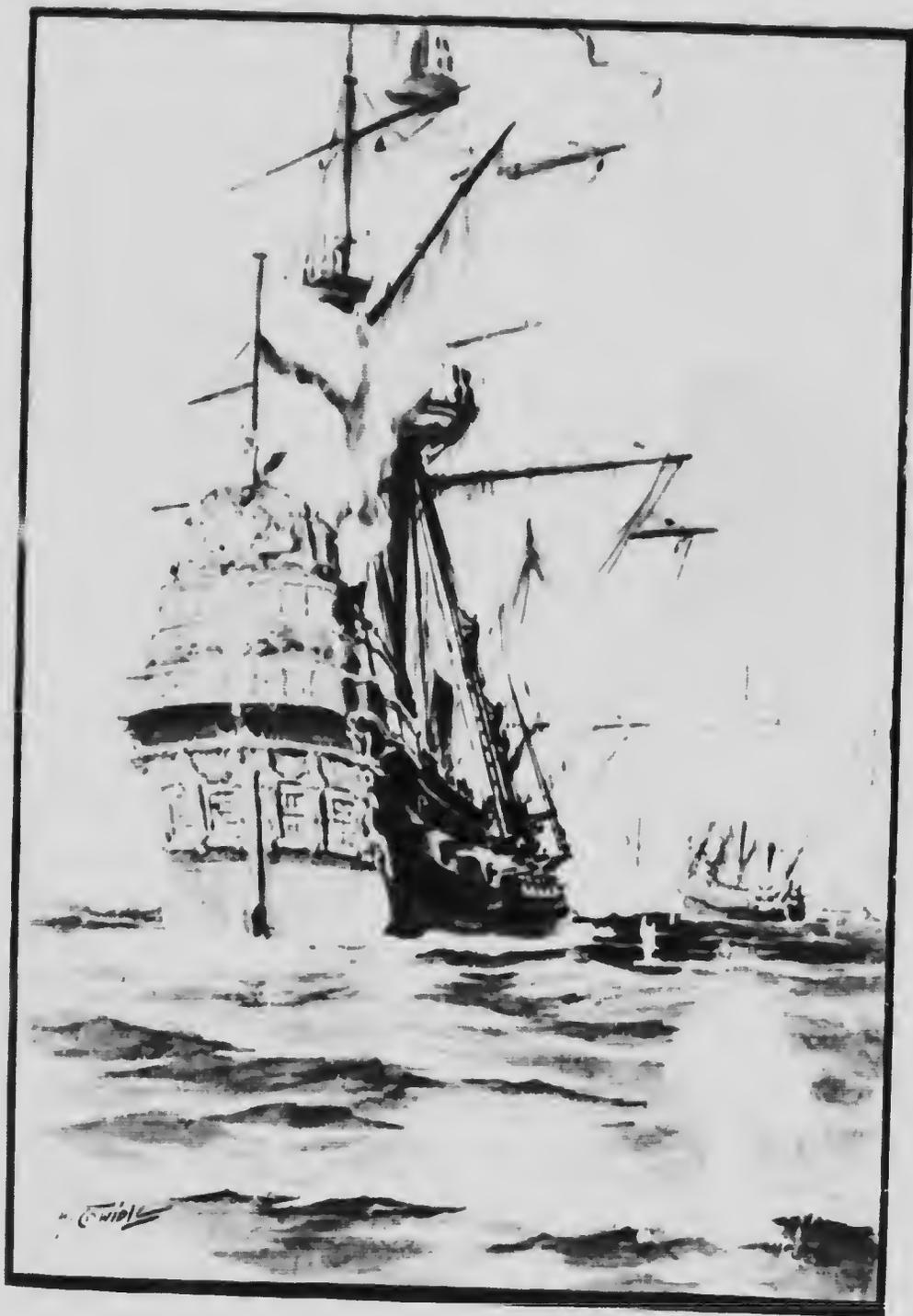
No mention is made of the Spanish losses, but without dispute the carnage must have been frightful, huddled together as the ships were, and unable to return the English fire at all effectively. As might well be expected, this action caused a mighty sensation throughout Europe. It was revolutionary. Henceforth the security which the holders of forts on shore had felt against any fleet whatever would never again be felt: it had been rudely shattered by this ten years' sailor. Clarendon, who must have often been at a loss to characterise the actions about which he wrote so well and copiously, says of this one:

"The whole action was so miraculous, that all men who knew the place wondered that any sober men, with what courage soever endued, would ever have

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"In four hours they were beaten, and all the ships driven ashore
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undertaken it; and they could hardly persuade themselves to believe what they had done, whilst the Spaniards comforted themselves with the belief that they were devils, and not men, who had destroyed them in such a manner. So much a strong resolution of bold and courageous men can bring to pass, that no resistance and advantage of ground can disappoint them."

One unlooked-for but very gratifying result of Blake's stupendous victory was the way in which it united men of all parties in praise of Blake. He was from henceforth to be the national property—a great Englishman above party, as much as if he had stepped out of the previous century, had been a contemporary of Drake and Howard. His own party, of course, showed the highest approbation of his services, but, in strange contrast with present practice, voted him no huge sum of money as a mark of their appreciation. They did indeed give him a portrait of himself set in gold and diamonds, and Cromwell wrote tendering him his own and the nation's thanks; but that was all. The Puritans did not believe in paying a man many times over for the same service. The Government ordered a day of thanksgiving to be observed for this great and glorious victory over the forces of evil, and the signal mark of Divine favour which it represented. And meanwhile the admiral himself was still at his work, to the utter amazement of the Spaniards, and indeed other nations, who could not understand why, after such a crushing blow, the men who had dealt it did not return home to be fêted and made

much of in many different ways. This stolid emotional method of holding on and doing our duty, alike in the hour of victory as during the long months of waiting for the chances of it, passes their comprehension, but undoubtedly heightens their respect for these island foes.

The same vessel that bore home Blake's despatches bore a letter from Martin to his betrothed, which, I have not mentioned the part that my hero played in the great battle, I venture to give in full:

Swiftsure.

At sea between Santa Cruz and St. Mary's,
April 22nd.

"MY MOST PRECIOUS SWEETHEART,

"These are to let you know that through the infinite mercy of God the admiral and myself are yet whole in body, whiles we are beyond doubt full of gratitude to God for the truly marvellous way in which He hath led us to victory and back again. I see more fully every day how mightily the good hand of our God hath been upon us, but this latter business hath been of so marvellous a kind that I am fain to lay my hand upon my mouth and only wonder and worship in silence.

"You are to know, sweetheart (how I do love you!) that towards the middle of March the admiral, God bless him! did appear ill at ease and restless, given to much silent communion with himself, as if he were brooding, which he certainly never did, and also to much private prayer. Of the latter I knew because he would tell me to permit none to molest him at such times, except on most urgent necessity,

warning them that he was in audience of the King of kings, which office I gratefully undertook. And also when our private informants came on board, of whom I may say nothing here, seeing how very private are all such matters, he would be for long lost in deep thought, apparently taking no heed of what was adoin'g around him. Yet had he lost no jot of his keen knowledge of every man his duty, the which attention of his hath ever been so valuable. And thus the days went by, I ever feeling that some great event was near at hand, until one evening, just before we were to retire to rest, when I was attending him as usual in his stateroom while he discoursed, as was his wont, of home affairs at Bridgwater and at Lyme, he said suddenly: 'Martin, lad, I am led by God to make an attack upon the Spanish fleet, which I am informed is in Santa Cruz. To all human seeming it is a desperate venture, but I have no fear for the result, whatever may befall, for I know that God doth guide us. We head for Teneriffe at to-morrow dawn, God willing.'

"Thus it befell that on the morrow the fleet made all sail with a fine quartering breeze for Teneriffe; and the admiral, summoning all the captains by signal to come and confer with him at two of the clock post-meridian, bade all hands lay aft, for he would speak to them. And when they were all of them assembled, he appearing before them with that inscrutably calm visage of his, raised his hand and said: 'Fellow-seamen, we are bound upon a desperate venture, speaking as men, but under God's guidance, as it shall be, I believe it will issue entirely successful.

We are to attack the Spaniard with twenty-two in the harbour of Santa Cruz de Teneriffe, since he will not come out, and we be all weary of this long blockade. It is a great venture, but I am confident of success, for I know in whom we trust, and I know you, my men. Let us, then, commend ourselves to the abounding care of God, and leave the result to Him calmly, be it what He will.' Then, dear to us all to prayers, the admiral kneeling in the front of the which pleasant exercise concluded, it was sweet to see how cheerily all hands did spring to their respective tasks. Then came the meeting of the captains, while all the ships, with mainyards to the masts, did lie gently tossing, awaiting the upshot of the meeting. By half-past three all was over, and the ships under full sail again, briskly sailing for Santa Cruz.

"I feel sure that many men, when they saw the mighty defences of the port on either hand to the narrow entrance, felt a sinking at the heart. Indeed our adventure seemed rash unto madness: but there was no halting—no, not for a moment. Straightly we sailed in, the flood making boldly and the sea-breeze blowing strongly. Then we changed formation to a line ahead, when within three miles, and Captain Stayner with the first division crowded in under full sail without firing a shot, Blake's orders being that he should reserve his fire for the ships within. But to see how the forts at the entrance did vomit flames and smoke was amazing. Yet still more amazing was it to note how that not one of their shot did strike us, but went hurtling high in air. Then d

we reduce sail (about one mile from the entrance) upon seeing how well Stayner's division was faring, and commenced to return the cannonade of the forts so shrewdly that some of them were too badly damaged to continue firing. Only the higher ones and the castle we could not reach, because our guns would not permit so great an elevation. So we sailed into the bay, where already Stayner's ships were anchored, some head and stern, and some by the stern only, while their fire upon the doomed Spaniards was terrific, the explosions echoing back from the mountains like terrible thunderings, and the Spanish vessels continually enveloped in clouds of smoke, which entirely hid them, at times, from our view. But they, firing at random, did strike some of our ships; and one shot falling upon a gun's crew of us, did slay three men and wounded seven others, the blood of one being hurled over me, so that I was gore from head to feet, and almost dazed with the concussion. The firing from our ships was like unto one long roll of thunder, never ceasing for a moment, until we saw that all the Spaniards' flags were down or hidden. Then did the admiral make the signal to cease our fire, and to board with boats. Also he ordered that the ships should all be set on fire, since it would be in nowise possible for us to withdraw them. And indeed it looked as if we should have much ado to come out ourselves, forgetting how signally the Lord had holpen us hitherto.

"Then the tide did turn to the ebb, and we to get up anchors with all speed, while ever and anon cometh a cannon-ball out of the flaming clouds ahead,

some of which did strike us, but doing little execution, thank God. We were hardly aweigh when, a gracious miracle on our behalf, the land-breeze in and wafted us outward, at the same time rose the smoke after us that we were still hidden from the forts on the shore. And so with that veil aster made our rejoicing way to sea without further sorrow and our total loss of slain and hurt less than a hundred men, at which price we have destroyed the entire fleet of Spain in Santa Cruz, and done grievous damage to the shore defences also.

"The admiral was exceeding weary, and his face white and drawn as I have never seen it before. He and Tom were wounded off Portland. I fear his glorious life is fast closing in. Yet doth he not complain, but taketh all with that sweet smile of which ever toucheth me to the very core.

"Now I must make an end of this overlong epistle (for me). Read it unto Tom, my dear brother, who may God bless mightily and keep him with health. Give him all my brotherly love and kindest remembrances from the admiral, who ever seeketh to know of his welfare. Give my warm salutations to Dick Pook and any townfolk inquiring. And for thy sweetheart, my very soul reacheth out unto thee as long for thee as a babe for its mother. I see thy sweet face in the night watches. I felt thy presence hedging me round as a wall of brass in the midst of the battle, and I pray that God may keep thee from me, and me for thee. Farewell.

"Thine own lover and soon-to-be-husband,

"MARTIN PENFOLD"

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CHAPTER XXI

REJOICINGS AT LYME

THE receipt of Martin's letter at Lyme was coincident with the arrival of the official news from London, and supplemented the latter so well that for a long time Grace was kept busy reading extracts from it to admiring townspeople, who came in numbers to the little house to hear news of their hero, the great admiral. Tom revived wonderfully upon receipt of the news; his eyes brightened and his face beamed, the haggard look almost disappearing from it altogether. He was so grateful to God, so proud of his brother, so full of admiration for Blake, so glad for his country's sake. Yet in the midst of his joy a shade fell upon his face as he thought of the sacrifice of human life, of the savagery of war, so opposed to the gentle teaching of the Prince of Peace. But he did not obtrude his views upon anybody, being in this respect much wiser than many of our modern peace-talkers, who always seem ready to make war upon any individual who dares to disagree with their peculiar methods of ingeminating peace. Hate war as we may, and ought to do, there can be no doubt that in the present condition of the

world the nation that does not hold itself ready for war, unless protected for a consideration by a more powerful country, must prepare to be enslaved. And also it will not be good for us to forget the waging of a more insidious war—commercial war, prompted by greed and greed and by means of which a group of enormously wealthy men, aided by their Government, attack a friendly State, ruin its trade, starve its women and children by thousands, and then build libraries and endow universities with some of the proceeds. This is a far more cruel form of war than that carried on upon open battlefields, with deadly weapons; our legislators have hardly realised that as yet. Tom kept his grief to himself, not doing or saying one word that would mar the joy of the day of thanksgiving, especially remembering Grace.

All over England, as at Lyme, the day was kept with holy joy, and now there were none to scoff. Even those who were most fiercely opposed to Puritanism, as being a new form of slavery, for the reason of which a man dared not enjoy himself, were nothing now. But at Lyme almost everybody knew Blake personally—knew Martin of course intimately—and so they rejoiced most vigorously, feeling indeed that Lyme was honoured beyond measure by its close connection with two such worthy men. As they could not fête Martin, they approached brother Tom, and asked him to preside at a feast whereat all the principal townsmen should be present and the present mayor and ex-mayor should stand on either side of him, and all honour should

tendered him on account of his past services, as well as for the sake of his brother's goodly work just heard of. Tom refused point-blank, alleging his unworthiness, ill-health, and maimed condition. But Grace pleaded with him, the dame scolded him, his townsmen would not take "No" for an answer, and so at last he yielded, but firmly stipulating that he should be spoken of as little as possible, and that all the glory should be ascribed to God, as requested in Blake's modest despatch.

Delighted, the successful deputation departed to arrange matters. They soon decided that, to be what they wished it, the feast must not be confined to the chief men and respectable householders of the town, but must embrace all, even the very poorest—it must be a day of general rejoicing. About the finding of funds there was no trouble whatever; for, strangely enough, mean men were almost entirely absent from the quaint little town at that time, and those who gave did so without asking, also without any ostentatious parade. Deep down in every heart was a precious well-spring of thankfulness for the great mercies of the past few years, and especially the crowning mercy of the crippling of Spain and Rome too, as they fondly supposed, the latter being in those days inevitably recognised as indissolubly connected with the former. And here was a golden opportunity for rejoicing as a united community, of recalling all their blessings since the day that Colonel Blake first marched in with his Bristol refugees at his heels. Preparations went merrily on in the large hall where the town's

business was transacted, and in sundry inn meeting-rooms and barns for the bulk of the people.

Oxen, sheep, pigs, poultry, were slain, and great store of wheaten bread and fresh vegetables laid out with many a barrel of pure home-brewed ale. At last the great day arrived, and Lyme smelt in one vast kitchen with the preparations for the coming feast. Punctually at 1 p.m. Tom appeared at the Guildhall, attended as usual by Grace and Dame Pook, who, having seen him safely within the Hall and seated, were about to retire, when the mayor observed them, and, running after them, made them stay. "Why, Grace, my maid, what ood Cap'n Tom do without thee? Besides, lass, I may not let thee go like this: my colleagues wouldn't hear of it. No, no; do'ee stop and hear all the 'mazing nice things we be goin' t' say about Martin an' t' admiral. T'will do'ee good, so ta wull. And Dame Pook mun stop too t' look after Grace—we can't spare none of the household to-day sin' Martin be away. Bless the lad, whenivir is he coming home here he'll settle down, and be a burgess of the good old town. I know I'd just love to see him mayor of Lyme. And the good, rubicund old man assumed such a comical air of vast importance that Grace and Dame Pook were fain to laugh outright, and so heartily too that the mayor could only gasp with astonishment, never dreaming that it was at him they laughed.

Then Dame Pook answered the mayor by saying "Well, Mr. Mayor, if so be you will ha' us vernal to be zittin' down along wi' 'ee, tes good, an' I'm not one to spoil your plans. But I wish we'd 'a' "

had more notice, so as we might ha' made ourselves look more vitty. We be hardly fit to be seen."

But this the mayor voted the rankest of nonsense, as indeed it was, both the young and old woman being perfectly clad according to their station, Dame Pook looking like a substantial farmer's wife, wearing a snow-white cap and pinner, and Grace in a dove-coloured kirtle and pretty lace shawl, brought her by Martin from Portugal on one of his home-comings to Lyme.

So they all sat them down to dinner, two hundred burgesses of Lyme, with Tom at the head of the table, in the place of honour, and Dame Pook, at her earnest request, between him and Grace, to carve their food for them, the original design of having him between the mayor and ex-mayor being perforce abandoned. There were many tears starting unbidden to the eyes of the guests as they saw their friends being fed like babes, and remembered that thus they had been for so long, one of them indeed since her early womanhood, and for their sakes. But all sorrowful feelings soon disappeared, for all were very happy. And when the eating was over, which was very soon—for these simple burgesses had not learned how to sit dallying with course after course for hours—the mayor rose in his place with a cup of ale in his hand, and said: "Our worthy fellow-citizen and dear friend, Captain Tom Pentreath" (here a mighty shout shook the windows), "hath begged me to do the honours for him, as such a business, he says, is all unfamiliar to him. But while I am glad to be of such assistance to him, I utterly

refuse to obey his second request, or rather command (for so really he put it), to make no mention of his name in the toasts we honour to-day." Another great cheer, which rose and fell and rose again, as if it would never cease, greeted this candid announcement while Tom sat with white face and set lips, and Grace looked as if it were the happiest moment of her life. "Fellow burgesses," proceeded the mayor, "our first duty to-day is to drink with grateful hearts to the health of our great countryman, Robert Blake, whose name and fame are personally dear to every one of us, as a patriot, a Christian, and a great sailor. We are all thankful to Almighty God for His great favour to us in thus preserving us; and while we render Him all thanks, we will not forget His chosen instrument, Admiral Robert Blake." A tempest of acclamation followed, which made the very roof-beams of the grand old building shake, and at its close all present stood up and sang the hundredth Psalm. In those days men were not ashamed of confessing their belief in God before a man as they are to-day.

When next the mayor rose, his voice faltered, and for some few seconds there was a hush, as he stood glancing towards Tom and the two women. "Friends and fellow-citizens," he said, "my next duty is a very precious one, but I feel hardly fit therefore to perform it. There came into our midst, with Colonel Blake, on that memorable day when he first marched into Lyme, a man who has entwined himself around the heart of every one of us. He is not of our town, but he became one of us in such a manner that he

is probably as dear to us all as our own flesh and blood. What he has been to us,—first as the valiant soldier ever in the forefront of the defenders of our town, next as a citizen and co-protector, with his brother here, of the Maid of Lyme, whom we all love as a dear sister who freely sacrificed herself for our sakes; and lastly, but embracing all the rest, as a splendid example of a happy Christian man whose every thought has been for others,—none of us can properly say it is too great a sum. We may feel—I speak feelingly, for I know I have so felt—we may feel some little grievance in the fact that these two wonderful men have not permitted us to share the joy of maintaining that dearly honoured maiden, for whose sake any of us would gladly die; but that is a very small trifle, and after all in no way detracts from, but rather adds to, the honour and glory of these two dear men. Martin Penfold" (here the speaker had perforce to pause while the assemblage shouted itself hoarse) "is still upon the sea, closely attendant upon the great admiral who, we grieve sorely to hear, is becoming frail and poor in health. Him we honour with all our souls in his absence; and his brother, Captain Tom, who sits at the head of this board, the joy and delight of all our hearts, is an object of almost worship to all of us. Quiet and unselfish, modest as brave, we have had to force him out of his retirement to gladden our eyes with the look upon his face, if he saddens our hearts by recalling to them his maiming for our sakes. May God bless the brothers Penfold, and bring the one still at sea safely home

to rest here with his brother Tom, until the utmost limit of a green old age, to be an example of what brave Christian men may be and do to this and succeeding generations." In all solemnity the toast of "the brothers" was drunk, and another psalm was sung with such zest and fervour that all men's faces shone again.

Then Tom slowly rose, and said: "Brethren and sisters of Lyme, I need not tell you how distasteful to me is this public praise, and how little I needed it to show me how you all loved us. Only for this reason, though, that Satan hath temptations enough for me, without my friends adding another—the temptation to think of myself as worthy of all these praises. If it hath pleased God to work in me to will and to do of His good pleasure some benefit to my fellow-men, who am I that I should take to myself any of the honour and praise which is due to Him alone? Moreover—and here I am sure you will all understand and agree with me—it is certain that the doing of good in this world is its own exceeding great reward. The exercise of those gifts which God hath entrusted us with brings with it a payment beyond all that man can bestow, and the acceptance of man's praises over and above doth ever seem to take away some of the joy attendant upon doing the will of God for the love of God and of His creatures. Who praiseth the sun for shining, or the fountain for flowing? Yet doth not the sun shine or the fountain flow more surely by the good will of God than man gives out what God first giveth in to him. Only he may, to his eternal loss, refuse

to let his light shine, wrap up his talent in a napkin, and hide it in the earth, thereby committing triple robbery: first, of God, whose gifts for the benefit of others he embezzleth; secondly, of man, in that he withholdeth those gifts from them; and, thirdly, of himself, in that he feloniously loseth that joy unspeakable which God hath intended him to receive and retain.

“Nevertheless, dear ones, think not of me as chiding you for these sweet words of yours; I only speak as fearing that by reason of them I may be puffed up, and perchance forget whose I am and whom I serve. You said and did what you have out of pure love to me and mine, and for that I thank you all with a full heart, and the more fervently because you *have* ascribed all the honour and glory to God. For Martin and this dear maid” (laying his hand tenderly on Grace’s head) “I thank you too. All that you have said of them they deserve, and I feel specially favoured of God in that I have been permitted to live and be associated with such dear servants of His as they are. But I would not have you forget Dame Pook. She has been a mother to us all. Meekly and righteously she hath passed through the furnace of affliction, quietly doing her duty in the sight of God, as becometh one of His dear ones, nor ever counting it praiseworthy on her part that she hath done so. She is of the salt of the earth, and I bless God for her.

“Now, I have been impatient to get away from the question of praise of men, gracious and loving

as it is of you to tender it, and come to the praise of God for His mercies to usward in this last most amazing victory. I sorrow over the slain men, the widows' and the orphans' tears, but I rejoice with unspeakable joy over the breaking of the power of that most evil nation, Spain, and the deadly blow dealt to the Man of Sin. Thank God, who hath raised up for us such mighty men of valour and wisdom to do this great work, and may Englishmen never forget to what they owe these unspeakable mercies of deliverance. And now, brethren, I pray you let me go home, for I am no longer strong, and the pleasure of this day hath been almost more than I can bear."

Immediately a dozen willing hands were outstretched to aid the maimed hero; but courteously declining all their assistance, he turned to Grace and Dame Pook, as had ever been his wont since first he was helpless, and, leaning upon them, went slowly homeward. As soon as he was gone the talking broke out in great volume; and until a most unseemly hour, for Lyme, the discussion went on, much controversial matter being introduced, as was always the case where so many extreme sectaries met in time of peace. At last, when the din of theological argument was at its height, the ex-mayor arose, a venerable figure, much beloved in the town for his solid virtues, and, spreading out his hands, cried: "Brethren, peace. Shall we close this happy day by jangling about minor matters belief or unbelief in which hath no jot of importance? Rather let us raise our voices in

another psalm, and then, considering the lateness of the hour, disperse to our several homes, and seek our beds against the labours of the morrow." There was an instant acquiescence; the psalm was raised "Oh, praise the Lord; for He is good, and His mercy endureth for ever." That worthy exercise concluded, the oldest preacher present led the assembly in fervent prayer, concluding with the time-hallowed benediction; and all quietly separated for their several homes.

As always ought to be the case after a feast, but, alas! seldom is, there was next day an air of great contentment pervading all who had been present. It had been most successful, this celebration, for no one seemed to have been forgotten, and all seemed the better for it. Tom was so decidedly; the meeting, though undoubtedly a severe strain upon him at the time, had caused a reaction which was entirely beneficial; while Grace was almost transfigured, so happy was she. The old dame too went about her household duties with a brisk and joyous air, as of a person who is suddenly made aware that their loving services have not been forgotten, and that they themselves hold a place in the community far higher than they had ever dreamed of. So deeply had the celebration affected the imaginations of those who took part in it that for long they could talk of scarcely anything else, and the fame of Lyme's thanksgiving day spread all along the coast of the bonny West Country.

Leaving them to their peace, let us return to the squadron, which under the bright summer sun was

still keeping watch and ward over the southern Spanish ports. But the war with Spain was drawn to a close quietly, from the impossibility of carrying it on by sea, and the Puritan inability to attack Spain on land in Europe. The West Indian campaign had been horribly bungled, nearly all the six thousand soldiers who had been sent there having died, not in battle, but of disease, owing to lack of proper arrangements for looking after them. But the weight of the blows dealt by Blake on the Spanish side quite compensated for the want of finish shown by Penn and Venables in the conduct of the expedition; and so the war was practically over, but undecided, a drawn game with nearly all the losses on one side. It was high time that Blake's squadron was relieved. He himself received permission—that is to say, was requested—to return home and rest, but Blake, ever mindful of his men before himself, could not bring himself to leave them, knowing that their necessity was fully as great as his own. So he held on through the scorching summer without finding any other opportunity of warfare against the Spaniards, his strength daily lessening under the strain put upon it, as the arduous duties and abominable food did their deadly work upon his enfeebled frame.

His condition was of course well known throughout the squadron, where his patient, heroic example did much to keep the men from breaking into open revolt against the hardships of their lot. They felt, and only too justly so, that while their shipmates, who had done no more than they had to gain the

victory over Spain, or to provide that great booty for England, were being fêted and praised tremendously, they were, vulgarly speaking, out of it ; and when they returned home (if ever they did return) they would be forgotten, and would besides be very fortunate if they could successfully claim their rightful share of prize-money. But from these bitter reflections the sight of their patiently suffering leader drew them away. They knew that he felt for them as never for himself, and that anything he could do for them he would ; and when he could not aid them, he could and did suffer with them. Martin suffered very much, but it was for his chief. In his solicitude for his friend and master he forgot all about himself, and consequently enjoyed the best of health. But occasionally he suffered from serious loss of temper—when he heard members of the crew, and those not always the foremost hands, grumbling and laying the blame for their miserable detention on the Spanish coast to the charge of the admiral. The fact was, as he knew full well, that the poor fellows were suffering simply from monotony ; if only something exciting had occurred, it would have mitigated their troubles immensely. In that temper they would have hurled themselves unhesitatingly at an enemy's fleet of ten times their strength, and welcomed the opportunity gaily. Action, of any kind, was what they principally needed.

At last Blake was able to gratify their desires. It became quite clear that the blockade of Cadiz was no longer necessary, although no orders had as yet been received for the fleet to return home.

Perhaps, being so busy with weighty matters of State at home, the Council had not time to remember its weary mariners still tossing on the Atlantic, waiting a port whose trade was practically dead, the ships being left to come out or go in, for so long a time at any rate. So the admiral determined to pay a visit of vengeance to the pirates of Salé, who, left to their own devilish devices for a long time, had forgotten the lessons taught to their *frères* of Tunis and Algiers. Orders were therefore given for sail to be made, and a course to be run southward for the pirate port, with the intention of dealing such a blow at the business as would effectually cripple it. But when the squadron arrived off the port, it took no long time to ascertain that under present conditions no attack could be made. None of Blake's ships could come near enough to bombard the pirate stronghold, while the light-draughted pirate craft, sailing twice as fast as any of the English ships, foul with their long cruising and in any case too heavy for the service, never allowed themselves to get near enough to be shot at with any chance of success. It was also impossible to make a boat attack without risking too much valuable life. To send boats into a harbour swarming with these light-heeled pirate galleys, crowded with reckless ruffians, was to court their destruction; they must have been overwhelmed.

Yet such was the terror of Blake's name that the ruler of Salé, although he must have been fully conscious of the Englishmen's helplessness under present conditions, was anxious to treat with them

He did not know how soon the infidel might choose to return with suitable vessels and wipe Sallee off the face of the earth. So he humbled himself, and promised amendment, released a great many slaves at a low ransom, and supplied the squadron with water, beef, and fruits at moderate rates; in fact, he behaved for the time with conspicuous humanity under the stress of fear. Consequently after a short stay Blake was constrained to sail away again, with an uneasy feeling that the promises made him were not intended to be kept—had only been made to get rid of him. If it be supposed that his energy was falling off, and that he did not deal with the miscreants in his old-time forceful manner, perhaps the supposition is correct in the main, as he was now much enfeebled in body, and possibly somewhat less clear in mind. Yet under the circumstances it is difficult to see how he could have acted in any other manner than he did, without a great loss of life, uncompensated by any adequate gain resulting therefrom.

So the fleet sailed slowly back to its station off Cadiz, every day seeing a change for the worse in the admiral. He was now suffering from a complication of disorders, of which gravel, scurvy, and dropsy were the chief, each severe enough in all reason to lay by any man, however vigorous. No landsman can fully appreciate the horror of the second of these grim diseases, scurvy, by which so many thousands of our seamen have miserably perished. It is a disease which is only second to leprosy in its loathsomeness. The flesh turns to

putty-like matter, the teeth drop out, old scars open and fester, and the wretched sufferer goes. And it is all preventable—ay, even curable up to a very late stage—by proper food and plenty of vegetables. I have seen a man almost in the agony brought back from death by having onions and potatoes crushed in a rude press over his mouth and their juice allowed to run in. It acted like an elixir of life; and being fed on purely fresh vegetable food, the patient was well enough to resume his duties in less than a fortnight. But apart from these awful complaints from which Admiral Blake suffered, and which he bore with most Christian fortitude, there can be no doubt that his blood was poisoned, and his whole frame permanently enfeebled, by the gross maltreatment of his wound received off Portland. This was aggravated by his constant exertions and hardships since, so that now, in the fifty-eighth year of his age, he was a broken-down, decrepit old man, beginning to look wistfully forward to his long, long rest.

Then came orders from home to return at once, bringing joy to the whole fleet, where all had been in gloom and despondency. Martin especially rejoiced, for his heart ached for the friend whom he had scarcely ever left, night or day, and upon whose noble head the shadow of death was already resting. The admiral's flag was once more hoisted in the *George*, and the welcome order was given to make plain sail to a favouring south-westerly breeze of good strength; and majestically the weather-worn squadron released from its long vigil, moved homeward.

CHAPTER XXII

AND LAST

BUT for the grim shadow which hung over the squadron during that passage to England in the sweet month of August, there would have been great rejoicings on board all the ships at the prospect of once again joining in the amenities of shore life, of receiving some of the acclamations of which the crews felt they had been unjustly deprived, and of fingering their shares of the long-ago-earned prize-money. But with the knowledge that they were bringing home their great leader dying came a solemnity of bearing that might easily have been imagined to affect the ships themselves, and make their passage a slow, solemn march, almost funereal in its character. It was a sad time for Martin. He could not help recalling constantly that beautiful August, fourteen years before, when in close attendance upon Captain Blake, both of them at the beginning of their acquaintance, he passed with a gallant troop through the sweet lanes and over the scented downs of Somerset and Dorset. And often, as he sat by his master's couch as the admiral dozed uneasily, he would wonder hazily what had become of the rest of that goodly company—whether any of them were

yet alive, and, if so, where. Then his mind would picture the sweet face of his beloved, waiting patiently for him, and he would wonder whether he was really going to be freed from his service in the fleet by the death of this dear friend, for whom he would most gladly have relinquished for years the fruition of his hopes, if only he might still keep him company on earth. Thankfully he assured himself of this—that though released from his wanderings to settle down quietly in that home which was ever beckoning him, he felt no eagerness to reach it, if it could only be gained by the loss of his master.

Then Blake would awake from his doze; and after his material wants had been attended to, and the news of how the squadron was progressing had been communicated to him by the officer on the watch, he would turn to Martin and discourse of old days spent together,—of the siege of Lynn and the brave deeds done by the lumpish country folk, who rose to the height of their great opportunities in amazing fashion; of the beginnings of the fleet, and the way in which the crews of the ships were gradually taught that the Puritan temper and mode of life would answer, if possible, better at sea than ashore, and how well that great lesson had been learned; of the long, long cruises through summer and winter, when blockading Rupert's ships and at the same time learning how to handle his own of the fierce fights with the Dutchman, the smoke and flame and thunder of battle, when England's fate seemed to hang in the balance, and, humanly speaking, all depended on the fleet. And then the talk would

turn to higher things—of God's overruling care of their dear country, bringing her victorious not only through her internecine troubles, but over every envious foreign nation that had sought to make capital out of those same troubles, to leap on her back, as it were, when she was down. "But," he would add, "it may be, Martin, that our people are growing spiritually proud, and overly intolerant of others who may slightly differ from them on minor points of doctrine, even to the extent of persecution, which is and ever must be a great evil, as entirely contrary to the law of Christ. Thou knowest, Martin, how foreign it has ever been to my temper not to grant to all under me complete liberty of conscience, or to meddle with anything of religious controversy, holding that to love God and keep His commandments is the whole duty of man, impossible of performance, except that love should be first shed abroad in our hearts by Himself. But tell me again, Martin, if thou wilt, the story of thy conversion. Wast an unregenerate rascal when first I knew thee" (with a sweet smile on the wan face), "but wast ever true, brave, and honest—a splendid foundation whercon to rear the glorious edifice of Christianity."

Then would Martin go through the well-remembered story, adding out of his stores of memory many pleasant things about his brother and Grace, with all of which the dying admiral was soothed and cheered and pleased. And so day by day, as the ships glided homeward, he drooped and sank as to his body, but rose ever into the clearer, brighter



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regions with his spirit, so that Martin, gazing upon him oftentimes when he was unaware of that regard, would be filled with awe, deeming it the face of an angel, so transfigured did it appear. Even when his body was racked with cruellest pains, his soul rose superior to them, as if they were a matter apart from its consideration; and after the agony had passed, and the dewes of pain lay in beads upon his face, the inner light would so gloriously shine forth as to make the bystanders forget that the body in front of them had just been racked with sharpest torture.

Unknown to him, the officers were doing their very best to drive the sluggish old ships along. They felt that they were running a race with death, and all fumed and fretted at the fine weather, which only permitted a speed of some four knots an hour, even with every sail and wind-saver ("savealls" we call them at sea) spread that could possibly be utilised. But the ships were so foul that progress was intolerably slow, and it would have taken a gale of wind astern to have driven them eight knots. I know well what that means, having once been in a similar position in a smart barquantine, of which I was mate. The master lay a-dying of some mysterious disease, with a dear wife and two little ones on board, and we were a thousand miles from port, in the South Atlantic, where the S.E. trades were failing preliminary to leaving us. I have never seen a ship so bedight with canvas wherever a rag could be hung to catch a stray puff without robbing another sail of it. Even with

the lightest airs the vessel (she was beautifully clean as to her bottom) would glide along at the rate of three to four knots an hour; but oh, how deadly slow she did seem! I heard a man at the wheel say once, "Seems as if Jemmy Smallback's hangin' on to her keel." So strangely do seamen's superstitions operate in the presence of any calamity.

Slowly—oh! so slowly—the squadron neared the Channel, and gradually the sea changed its deep azure for the well-known and well-beloved Channel green or greenish grey. The deep-sea lead found the bottom, and the arming brought up sand, shells, and hake's teeth, sure evidence of being in the fairway, while the depth was sixty-five fathoms. Martin conveyed the glad news to the admiral, letting him know at the same time that all was well with the fleet, and that they hoped, with the present breeze, to sight the land about the Beast in a few hours—four or five at the most. Blake turned his weary head towards his friend, saying: "I would fain be spared long enough to see my home and settle my small affairs, but I know that I shall not do so. My time is nearly come, and except for the business I speak of, I should be well content to go. Of late I have been sorely troubled in body, as thou knowest; but that tyranny of the flesh will soon be overpast. How can I thank thee for thy faithful service, Martin? How make thee understand how good and pleasant thou hast been to me ever since God brought thee to me? I can only give thee a dying man's blessing, praying that thou mayest see abundance of years, rich in happiness and peace. Also I would fain give my

blessing to all the ship's company, but I have not the strength. Let the officers all be asked to see me; I would speak to each one of them, and thank them for their loyal, hearty aid in all that I have been led to undertake. Call them down, Martin."

Obeying with a bursting heart, Martin summoned the officers, and a most affecting leave-taking took place, several of them shedding bitter tears, both for the loss of one personally dear to each of them and also for the enormous loss to England that was about to befall. Some of them indeed ventured to prophesy that it only needed the good cheer, rest, and comfort of the land to restore the admiral again; but he knew better, and told them so. Presently a ringing cry of "Land-ho" came pealing down from the masthead, and was heard in the stillness of the admiral's cabin. His eye brightened, and he murmured, "Dear land, though I shall never see thee more, I love thee to my latest breath, and pray that thou mayest prosper in all right ways, but principally in the simple worship of God, and the succouring of all such as be oppressed. Gentlemen, return to your duties, or your rest, and God bless you all. I am weary, and would fain sleep."

On deck all who were not actually engaged in some work that kept them from doing so were feasting their eyes upon the soft beauties of that most lovely coast of Cornwall and Devon, lying in the mellow light of the westering autumn sun. And in many an otherwise hard heart was the unuttered prayer that God would spare their dear leader, the personal friend of them all as they felt,

to once more set his foot upon that beautiful shore before he laid him finally down to his eternal rest. Their prayers and hopes were not to be fulfilled as they desired, for suddenly the signal was made for all flags to be lowered to half-mast. Admiral Blake was dead—dead in sight of port, dead upon the sea he had served so well; and every soul in the fleet felt the shock, while most of them shed tears.

Two hours afterwards the watchers at Plymouth saw the ships entering the Sound, the *George* leading in truly funereal guise, all flags drooping mournfully; and a rumour ran round that the squadron was surely mourning the loss of their head. Excited folk accosted one another in the quaint streets, and discussed the probabilities of such a calamity; but when at last the sad news became known, there was such an exhibition of public mourning as the good old three towns have seldom witnessed. It could hardly be believed; but at last the sad truth admitted of no doubt, and the whole town was put in mourning. The news was sent with all speed to London, where preparations were immediately made for a public funeral, but nothing at all extraordinary; in fact, it is on record that the ceremony was carefully copied from that used at the burial of Admiral Deane, who was slain by the side of Monk when fighting with the Dutch. It was not a part of the Puritans' programme to make very much pomp and parade over any great man, feeling, as they did, that too great a distinction drawn between the man who leads and the men who follow savours of dishonour to God.

But they buried Blake among the kings in Henry VII.'s chapel in Westminster Abbey, with quietness and decency, while there followed him to the grave a host of sincere and hearty mourners, chief among whom was Martin Penfold, who had not left the side of his dead chief, except to snatch a little rest and food, by day or by night, until he was laid in the earth within that mighty sanctuary. That he does not lie there now everybody knows. The unspeakable gang who came into power at the Restoration, like the jackass kicking the dead lion, dug up his bones and flung them into one common grave with Cromwell, Ireton, and Deane, and nobody knows where it was. And after all, what does it matter? Such a currish proceeding is hardly worth mentioning, except as being typical of the class of men who succeeded the Puritans, and made England a common stews, a byword and a hissing among the nations, until the outraged people rose up and flung them forth to make place for decent men.

No sooner did Martin behold the last of his beloved chief, than, collecting his pay, he shook the dust of London from his feet, and remembering his master's last wishes, turned his face westwards, his heart growing lighter at every mile as he pictured the joy that awaited him at Lyme. But even that was tempered by a fear lest he should find his brother also gone. In the stress of attendance upon the funeral, and escorting the body from Plymouth to London, he had not been able to communicate with them at Lyme, so that it was

now many months since he had heard, and he had much ado to keep from growing anxious. But here his buoyant faith came to the rescue, and before long he was singing, as he rode, like any bird, for pure joy of heart. Every now and then a qualm of conscience would give him pause: was it right for him to be so happy while his dear friend and master lay mouldering in the tomb? Sound, sterling common-sense came to his aid this time, telling him to be of good cheer, and reminding him that in God's good time Admiral Blake had been called home, his work well done, his greatly needed rest well won. And why should the friends left behind him sorrow over such a noble life? Rather rejoice in that it had been lived and that they had been privileged to be associated with it. So that Martin, reasoning thus, finally accepted the invitation of his sound mind and healthy body to be happy, and was so—as happy a man as you could find in broad England that day. He looked forward gleefully to his wedding with Grace—to turning his back upon the sea as a business for the rest of his life, and settling down to a cosy life as a man of independent means, to work or not as it pleased him, and to enjoy the pleasure that a well-earned retirement must always give. He was just in the prime of life, although bearing very patently the marks of his hard career, and the signs that he had been accustomed to command. But in his bright, wide-glancing brown eyes there was the happy gaze of a healthy child who has been always lovingly tended and wisely ruled—a look that appealed to all with

whom he came in contact: the face of a child of God, in brief, whose transparent soul looks out of his eyes unstained by any contact with the world of evil lying all around him.

On the second day of his journey, for he travelled by easy stages so as not to distress his willing beast, he halted for the night at a little inn just off the main road through the New Forest, not far from Lyndhurst. He was entertained by a comely dame, who, as used to be the pleasant custom at many village inns, made him welcome, not as a traveller, but as a member of the family just returned from a long journey. Before his simple meal was ended she had confided her great sorrow to him: her husband, "a good husband if ever there was one," had died a few years ago, and her only son, a stalwart youth of twenty-five, had departed from home, saying that it was far too quiet for him; and for four years she had seen naught of him. She greatly feared that he was dead, and if he were, she did not wish to live longer. It was only the hope of his some day returning that kept her alive.

"What was his name?" said Martin, without much show of interest, really more to make the old lady feel that her story was being attentively listened to.

"Edward Ireland," responded the dame.

And Martin, suddenly shaking off his listless attitude, said: "Then, praise God, dame; for unless some calamity come between ye, surely you will see him ere long. He was pressed in London for the *George*, and after some time of sullen bitterness, as was only natural, he went to work with a will.

And I, liking his face, made friends with him, and spake to him of the love of God ; so that he, being greatly moved and softened, told me his history, and of you waiting here in loneliness for him, while he was ashamed to face you after all his bad behaviour."

"Poor lad, poor lad," murmured the mother.

"But be sure that he will come, dame," Martin went on ; "I will vouch for his sincerity with my life, and—— Blessed be God, here he is!"

It was indeed the returning prodigal, a fine, sturdily built man, swinging up the pebbled path between the flower-beds. On the doorsill they met, mother and son, and her happiness was complete. The first transports over, they sought Martin, to thank him, and found him with face shining with joy for that he had in any way been instrumental in bringing this pleasant meeting to pass. Naturally they pressed him to stay with them for a few days, that they might show him how grateful they were ; but when Martin explained his position, told them to what he was returning, and his longings to see his dear one, they pressed him no longer.

At early dawn next morning they bade him God-speed, loading him with blessings. He rode on his way with a full heart, and a feeling that this auspicious happening augured well for his happiness. So much does the taint of superstition often cling to the best of men. Full of eager hope he pressed on as rapidly as his good horse found possible, and at four in the afternoon was riding down the steep High Street into Lyme. Just pleasantly

answering the greetings of the few people he met, he hurried home. His horse's feet upon the pebble-paved walk brought Grace to the door, her look of inquiry brightening into a smile of radiant joy as Martin, flinging himself from the saddle, seized her in his close embrace, murmuring, "My precious lamb, at last we are together, never, I hope, to be separated again in life."

The first transports over, they went in to where Tom lay on a couch at the window, watching the descending sun, and together they bent over him, their faces aglow with love. And Tom, turning to them, put an arm round each, drew their faces down to his, murmuring, "Thank God, thank God, for all His abundant mercies." Then Martin's keen eye of affection, which had been busily scanning Tom's features for some sign of the change he feared, suddenly discovered a delightful thing—Tom was evidently better. The wan and sunken appearance in his face had almost disappeared, his form had regained something of its old sturdiness, and the other-world expression, so characteristic of people who are marked for death, was no longer there. Now Martin's joy almost broke bounds. With broken voice and streaming eyes, he congratulated his brother 'upon the wonderful change for the better, and assisted him to rise.

Presently the dame came in, looking older indeed, but sonsie as ever, and full of vigour. She greeted Martin with great delight, overwhelming him with questions, and finally whispering in his ear, "When is it to be?" To which, blushing like a schoolboy,

he replied, "As soon as possible, for I am going to sea no more!" The dame gave a regular cackle of delight, and, as if gifted with sudden youth, bustled about to prepare a meal for her "boy," as she persisted in calling him. Then all sat down to the cheerful table, a happy, united household, with the delightful sense upon them that their many painful partings were at last all over. Martin told them that his pay and prize-money amounted to so substantial a sum that, added to what he had already saved, they were all provided for for life. But he said it was his intention to buy a farm he had long had his eye upon, a little to the eastward of the town, and overlooking the sea. There they could all happily pass the remainder of their lives, looking back with full satisfaction upon the part that each of them had played in their country's history, and looking forward with serene contentment to the pleasant years in store—years of rest and fulfilment of desire.

After supper Tom requested news of the last days of the admiral, but without sadness, for already rumours had reached his ears of the way in which the hero had died. And Martin told the beautiful story as only he could do, from his close attendance upon, and intimacy with, the great man: told of his heroic putting down of all his own painful disablements, and earnest prosecution of his duty in spite of all hindrances; how, as long as any energy of body remained to him, he kept at his post, and how, when his feeble frame could no longer respond to the calls his strong mind made upon it, he laid

him down with heavenly patience and utmost fortitude, awaiting the end; and how he passed away meekly and humbly in the full assurance of the love of God. Tears, happy tears, were in the eyes of all—tears of rejoicing over the truly triumphant home-going of one so dear to them all. And they thanked God for that they had ever known him.

So they all retired happily to rest, but not before Martin had taken Grace into the little garden for a space to himself. There, amid much lovers' talk, they discussed practical details of their marriage, the date of which Grace left entirely to Martin, sweetly saying that all her desires were towards him, and she would gladly accept his rule—nay, rejoiced to be ruled by him. So it was agreed that they should be married in a month, please God, as by that time Martin doubted not that the Brow farm could be got ready for their removal thither. And I doubt whether all Britain could have shown a happier family than that slumbering in that modest dwelling of Lyme that night.

Martin's ordeal in the morning was a severe one. He had to face practically the welcomes and congratulations of the whole town. Men, women, and children alike pressed around him to overwhelm him with kindly words and blessings. In vain did he deprecate so much fuss, as he said; in vain did he allude to himself as merely a tool in the master's hands without any right to the praise due entirely to that master. At last he blurted out the news of his approaching wedding, and it ran through the town like flame. One would have thought that

the news of some great victory had just been announced, so many and so public were the rejoicings. Almost immediately there was mooted the idea of a public wedding, and the idea was immensely popular. It was, however, quite distasteful to Martin, who, like his brother, preferred to be quietly left alone. But that was not to be thought of. The chief men of the town pleaded hard with their hero, but unsuccessfully, until Tom, of all men, added his voice to the rest, telling Martin that, after giving the matter earnest, prayerful thought, he was convinced that it was the right thing to do, as it might be made an occasion for universal thanksgiving. Besides, Tom said, the good folks had been disappointed greatly in not having Martin with them when they had feasted joyfully at the news of the great victory of Santa Cruz, and he felt that they were certainly entitled to have their kindly wishes considered now.

So Martin reluctantly consented, and went to tell Grace. He had consulted her before as to her wishes on the matter, but she had told him, with a sweet air of perfect confidence, that whatever his will in the affair might be, it would certainly be hers. She had no thoughts, no aspirations, no ambitions apart from him, and anything done which would let the outsiders know something of his noble nature would give her joy beyond expression. The acquiescence of Martin was speedily public property, and all classes combined, according to their ability, to make the occasion one long to be remembered in Lyme. Remembering the efforts made at the

thanksgiving ceremonies, everybody determined to outdo them by far, and to make Martin and Grace realise, if possible, how much they were beloved. The preparations went on almost day and night, all sorts of quaint devices being used to decorate the town. The farm was stocked with cattle, pigs, sheep, and poultry. Food also for the animals was carted in lavishly, everything being freely contributed, so that scarcely any money was spent at all.

At last the great day arrived, and in the open air, on the grassy hillside, where as many of the townfolk as could come were able to witness the ceremony easily, Martin and the Maid of Lyme were made one by the venerable old Independent minister of the town. As soon as the binding words had been spoken, as if by one common impulse the whole audience burst into that magnificent song of praise, the hundredth Psalm, the stately chorus sweeping over hills and through dales, till wayfarers on distant roads paused to listen and wonder whether that burst of melody came down from heaven or no. Splendid was the feast that followed, yet without gluttony or any drunkenness. It was in truth an immense love-feast, although the central figures were so humble. And when at last the time came for departing, and all the public farewells had been said, Tom and Dame Pook looked wistfully at the newly married couple, and wondered how they should feel upon returning to the bereaved old home. But Martin, sensitive soul, saw the look, and seizing Tom and the dame by the hands, he said, "Come,

brother, come, dame, let us all go home to our new home, never to part again till God call us hence." So they all went home together, full of well-earned happiness; and there, in the full enjoyment of it, we will leave them.

THE END



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