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MASTER ARDICK, BUCCANEER

MASTER ARDICK BUCCANEER

BY
F. H. COSTELLO



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MASTER ARDICK, BUCCANEER.

CHAPTER I.

OF MY BECOMING A SEAFARING MAN.

I WAS born in the days of the Lord Protector, so that I was a little past my majority when the things that I have in mind to relate took place. At that time the second Charles was on the throne, and we were dancing to the fiddle of the great Louis, which was the reason we had been drawn into a war with the Dutch, and had thrown over the Triple Alliance. My father was a sea captain, out of Portsmouth for the Mediterranean, and was killed by the Barbary pirates and his ship taken a little time before I came of age. My mother grieved sorely for him, and only survived his loss a few months, and my two young brothers being then put out with a reputable haberdasher, and the little that remained of our fortune turned over to him for their benefit, I found myself of a sudden alone in the world, and brought, for the first time, to depend upon myself for a living. I had made a few voyages with my father, and had come to be something of a seaman, though I knew scarce anything of navigation, and this knowledge, with what I had gained from an ordinary round of school-

ing, stood for all I was now to reckon on to make my way in the world. While I was reflecting on my condition, and casting about to see what I should do—for I did not relish the idea of using the sea, though that was now often in my mind—I chanced to fall in with a certain shipmaster, Daniel Houthwick by name, to whom, after a short acquaintance, I disclosed my case, and asked his advice. We were seated in the taproom of one of the little dock inns at the time, with a pot of old October before us and no one just by. The captain took a pull at his mug, which made his hairy throat give a great throb, and after a little deliberation answered :

“I should be blithe to help you, Master Ardick, could I but get my bearings to see how. You know I am an old salt-water, with little run of things ashore. I might come at something by broad reckoning, but no better.”

“Give me that,” said I eagerly. “Anything is better than beating about all ways in the wind.”

“Well, then,” he began, to make a start, “how is it with a trade?”

“I have a poor turn for any that I know of,” I answered. “Besides, I am now too old to go into indentures, and have no money to buy an entrance.”

“Yet that might be managed,” he replied; “but I could not, for your sake, advise it. An unwilling workman at any business is in a poor way. Would it suit you to enter the employ of a merchant? I think I know of one who might be induced to receive you.”

"I heartily thank you," I said with some embarrassment, "but in sooth I fear I should make my way but slowly at that calling."

I feared that he might take these refusals rather ill, but it seemed not. He only hesitated a little, as though giving the matter further thought.

"Then how say you," he finally began, "to taking up with the sea? I will not deny that it is a hard life, and I mistrust you do not incline to it, yet I think there be worse callings. Moreover, your father followed it, and I conceive you must have been born with some natural fitness for it. These things do not out of the blood in one generation. Have you, then, so much salt water in your veins as will overbear the objections?"

I hung in the wind a little, for this was the very thing I would not have, yet I was slow to add still another refusal. At last I answered:

"I have indeed salt water in my veins, which is to say I like the sea, yet I have a scruple concerning a sailor's life, and thus far have not learned sufficient to overcome it."

He regarded me with attention while I was speaking, and when I had made an end smiled and was silent for a moment.

"It is as I guessed," he then went on to answer. "Well, and I am willing to concede you three parts right. Yet how if there offered some opportunity for advancement—I mean without waiting half a lifetime?"

"Why, in that case," I answered, not quite sure what he would be at, "the matter would stand in another light."

He nodded, and leisurely helped himself to more liquor.

"Look you," he said, rounding upon me then and speaking in a brisker tone than he had before, "I have a mind to make you a proposition. I am in want of a second mate. So we can agree upon terms, what say you to the place? It is a little better beginning than a bare berth before the mast, with the chance of betterment."

I could see the thing closing in upon me, as it were, yet hardly knew how to evade it, and, on the whole, began to care less to do so. "Well, captain," I finally answered, "I can not see why I should decline such a kindly and timely offer. I agree, providing that I am able to fulfil all your requirements, which I somewhat doubt, seeing that my experience has been but brief."

"We will take care of that," he said with a confident air. "When will you board me, that you may determine whether you like the ship?"

"When you will," I answered, beginning now to conceive a liking for the venture, and dreading a little that I should not wholly suit him. "You will examine me in some sort, as to my fitness?" I went on to ask. "I care not, neither for my sake nor yours, to miscarry in the matter."

"Nay, never concern yourself as to that," he answered lightly. "I do not expect wonders of you."

"Yet you must come to an assurance," I persisted.

"Never fear," he laughed. "I am not one to buy a pig in a poke."

I was compelled to be satisfied with this, or at least with the idea, though I thought the figure might have been improved.

"Then since you are ready," he said, rising, "let us be off."

He called for the score, which he insisted upon paying, and we left the inn. There was a good deal of confusion along the docks, for several of the king's ships were fitting for sea, and the running about and pulling and hauling, all without much method or precision, were surprising and perplexing, but at last we reached the jetty where the captain's boat was lying. On the way it suddenly occurred to me that I had neglected to ask a pretty important question, which was the port that the *Industry*—the captain's ship—was bound for. I asked it now, and learned that it was Havana, in the West Indies. This suited me very well, as I had never been in those parts, and had a young fellow's fondness for novelty. We boarded the gig, which a middle-aged sailor was keeping, and were soon clear of the tangle of shipping about the docks, and standing into the roadstead. I suspected that one of three large vessels that were at anchor some little distance out might be the *Industry*, and accordingly asked the captain.

"Ay, quite right," he answered, pointing to the easternmost of the ships. "There she is."

There was a dazzle on the water in that direction, and I could not get so perfect a view of her as I desired, but nevertheless I was able to judge her chief features. She stood pretty well out of the water (considering that she was loaded), and, while she had

a good beam, was not overround in the bows, and was well and loftily sparred. She was painted black, with a gilded streak, and showed no break for ports, which, indeed, was not surprising, as few merchantmen at that time carried their guns otherwise than on deck. All her tops seemed to be provided with shields, or barricadoes, and on the poop and along the bulwarks I could resolve the outlines of several sakers and swivels. Besides these I thought she might carry some heavy piece, and, in fact, I caught a glimpse, through an open gang-port, of a shape in a tarpaulin which could hardly be other than a long-range gun. The whole appeared to show that she was fitted to fight as well as to fly, which was passing needful in those troublous times. Her burthen (as I afterward learned) was three hundred and fifty tons, and as we approached her, and she flashed up her great black side, she looked even larger. As we drew near, some heads showed above the bulwark, and I made out a ladder hanging over at that place. We pulled up to it, and when we rose on the next wave the sailor reached out a boat-hook and steadied us to it, and we were speedily up the side. When I came to reach the deck I found more hands behind the bulwark than I had supposed, for just here it was too tall for a short man to see over, and it struck me that a more than ordinary proportion of the fellows were undersized. However, they looked well enough, take them faces, expressions and all, and I was instantly brought back to old times at sight of the sea-pickled countenances, as they fetched about from the rail, and hitched their breeches and watched us expectantly. I readily guessed that the

captain had dropped out here, after stowing his cargo, on purpose to hold his crew, well knowing the weaknesses which poor Jack is prone to, and not relishing a set of hands shipped at the last moment (for the greater part lugged aboard helplessly drunk) by extortionate crimps.

As I glanced about, taking in the fashion of the deck and such arrangements as had not been visible from the water, a short, broad man, in a kind of Dutch blouse and heavy sea boots, came from some place forward and accosted the captain. I inferred that he must be the mate, and so, indeed, it proved, and upon being presented I found his name was Giles Sellinger, and that he hailed from Southampton. He had a resolute, honest-looking countenance, albeit the smallpox had pitted him rather severely, and I thought had the air of a good seaman and competent officer. The captain explained the meaning of my being aboard, and said that he doubted not I should suit them well, though it might be I should halt in some things at the beginning. Master Sellinger received this explanation in a way favourable to my pride, for he presently commended the idea, and when this had passed the captain led me about the ship, taking me first to the cabin, which was a plain furnished berth reached by a door set its whole height in the face of the poop, and thence had me along 'tween decks to the storerooms and forecastle. The whole suited me well, for she seemed a stout, clean craft with everything as it should be, and I was now only concerned lest I should not fulfil all the captain's requirements, and make one of the company. This kept me in some suspense, which, as

it seemed to me, he did not at all share, either for my sake or his own. Shortly after this we left the fore-castle and passed aft. When we had reached the hooded gun—for such the object under the tarpaulin proved to be—he stopped and pulled the covering a little aside, that I might admire the handsome fashion of the piece, and the admirable, clean way it was kept. Its brass barrel, indeed, shone like a new sovereign, and under different circumstances I should have bestowed considerable attention and admiration upon it, but just now my mind was too full of other things. Perhaps he perceived my abstraction, for he presently put the tarpaulin back, and turned to me with his former brisk air of business.

“Well, Master Ardick, now that the civilities are over—and I trust that you like the ship—we will to the concerns which bring you here. First attend, and I will propound to you some questions in seamanship.”

“That suits me well,” I replied. “I hope the answers will serve, for truly I like your ship, and shall esteem myself lucky to go in her.”

“Then hearken,” with which he proceeded to ply me with a number of nautical questions. I will not give them here, as they are not to the purpose, but the wind-up was that I was able to satisfy him, and he declared that he was ready to sign me, the concern of wages alone standing to be settled. It will be guessed that I did not allow that matter to divide us, and in less than ten minutes more I was on the books as second mate of the *Industry*. It was arranged that I should return at once with the captain and order my few affairs, and be fetched away

again when he came, which would be about the middle of the afternoon. It seemed that he had the supercargo to bring off, with some other important business, so could not be ready any speedier. We were to sail as soon following as the wind served. This by the signs would be before long, a hard, streaked sky already showing in the southeast, and the colours at the maintop-mast head snapping out at intervals toward the west.

We made no further delay, but returned to the town, and at the hour appointed to be fetched off I was ready, clothes-bag in hand. The tide had fallen since morning, and I had to walk to the edge of the jetty before I could espy the boat, which I then perceived at the foot of the long flight of wet steps. The two sailors, who were the crew, were alone in her, and so I saw that I was beforehand with my companions. The sun poured down hot on the open jetty, and I went down to the boat, which was in the shade, greatly relishing the cold, sea smell of the barnacled spiles on the way, which, indeed, at that moment brought back a little clear thought of my boyhood. I had loved to hang about such places, gratifying the passion for the ocean and all its belongings which I suppose was born in me, and in a way fitting myself, by this close touch with sea things, for the life that Fate was preparing for me.

I waited a few moments, talking with the sailors (but not too freely, lest they conceive me of an easy sort, which would not do), and presently I heard the voice of the captain. He was a large, heavy-chested man, with tones to match, and I doubt not I began to hear him as soon as he set foot on the jetty, but

at the moment I could not distinguish any voice in answer. The sailors pushed the boat more fairly to the foot of the stairs, and directly the captain appeared at the top.

"Aye, Master Ardick is here," I heard him say back to some one behind him, and almost with the words the person he had addressed joined him. The supercargo, for such, of course, the second man was, I found to be a nimble, erect little gentleman, in age perhaps sixty, with some gray in his beard, but a good fresh skin, and dressed very handsomely in sad-coloured velvet, low-crowned hat with feathers; yellow hose, and high-heeled French shoes, with blue rosettes. His head was covered with a fashionable flowing wig, and his broad sword-belt supported a good substantial sword with a silver hilt. He came actively down the steps beside the captain, and when the latter had greeted me and passed the supercargo on to the stern sheets, the men shoved off and shipped their oars.

As soon as Captain Houthwick had put us on our course he presented me to the supercargo, giving his name as Mr. Tym, and informing him with some little pride that he would find me other than the common sort of sailor, being a man of considerable parts and of a family above the ordinary, my father having been an owning shipmaster and the son of a justice of the peace, and my mother the daughter of a knight.

I was surprised that these little matters had stuck so shrewdly in the captain's memory, as he had not seemed to be a person to be impressed by things of the kind, but I could not feel very sorry, both

from a little pride which his explanation gratified, and because I saw that the supercargo seemed to treat the matter with respect and attention. Not much passed on the way to the ship, and after a somewhat tedious pull, the wind being in part contrary and quite a sea beginning to run, we drew near, and I got up and made ready to seize the ladder. It was of rope, with wooden rungs, the top and bottom made fast, and presently I succeeded in catching it, and drew the bow of the boat as near as was safe. The ship rose and sank and churned about in a troublesome fashion, but I managed to hold on, and first the captain and then Mr. Tym passed me and swung over to the ladder. The old supercargo was as steady and sure-footed as a rope-dancer, and it immediately occurred to me that he might be a veteran seagoer, a conclusion which was confirmed as I saw how coolly he waited on the ladder till the captain was out of the way, though the ship was rolling and pitching and sending frothing flings of water up to the very soles of his dainty shoes. In a moment the captain had passed over the bulwark, and Mr. Tym began to follow, and it was then that I made a surprising discovery. I had noticed that the old fellow had kept his cloak partly about him, and I had marvelled at it, as the day was so warm, but now, as he began to climb, the wind caught the garment and blew it out, and behold, he had lost his left hand! The sleeve hung loose and long about the wrist, and out from the drapery—showing queer among the lace—peeped the black turn of an iron hook. He caught this over the rungs of the ladder, alternating with his right hand,

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and without any difficulty mounted the unsteady side and swung himself lightly over the bulwark. I watched him in a kind of fascination, but he was quickly up, with his agile, deft movements, and after that I had something else to think of. This lively breeze was a fair one for our sails, and we must all needs look alive, and walk up the anchor and get the Industry under canvas. The two sailors passed the boat astern, and we run it up to the davits, and then I went forward and stood ready to catch the mate's word and start the good ship on her travels.

The captain mounted the poop, a man was sent to the tiller,* and the mate stationed himself just abaft the forecastle to pass the word along.

"Heave her short!" shouted the captain. "Heave her short!" repeated the mate, and the pawls of the windlass began to rattle.

"Loosen sail!" followed, and the men sprang into the rigging. Everything was cleared to let go, and all hands, except a man on each yard to stay the bunt, scampered back to the deck.

"All ready aloft?" hailed the mate. "All ready!" answered the fellows on the yards.

"Let go!" and the ship flashed out white, and stood clothed in the waves of loose canvas. Then the chief topsails were set, the yards trimmed, and the anchor finally brought to a head. She steadied quickly to her work, and as she climbed away the light canvas was rapidly put out.

* The wheel, as a steering apparatus, was the invention of a later day.

I had experienced some small anxiety till all this had passed, for of course my berth was strange to me, and I knew that I should be watched. Haply all had gone well, and I could now breathe freer. One thing that made greatly for me was that I excelled in work aloft. In good sooth, I had an excellent, steady nerve and sure eye, and I took care to secure the posts which would show off these qualities, knowing well that they would advance me with the men, and that without them I should speedily fall into contempt and in the end be in a most unhappy case. A good start being thus made, I walked aft—that is, as far as the mainmast—and took a brisk turn or two to let the captain see that I would be in his sight and a-stirring. In a short time the watches were appointed, and the business of putting the ship in order and other like things of the beginning of a voyage attended to, and after that I had a little breathing space and slipped down to my cabin. I had a small berth in the aftermost part of the 'tween-decks, and here I found my clothes-bag and other effects, and proceeded to sling a hammock (preferring it to either of the bunks the berth contained), and sat down to have a brief smoke. I was already enough of a sailor to set considerable store by my pipe, though I was not of those who will be having the clay between their teeth almost from morning till night. In fact, I had not run to any dissipations, which was doubtless one reason why, though I had grown to man's stature—indeed, a little beyond the average stature—I had still the rosy skin and clear eyes of a boy, and, with a rather slim figure, had the downright strength of a mature

and able man. Moreover, I was active, too, in those days, not a young fellow in Portsmouth fleetier of foot, and few, if any, that could lay me on my back in a bout of wrestling. I was not ill-looking either—to follow this business of limning me to a conclusion—for I had good features and sound white teeth, and my eyes were bright and dark and matched my brown, wavy hair. My beard had not fairly begun to grow, being backward, and I kept what there was closely shaven, by this no doubt adding to my boyish look. My hair I wore short and brushed plainly back, not being of means or station, and indeed not of inclination, to wear a wig, and my dress consisted of a soft cap, rough gray short-coat, gray smalls, plain brown hose, and stout shoes.

My smoke over, I strolled for a bit into the fore-castle, and then went again on deck, where I found the wind rather gathering strength and quite a stiff sea running. We reefed the topsails, and by that time supper was called. The rest of the evening passed without incident. I turned-in early, as my watch was to be called at eight bells, and, when the time came, crawled out mighty sleepy, but full of zeal, and so kept my four hours. At daylight all hands had to be called, as there was a heavy wind, which was verging on half a gale, and we whipped down the mainsail and the great lateen, and before we were done had to be satisfied with a reefed main topsail, a bit of foresail, and a reefed sprit-topsail. Thus snugged down, we dined along, the wind now nearly ahead, and we laying up to it the best we were able, but with a vast deal of labour and ado. Indeed, there was a constant wild upheaving and

awesome plunging down, while tons of water, crowned white as milk with froth, would flood all forward and race aft almost to the quarter-deck. The sky was now nearly sheathed in gray, with a murkiness in the southwest, and the wind came in heavy, lowering gusts, threatening even our scant canvas, though as yet both that and the spars stood the strain very sturdily.

"Marry, but this is something boisterous for the narrow seas," said a high-pitched voice behind me, as I stood holding on by the lashings of the big gun and watching the turmoil.

I turned and saw the little supercargo, who had just come up out of the cabin. He was balancing himself fearlessly on his straddled legs, a long sea-coat whipping about him, and his hand clapped upon his hat to keep both that and his great curly wig from blowing away.

"Best step along here, sir!" I shouted, fearful lest the next lurch of the ship should carry him off his feet, and at least bruise him against the bulwark.

He racked along to me then, but slowly and deliberately, as though he felt no fear.

"Aye, sir," I said, as he reached me, now replying to his question, "this is rough weather for the Channel."

"I saw worse once!" he shouted, with a kind of chuckle, and then immediately sucking in his lips, which I found was a way he had.

"And how was that?" I asked, willing to forget the weather for a moment if I could.

"Why, it was a matter of above twenty years ago," he replied. "Things so fell out with me on

that occasion that I put to sea on a day even worse than this in only a small fishing sloop."

"It was beyond account rash," I commented. "It must have been a strait, indeed, to bring you to it."

"It was to save my neck," he answered, speaking this time close to my ear, that he might talk with less strain. "You see, it was in the days of old Noll, and I had ventured into my native Sussex—I had forgotten to say that the old tyrant had set a price on my head—and was forced to get speedily out. Luckily, a fellow-Royalist was at hand and lent me a horse, and on that I reached the seaside and thence boarded this fisherman, upon which I put out, as I said. Yes, it was a wild bit of a cruise, and the craft was none too stiff and firm in her timbers, either."

"But the master of her," I queried, a little puzzled by that point in the story, "how did you prevail on him to take such a risk?"

"How? Why, to be sure, with a pistol at the head. He would listen no otherwise."

"And the crew? Had you no trouble with them?"

"Nay, not a whit. I did but point another pistol at them—I had two hands in those days—and they became most tractable."

"You deserved to escape!" I cried admiringly. "But what then? Did you come to close straits before you made the other side?"

"Yes," he answered, shaking his head, "and at last we had to cut away the mast. It is too long to dwell upon, but the wind-up was we finally made France. It was hard by Calais, and we had started

from Eastbourne. There was much tedious pumping to do, and right slow progress under such sail as we could put upon a jury-mast."

"Lost your hand in the wars?" I inquired, thinking that he would take no offence at that question, seeing that he had been so communicative already.

"Aye, at Worcester," he answered, his countenance sobering a little. "I was of those who strove to cover the king's retreat, and did, for the time, beat back the enemy. A crop-crown finally sheared away the greater part of my hand, so that I was compelled to retire. I lingered only long enough to pistol the man and exchange horses with him, mine being well-nigh spent."

"Surely the king rewarded such zeal and valour as it deserved," I said with warmth.

He frowned. "Nay, I like not to talk of that. I am a king's man and shall be till I die. His Majesty has many calls upon his favour, and can not be bounteous to all. Let us say I have come by a little estate, a part whereof is invested in this ship, and, having neither family nor kin, choose to follow my money with my time, and so you behold Mr. Supercargo. Is not that a sail out yonder?" He broke off, and pointed to a white speck on the northwestern seaboard, which hung with such steadiness that I soon decided that it was, indeed, a sail. It was nothing surprising or unexpected, of course, here in the Channel, and I gave no more heed to it at the time. Mr. Tym shortly retired again to the cabin, and the hard weltering of the ship through the heavy seas went on. The forenoon wore away, and it was

about seven bells when, happening to think of the sail I had seen, I went to the rail to look for it. It was now about on the lee bow, and much nearer, and soon I could make out a large ship closehauled on the starboard tack. She was carrying about the same canvas as the *Industry*, which was, indeed, all that a prudent captain would venture in such a wind. I continued to watch her, and presently I saw that she had altered her course and was now standing directly toward us. This gave her a beam wind, and, though she immediately reduced sail a little further, she was unable to put the seas well under her, and rolled and thrashed heavily along. I conceived it would have been better seamanship to fetch her head a little more to the south, and as this thought occurred to me I happened to glance toward the poop where the captain and mate were standing, and saw that the skipper was pulling out and pointing his glass. He took a long observation, and then, to my surprise, shook his head energetically and passed the glass to the mate. Sellinger looked in turn, and almost at once lowered the instrument and began bawling something in the captain's ear. Houthwick answered by a nod, and turned sharply and ran a little way aft. He gave a command—I could not tell what—to the man at the helm, and rapidly returned and descended the poop ladder. The mate followed, stopping at the bottom to hang the glass in some becket, and came to the confines of the quarter-deck. Houthwick, on the other hand, turned short at the companion, which he opened, and from a strap just inside took out his trumpet. He made no stop, but skurried out to the ladder again, and

went up with long, eager strides, the pace faster than I had ever observed him use before. He was not yet at the top when the mate roared to me, using his hand to guide the sound :

“Call all hands!”

CHAPTER II.

OF THE BRUSH WITH THE BLACK SHIP.

I PLUNGED off to the forecastle, seizing a hand-spike as I went. Thundering on the hatch, and then opening it, I roared down :

“All hands ahoy! Look alive!” In an instant there was a bouncing out of bunks and hammocks, and a rush up the hatch. The fellows popped out in quick succession, and in a flash the entire crew was ranged on deck.

“To the braces!” shouted the captain through the trumpet. “All ready to slack and haul! Some of you forward to tend spritsail!”

These orders, taken up by the mate, as the yelling of the wind drowned in part even the bellowing of the trumpet, were rapidly obeyed, and the crew scrambled to their stations and stood ready.

“Down helm!” was shouted back to the two fellows at the tiller. The ship's head began to fall off, and as it did so the orders to handle the braces followed. In a mere matter of moments, so fast did the men work—urged on, indeed, by the knowledge that there was some unusual stress, though as yet they understood imperfectly the cause—in that few mo-

ments the last order was carried out, and the ship's head now pointed due north. I had kept an eye on the stranger's movements while we were fetching the *Industry* upon the new course, and was not greatly surprised, on casting my eye that way, to see the broad bows suddenly fall away from the wind, and the long black side begin to show. At the same moment her yards flew round, and thus she too was pointed north. There could be but one explanation of this last action—the stranger meant to overhaul us. I was now burning to get speech with the captain or Sellinger, that I might resolve something more certain out of this stirring business; but for the present they were busied with other matters, so that I did not like to seek them. By this time the other ship was near enough to enable me to make out some features of her build and rig, though as yet no small details. She was apparently about a fourth larger than the *Industry*, and was proportionally broader in the bows and higher in the stern. Her masts seemed relatively shorter, and had a sort of stumpy look, though there was a great show of long yards and of space for cloth on the boltsprit spars.* She was painted black, and at this distance I could make out no ports, so that if she were really a war craft, as I now began to think, she must have her guns blinded, a trick not seldom practised by cruisers in those days. As for her speed, which all on the *Industry* must be now trying to guess, there had been as yet no conclusive test of it, though up to this time she

* That is, those spars on the boltsprit, as it was then called, which carried the sprit-sails.

had discovered no more than we could show. I made all these observations in one or two careful glances, and the question now was what was her purpose and why was she pursuing us? The readiest answer to be come at was that she was Dutch, and was making a flying cruise of it in the Channel. If so, she should be both faster and stronger than she looked, for it would be a bold thing, indeed, for a mere wagon of a merchant rigger, without broadside guns and having no near friendly port for refuge, thus to seek prizes in our narrow seas. While I was turning these matters over in my mind, taking care to keep an eye out aft, the while, to be in readiness for sudden orders, the companion opened and the supercargo again appeared. The mate was standing near by, and Mr. Tym at once went over to him, and, by his expression and some words which the wind took to me, desired to know what had happened. This was the very thing I would have, for now, without pushing myself into their counsels, I could slip a little nearer, and be made acquainted with the whole matter. I did this, advancing from where I had been standing to the weather rail, just abreast of the great gun, and there feigned to be watching the doings of the other ship.

"Ay, a Dutchman, fast enough," the supercargo was saying. "A daring fellow, too, and not to be lightly shaken off, I fancy. Will it do to set a bit more sail?"

"It would not be profitable," the mate answered. "She is doing what she can with this strength of wind. By the breaking of the clouds yonder, it will presently quiet a bit, and then we will see what can

be done. You observe that we hold our own with the fellow at present, and carry as much as he does."

"Yes," said the supercargo, "I perceive that."

"We will make a race with him for the coast," pursued the mate, "and it will go hard with us if we do not give him a shrewd brush."

"How far might it be? Surely twenty miles."

"Call it a bit more. Say five-and-twenty. We could make that by nightfall."

"True," said Mr. Tym with a satisfied nod, "and if he should overhaul us on this course we could try a bowline."

A long slide of the ship, which swung me about and made me shift my place, lost me the beginning of the mate's reply. When I could hear again he was saying:

"If he should crawl near enough. We saw four on deck—none, it is true, larger than sakers; but there is a kind of house just abaft the foremast,* and that may be a cover for two or three large pieces."

"Then fighting will hardly serve," said the supercargo reflectively. "Well, let us see how clean a pair of heels we can show. I will take the glass and have a look at the fellow. His audacity has something of charm in it, though I own it might fade upon a closer acquaintance."

He strode off to where the glass hung (the captain had brought up another, which he was using from the poop), and when he had fetched it to the

* The forecastle house, or topgallant forecastle, was rare, if not unknown, in ships of that date.

rail he climbed upon a coil of line and brought it to bear. I followed the observation with my eye, and saw that the Dutch ship (for such I could not now doubt that she was) was keeping the same relative place, not gaining, but storming along in a heavy, dogged way, her white flash of canvas showing in a narrow streak as we caught the slant of it, and her black side riding up huge and imposing.

The supercargo used the glass for some time, but finally put it by, and went up to have a talk with the captain. Of course I could not hear what they said, but it was easy to guess that it must be about the present strait. In a few moments the captain came to the verge of the poop and called the mate. Master Sellinger hurried up the ladder, and the three men talked together earnestly. The mate then came down again, and immediately the captain walked to the colour halyards, and with his own hands ran up the flag. As it blew out at the mizzen truck the crew, who, as well as myself, were watching anxiously and curiously the doings aft, broke into a cheer. All eyes were now on the stranger, for this was a clear demand that he should declare his intentions. It was the most stirring moment thus far since the chase—or race, if you please—had begun. The long black mass rose on the next crest, and slid foaming down into the valley, and again soared and fell. How we watched her! Lift, lift, she rose, up-tilted her great house of a stern, and plunged, with the shock of the parted seas, down the declivity, and all swiftly and mightily rode to the top again, and still not a handkerchief's breadth of bunting! Five, and at last ten minutes, and the same monotonous

upride and tilt and fall. The captain stood with straddled legs, silently using his telescope, and the mate was in the mizzen shrouds scanning the foe under the pent house of his hand. The supercargo leaned over the poop rail, holding on hat and wig, and the rest of us lined the weather bulwark, in the waist. Of a sudden the captain lowered his glass and shut it up. The supercargo turned, catching the action, and they came together and exchanged a few words.

"The thing is fetched to a head," said a sailor at my elbow, with an excited pull at his waistband.

"You would have it that the stranger's no answer is answer enough?" I inquired, willing to get the fellow's opinion, for he was an old salt-water, and had a look of some wit, besides.

"Ay, Master Ardick," he replied, with an emphatic bob of his head, "the thing is settled, as sure as my name is Jack Lewson. That fellow would swallow us, bones and all."

He had scarce spoken when Houthwick left Mr. Tym and stepped briskly to the head of the poop ladder.

"Master Sellinger, set the mainsail and reef it. Take out one reef in the foresail."

The mate was off his perch to the deck in an instant, and at his word the men flew to their stations. The wind had less weight now than formerly, and blew steadier, but for all that I apprehended that we were taking considerable hazard to thus swell our canvas. Yet very quickly the thing was done, and under the added pressure the ship drove her nose into the smother, and made a strong lurching start

of it onward. While I was stepping back from the foot of the main shrouds, and in the act of directing one of the men to coil up a loose length of halyard, some one behind me gave a shout, and I turned to see that the dark ship was likewise whitening with added sail. I hurried over anxiously to the weather bulwark and mounted it, holding on by a shroud, and prepared to watch this great and hard test of the two ships' speed. The Dutch craft, too, as her new sail caught the wind, gave a swift plunge forward, and like us she was now swinging powerfully and gainfully ahead.

I looked up at our masts, anxious lest they might not stand the strain, or that some weak spar should give way, but so far all held on stanchly. Yet surely it was wild work, and a strain upon the mind if not upon the ship. The canvas was filled as hard as wood, and gave out a low roar to the accompaniment of the harping of the guys and sheets and braces, and the din and pounding of the chasing after-seas.

On we raced, and it must have been that the greater part of an hour went by. So far the Dutchman and we were rarely well matched, he driving along at the same point off our beam, as though he might be our shadow. But a change was at hand. All in a moment, as it seemed, his long bulk began to narrow, the small slant of his sails that we could see expanded, and at once his pot-round bows rode, leaping and sinking, into view. He had changed his plan, and would fly straight at us.

In an instant the trumpet of Captain Houthwick began to bellow :

"Man braces! Down helm! Slack lee braces! Haul in on the weather! Aft here, some of you, and let out a reef in the lateen!"

It was clear what the skipper would be at. The cruiser, perceiving that he could not outsail us and cut us off, meant to close in and try to disable us with his guns. To prevent this we must turn tail and make a straight-away run of it. The question then to be settled was whether he could get near enough to wing us, by cutting up our spars and rigging. I thought this all out at a blink, as the Scotch say, for just at the moment I had to use my fingers rather than my brains. When I came in from the boltsprit, having gone there on some matter concerning the drawing of the sail, I found that the Dutchman was fair astern of us, only the slant of his sails catching the light, and the rest of him standing up round and black. I think something like two hours now passed, only one thing, but that an important one, happening, which was that the Dutchman slowly gained upon us. Twice Captain Houthwick altered sail, and once he increased it, but still the black fellow astern crept up. By this time the wind had considerably fallen, and hauled a point or two to the south. The captain called the mate to the poop and conferred briefly with him. The supercargo joined them, and I could see by their gestures and the uneasy way they stirred about as they talked that they were troubled to resolve their course. At last Houthwick said something to which the others appeared to assent, and the mate hurried off the poop. He espied me, as I stood by the main shrouds, and beckoned me to

him. When I came up he said low and in a strained, quick tone:

"The captain thinks we had best try a gun. I must serve it. Do you stand ready to help work the ship. Call the carpenter, and put him in charge of the magazine. The main hatch will have to be opened till they can get up the first supply of ammunition, after which batten it down again. The rest can come up the companion. Tell Spyglow that he can fetch out the arms chest and take the pikes from the becketts and pile them up. No harm to have things at hand. Stay! You may likewise get out the medicine chest, and set it in the open space 'tween-decks. That must serve as a cockpit, if any are hurt. Let the cook, who is something of a saw-bones, go thither. The cabin boy can assist him. That will do for now, and look alive."

I said "Aye, aye!" in a seeming hearty voice (though, to own the truth, my heart was beginning to beat fast, and I felt a bit weak in the knees), and hurried away. In a few minutes all the orders were carried out, and the mate was free to try his experiment.

When I returned to the deck the gang-port had been unhooked, and the gun's canvas jacket taken off. Its handsome length was shining like gold, and its tompion was out, and the balls and powder ladles ordered for loading. An old sailor, by name Hob Dingsby, who had seen some service on a man-of-war, and a broad, strong Frenchman—one Pierre Lovigne—were standing by to assist the mate. I eagerly looked astern to see what had become of the foe, and there, to the quickening of my pulse, he

was, under a mile away. I could now make out the black dots of figures where the crew were overhanging the bows, and caught a glimpse—as I was almost sure—of two glistening objects, which could scarce be other than brass bow swivels. As I turned to see whether the mate was ready—I mean ready to have the ship luffed, so that he could secure his aim—I heard a low, dull boom, and, as I whirled again, a ball of smoke blew out from the bows of our pursuer and wreathed off to leeward.

“He’s firing at the moon,” said the mate contemptuously, and now I saw that the excitement had struck the colour from the man’s cheeks, save for a little patch of red which showed under the sea-burn, and that his nerves were strung high and firm.

“At the gun!” called the captain from the poop. “Are you ready, Master Sellinger?”

“All ready, sir!”

“Then to the braces, men! Luff!” he roared back to the two fellows at the helm.

The ship came handsomely into the wind, and as she dipped to the bottom of a hollow the mate gave a swift glance along his gun and applied the linstock.

He had loaded while I was below, and I knew not what the charge was, but it must have contained a scatter-load, for I saw a tremendous dimple all over the water, just outside of the Dutchman’s forefoot.

“A good beginning!” shouted the captain. “Have at him again!”

We got upon our course once more, and meantime the gun was reloaded.

“Ha! he’s showing his teeth at last!” cried the

mate, pausing with his fuse, which he was blowing up, in his hand.

He pointed toward the enemy, and lo! two ports in the bows had opened, and in each was the round target spot which marked the muzzle of a gun.

"He has discovered that something besides swivels will be needed," said Mr. Tym, who had come, without our perceiving him, among us. "Nay, but he is about to give us the compliment of his whole broadside."

As he spoke we saw that the Dutchman's tall black bow was riding into the wind, and before thirty seconds more we caught a glimpse of four open and furnished ports. This was besides the bow piece, so that the fellow, after all, had declared himself to be a very pretty sort of a ten-gun cruiser. His ports were doubtless made to shut very tight, with lids, and so he had concealed his teeth, as the mate called them, till now. We began to rise on the crest, and every man held his breath.

A tremendous, crashing roar, and a sky full of smoke followed. I think I stooped, but I am not sure, and the next that comes clearly before me is that a great splinter, from somewhere overhead, struck the deck near me and gave a queer sort of elastic spring, and went overboard. I confess I jumped back, and as I did so I ground my heel upon something soft, and had to make another spring to prevent falling. By this time I had backed nearly to the quarter-deck, and, the smoke having now almost blown away, I leaned against the break of the deck and looked around. The spot where I had stumbled first arrested my eye, and there, rolled up almost in a

ball, lay the body of old Dingsby. His belt had burst with the strain of his doubling over, or perhaps was cut by the glancing of a fragment of shot, and it was slipping off him, almost giving him an air of unbuckling it from the front, his back being toward me. The mate and the Frenchman were standing up stiff and bold near the gun, and no one else had been hurt, that I could perceive.

The captain's figure broke through the passing cloud of smoke, coming from the helm, or some part aft, and pausing at the edge of the poop.

"On deck, there, how fares it?" he inquired, peering down. Then perceiving the body of the old man-o'-war's man, he answered his own question—"So they have slain poor Dingsby! Carry him a bit aside, some of you, and bestow him in a seemly sort. We will do better anon. What say you, Master Sellinger, have you a sharp word back?"

"Aye, aye, sir!" growled the mate. "Luff her, and I will give her a shrewd answer enough."

"Luff it is, then."

Something hastily, for there was little time for sentiment, two of the men bore aside the body of the old sailor, and the others sprang to the braces. Again we came into the wind, and again the mate sighted and applied his linstock. The smoke drifted astern, and I eagerly jumped into the shrouds and stared through the first clear opening. What was my delight when I saw the great bulk of the Dutchman sawing wildly into the wind, beating up a yeast of foam, and all a wreck forward, where his fore topmast and fore topgallant mast hung in a dreadful mess from the foremast head. The crew, seeing

how the thing had gone, burst into a roar of triumph, and the captain, from the poop, took off his cap and cheered. Even Mr. Tym, after clapping his iron hook to his head to secure the safety of his wig, plucked off his hat and waved it.

"Give 'em the small pieces now, Master Selinger!" shouted the captain, as soon as this confusion had abated a little. "Let go those two sakers, while I pop at him with the swivels."

The mate hastily obeyed this order, and let drive with one saker after the other, while the captain set the small pieces a-roaring from above. All this while the Dutchman was in a great mess of getting before the wind again, but as yet without full success, though his crew could be seen swarming about the litter like bees. I do not think we accomplished anything with our small guns, and presently the order came to handle ship and fill away upon our old course.

We had got everything to drawing, and I had climbed upon the weather bulwarks, my mind very content, and casting looks of exultation at the floundering Dutchman, when, with very startling suddenness, a spit of fire darted along his cumbered fore-deck, and a terrible whistling ball rushed close above my head. I distinctly felt the wind of it, and was off my perch, half tumbling, indeed, to the deck, in an instant.

As I steadied myself on my legs I heard a laugh above me, and on looking up saw Captain Houthwick standing at the top of the poop ladder. He shook his shaggy head at me, mighty amused, as it seemed, at the way I had rolled off the bulwark, and

as I looked up he said something in a kind of chuckling voice, and turned away. I had his tall, broad figure for an instant in my eye, and then came the boom as of another gun from the Dutchman, and before I could move or scarce think the captain took a long, sinking step backward, whirled, raced to the edge of the poop, and rounded down in a loose heap, one arm hanging over the verge.

CHAPTER III.

OF THE COURSE OF EVENTS TILL WE WERE FINALLY SOUTH BOUND.

SOME one behind me shouted, and there was a rush of the men and cries, and in the midst of it I saw the little supercargo dart from some place aft and raise the captain's head. I leaped to the poop ladder and flung myself up, and just as I did so one of the men left the tiller and came running forward.

"Back to your place!" I shouted. "You are not needed here."

I faced him till he saw I was in earnest and obeyed, and then I turned to the poor captain, with whom it had fared, indeed, after the worst. His lower face, save for the chaps, to which some beard hung, had been shot away, and he was a dead man, even before I had stopped to speak to the sailor.

"This is sorrowful business," said the supercargo, rising with a sigh, and covering the shattered face with his pocket handkerchief. "He was a brave man

and a true. Go you, Master Ardick, and fetch three of the hands, that we may carry the body below."

As he was speaking Master Sellinger, who must have waited a moment—as I suppose to quiet the men—sprang up the ladder, and I hurried to the deck. I summoned the three seamen, and with great tenderness we brought down Captain Houthwick's body, which we laid for the time on the quarter-deck, covering it with a tarpaulin. Then, when we had fetched poor Dingsby's body there also (for now the dignity of death had wrought in him, making him for the time of the same rank as the other, wherefore we laid them together)—when these things were attended to the mate dispatched us again forward, and for a little we gave our sole attention to the handling and better speeding of the ship. The Dutchman's crippled foremast continued to fret him, but he would not give over, and so for a time we both kept our course, though the *Industry* all the while made a small but steady gain. It might have been half an hour after this that Master Sellinger called me, and upon my responding said that he must now retire to the cabin for a little, the further disposition of the voyage standing to be settled, and that meanwhile I was to command the ship. With that, and upon my ascending to the quarter-deck, he made a sign to Mr. Tym and they both went below. (He that reads this must make allowance for a nautical term which here does not truly apply, though it comes ready for convenience, as in truth the cabin of the *Industry* was altogether on deck.)

Left in this fashion to myself, I presently conceived it in line with my business to take an obser-

vation of the chase, upon which I fetched the telescope and set the sights. Glasses did not magnify greatly in those days, but at last I got the fellow into the field, and when I had steadied the tremble could make out a number of things about him very clearly. He was now a good bit away, but I could easily perceive the crawling swarm of black dots upon his deck, which showed how full a crew he had now mustered, and I could likewise detect the glint of his two great foredeck guns. These had indeed been masked by the little hutch I had noticed, and had not been uncovered till a late stage of the pursuit. But a still more interesting and unexpected thing than this I discovered. From the fellow's main topgallant mast head * now floated the great Hollander flag. Whether in a manner of boast, to prove his boldness in venturing into our waters, or for what other motive the Dutchman had now displayed his ensign, I could not guess. There it was, and we might be sure that we had battled with a veritable Hans Butterbox, even had not his stumpy masts, dinner-pot bows, and other peculiarities of the build and rig of his ship betrayed him.

After a little Mr. Tym and the mate returned to the deck, their countenances, though sober, cleared, as I thought, as it might be they had settled their business to their minds.

They first devoted their attention for a brief space to the Dutchman, who was still by littles falling behind, though he had at last set some manner

* The most prominent point to display the colours. There were then no royal masts.

of fore topsail, and continued doggedly to follow us, and when this scrutiny was ended they walked over to where I was standing.

"Well, Master Ardick," began Mr. Tym, "doubtless you and the crew would by this time relish some information as to the future business of the voyage. Master Sellinger and I have taken counsel together, and think, please God, to go presently on with it. We shall stand forthwith into Sidmouth, where we hope to procure a first mate, which done, with Master Sellinger raised to be captain, we shall straightway fetch our course again for Havana."

I knew that Mr. Tym owned a considerable part of the ship, and doubted not that his plan would be approved of by the other owners, who were, indeed, venturing the voyage on their own account, not having put her under charter, and since his decision saved time, and seemed reasonable enough, I was not disposed to regret it, but was rather pleased with it. Yet of course my opinion was not sought, but merely my curiosity was vouchsafed to be satisfied, so I only bowed, and said that the decision would please the forecastle, as it did me, and with that I withdrew and went forward.

After a time the Industry's course was changed, and she was laid with her nose almost due north, and this she held as the Devonshire coast gradually rose and cut a clearer outline. By this time poor Hans Butterbox had become discouraged and given up the chase. Going upon the port tack he had shown us less and less of his great black bulk, till now, as we gradually rose the coast, he was about hull down.

I was beginning to be surprised that nothing had been done touching the disposal of the bodies of the captain and Dingsby, which were still extended on the quarter-deck, covered with the tarpaulins, but I was now to understand the reason of the delay and apparent neglect. Master—or I must now say Captain—Sellinger presently came to the confines of the quarter-deck, and, having called us before him, told us that it was Captain Houthwick's oft-expressed desire to be buried in the sea, which desire, he said, he had determined to comply with. As Dingsby was an old sailor, and was not known to have any family, it was the opinion of Mr. Tym and himself that it would be well and fitting to let his body accompany his old captain's. No one raised any opposition to this, or indeed struck in with a word, and so the sea burial for both these brave mariners was settled upon. Captain Houthwick, indeed, had neither wife nor children living, and no near kin, it was said, so there was the less to be complained of by any one that his own wishes were to be so scrupulously carried out. We sewed the two bodies up in their canvas shrouds, heavy weights were placed at their feet, and they were balanced on planks across the bulwark. All uncovered, and Mr. Tym read a prayer. As a rough voice or two joined in the amen, Captain Sellinger gave the signal and the bodies were shot into the water. The splashing they made was lost in the racing by of the next sea, and we solemnly drew in the bare planks and the doleful business was over. In the fore-castle an auction was immediately held of the dead sailor's belongings, in this following the ancient sea custom,

and within an hour from his mournful slide into the deep his scanty wardrobe—all he had—was parted among his shipmates. So it was in the fore-castle, and in the cabin we had something to the same purpose, for my Captain Sellinger stepped briskly into my late Captain Houthwick's shoes—in a figurative sense—and forthwith everything went on as before.

We ran into Sidmouth without trouble or delay, and when the anchor was cast Captain Sellinger ordered the gig, and was pulled ashore. He did not return till morning, and then fetched with him a stranger, whom he presently declared to us as the new mate. I immediately fell into some wonderment at the looks of this man. He was tall—taller by an inch than I—round-backed, gaunt, and marvellously old-looking in the face, though he could not have been above five-and-thirty. His hair was jet black and coarse, and there was scarce a thread of gray in it, despite that his countenance was so worn. He had little, fierce eyes and a great Roman nose, and his mouth—to conclude his picture—was wide, but fell in, and would seem to be often mumbling, owing to the loss of his teeth.

I could hardly conceive why Captain Sellinger should choose such a man, for it seemed to me that he must be harsh and of an ill temper, which the captain was not, and had never seemed to approve of. It soon came out that the port was almost bare of good seamen, as some were gone in the new fleet (of the king's), and others had shipped in the many vessels bound for America, so that a choice of mates, as the case stood, must needs be passing narrow. After all, this Master Pradey (such was his

name) had certain worthy people to recommend him, and it might be, notwithstanding his looks, that he would turn out well enough, and at least could be put up with.

We soon made sail, and after a time worked out from the coast and fetched our bows once more to the west. We kept a sharp lookout for suspicious craft, but saw no signs of any, and at last began to think that our bad luck was over, and that we might now be speeded by good fortune, having begun so ill.

In the business of getting the ship under way and sailing her to this point, the new mate acquitted himself well, and in nowise after the harsh manner promised by his looks, which was indeed in the nature of a pleasant disappointment, so persuaded were we all that he had the will to be a tyrant. However, the captain was almost constantly on deck, which must have curbed him, had he ever so great a desire to rate and storm, and yet we could not say that he had looked at any with the air of wishing to be worse than he was, wherefore we had to confine our ill opinion of him as yet to his ugliness, which was indeed passing great.

In reasonable time we cleared the Channel and began to climb the long Atlantic swells. We saw nothing more of the Dutchman, and little apprehended any further alarms from him, as he must by this time have consulted prudence and taken himself out of these waters. We had repaired the little damage he had done to our spars and rigging, and thus, as we finally made the open sea, we seemed in good case to go blithely on with the voyage.

Several days now passed, during which we had favourable winds, and the Industry made very good progress. One morning, being sent on some matter to the hold, I heard a running about and shouting on deck, and on calling up to learn the cause was told that a large ship was in sight.

"She's a fast craft—by the way we are raising her," said the fellow who was speaking, "and the captain is in a hurry to bring her into his glass. He is halfway up the weather shroud, a-goggling away as though for his life."

I dropped what I was doing and climbed hastily out of the hatch.

CHAPTER IV.

OF THE MOVING TALK OF THE YOUNG SAILOR, AND THE STRANGE BEHAVIOUR OF AN OLD ONE.

I HAD thoughts of another Dutchman as I made for the deck. If mynheer was so bold in the Channel, he was surely to be dreaded here, and it would be a marvel, so this fast ship proved to be of his nation and for war, if we escaped in the easy fashion that we did before.

I was up the main shrouds at once, the captain and Master Pradey being in the fore, and when I had well cleared the deck I stopped and took a long look.

The stranger was in the southwestern seaboard, hull down and with only his topsails and the upper part of his courses showing, and at the moment was

standing on the starboard tack. This brought him well forward of our lee beam, as we were on the larboard tack and headed somewhat south of southwest. He was rising rapidly, as his swift whitening and enlarging showed, and at this rate would be hull up and distinct in the course of a few minutes. I watched him eagerly, alternating with curious glances at the captain, who still stuck to his post with the glass screwed in his eye, and presently was able to make out the long dark line of his hull, as it rose for an instant to the top of a swell. He continued to enlarge, and soon the whole oblique range of his sails was plainly in view.

Of a sudden the captain lowered his glass and said something to the mate. I did not catch what it was, but Master Pradey gave a nod, as though of satisfaction, and at once swung down to the deck.

"Run up the colours!" he shouted, flourishing back the knot of men who presently drew about him.

A sailor sprang away, and in a few seconds the flag was mounting aloft. While this was doing I saw Mr. Tym descend from the mizzen rigging, his telescope strapped on his back, and guessed from his easy mien that he too was satisfied with the looks of the stranger. We could now make out his flag, though nothing upon it, yet easily guessed that it must be English, or at least friendly, and with this contented ourselves till he should draw nearer. Master Pradey had betaken himself to the poop, and the captain was still in the rigging, so we had no one to assure us what the telescope had made out,

though from what had happened we could fetch a shrewd guess.

After a little Captain Sellinger shut up his glass and descended to the deck, and upon espying me called me to him, and ordered me to put the *Industry* in a posture for defence. "Yon ship flies the English flag," he said, "but she may be an enemy, for all that, and we will not be caught napping."

I did as he commanded, and speedily had sail shortened, the magazine opened and several charges of ammunition bestowed just under the main hatch. I also unlocked the arms chest, and saw that the hand weapons were fit for use. When this was done I hastened again on deck and remained watching the strange ship, which was now coming on at a fine swelling rate.

She drew gradually nearer, and soon with the naked eye we could make out the design upon her flag. It was St. George's Cross, as we had suspected, and, moreover, we could now read English build and rig in a score of little peculiarities, discernible at least to a sailor's eye. She was a handsome craft, not too narrow in the beam, yet shapely, and with a perfect cloud of white, well-fitted canvas on her tall spars. She was painted light green, with a wide gilded streak, and showed two ports for bow-chasers (contrary to the custom of merchantmen), besides a large gun amidships, and the usual equipment of sakers and swivels.

By this time we could make out the groups of the officers and men—there must have been at least two score persons in all—and even distinguished, in

a rough way, their faces, noting at least those who wore long beards, and the like.

When we were less than half a mile apart the stranger began to luff, edging along on with a small way, and so crept within quarter of a mile, when he clewed up some of his sails, and came squarely into the wind. We had already put up our helm, seeing that he would have speech with us, and upon this clewed up the remaining light sails and hauled up the mainsail. The two ships now lay head and head, rising and falling gently with the swell. Our captain took his trumpet, and a tall, dark-bearded man coming to the rail of the other ship, also with a trumpet, the hailing began.

"Ship ahoy!" bellowed the other captain. "What ship is that?"

"The Industry, Sellinger master," returned our skipper.

"Where bound?" came from the other trumpet.

"Havana."

"This is the Happy Bess, Captain Torrycorn," announced the skipper of the other ship after a little pause. "We are from New York for London. Will you take a letter for us?"

"Aye, aye!" bellowed our captain back.

At once there was a stir on the deck of the other ship, and in a few moments a boat dangled down from the davits, the captain and two sailors in her, and dropped with a neat splash into the water.

"Put over the gangway ladder," said Captain Sellinger; which we did, and the other captain was soon with us.

After passing a word or two of the usual sort—

that is, concerning their respective ships, ports, and so on—they came to the business in hand, and Captain Torrycorn produced his letter.

“It is for Mr. Jeremiah Hope, of Havana,” he said, “a gentleman that you very likely know. By some going astray it was put aboard my ship, and but for you must have taken a long tack before it was delivered.”

“I will cheerfully relieve you of it,” answered Captain Sellinger. “I do not know Mr. Hope, but have heard of him, and understand that he is a gentleman of worth and consequence. But step into my cabin now, and let us have a drop, as we say, to sweeten the bilge. After that we will go into matters more at large.”

Captain Torrycorn made no stand at this, and indeed his bulbous nose showed that he was not one to decline such an invitation, and the two skippers passed into the cabin. Yet before Captain Sellinger closed the door he ordered me to summon Master Pradey, who was on the after part of the poop, and likewise to have aboard the two sailors, that were till now keeping the gig. I ventured to ask if we might not, for the ship's sake, broach a cask of ale, and was kindly answered in the affirmative; whereupon I hastened to execute both commands.

Master Pradey was never a sociable man, but I suppose he conceived that the captain's wish was well enough to regard; wherefore, with a cold nod to me, he repaired to the cabin. I must say here, as the matter will eventually have significance, that he presently came on deck again, and after a little strolled forward, halting at last by the after gang-

port (near the foredeck), where and whereabouts he continued during the rest of Captain Torrycorn's visit.

I made known the captain's good nature to the men, by whom it was received with great favour, and they were not slow in having the two tars out of the boat. Then, having fetched up the ale, all proceeded to set off their pipes and gather round for the news. I took my own stand near by, a bit outside the circle, but within hearing. Both the visitors—judged at a glance—were ordinary English sailors, brown, bluff, and sturdy, with jaw tackle doubtless on an easy run, once the bowl had passed. They gave us a brief account of their ship, growled over the provisions, which, it seems, were of a particularly wretched sort, and in turn fell to questioning us. We gave them the home news, and added some spice at the end by an account of our brush with the Dutchman. This brought out a lively round of talk, the purport of which was that the Dutch had wondrous assurance, but for a fair fight, with even metal, were naught beside the English. When this had passed some one brought up the doings of our ships abroad, and notably in piratical waters, and from here we naturally fell to talking of the buccaneers.

"Nay, mates," said the younger of the two sailors, "I think I can say a word there that shall put a little tingle into your blood. I trow every jack of you has heard of Henry Morgan?"

"Ay, ay!" cried near all our fellows together. "The great freebooter," added several.

"Belay there, mates, and hear me," said the sailor,

flourishing his pipe for silence. "Hast heard what Captain Morgan is now about?"

"No, no!" cried the crew.

"Well, mates, it is the greatest thing conceived by English sailors since the days of Drake. Naught less than the taking of Panama!"

Our men broke out in a hearty note of applause.

"We had it from the brig Prince James, that had spoken the Starlight, and her captain had the news straight from Sir Thomas Modyford, governor of Jamaica," went on the sailor. "So I conceive it must be true. Captain Morgan is even now getting his crews and ships together. He will rendezvous at Hispaniola, and fetch thence to St. Catherine's, whither he will sail straight to the isthmus."

"Stay a moment," I struck in at this point, and speaking with a disapproving air. "I think but little of this news of yours. What have the Spaniards done to us that we should deal with them in such a fashion? To my thinking it is no better than rank piracy."

"Yet it has the warrant of the King, else report is a liar," said the sailor briskly.

"Nay," said I coldly, "I must needs have proof of that. I can not think his Majesty would consent to such ill-doing. Besides, England and Spain are at peace, and this should surely involve them in war."

"Well, Master Ardick, you take me out of soundings there," said the sailor, with a laugh. "I must stick to my facts—for facts I still think they be—and let such deep matters go."

I saw that nothing was to be gained by this talk

with the fellow, who was, indeed, of better parts than I had supposed, and a kind of "sea lawyer," as the saying is, wherefore I let my argument fall, only drawing myself up with some stiffness, as though in a little contempt of his answer. He fetched a complacent whiff or two, and directly went on. "It is said that Morgan will have close upon two thousand men and above fifty ships, with arms and other outfit to match. He will sail first for Charge, and after taking that will march straight upon Panama. The governor is already in fear of him, and is preparing to make a mighty defence of the city, but I trow one that will avail him little. A good crew of English tars, with pistol and hanger, and heartened with a pull of strong waters, shall overmatch a whole beggarly army of Jack Spaniards! Then the city taken, what spoil and reward!" Here the fellow's eye lighted. "Why, I have it from them that should know that Morgan and his men fetched home nigh three hundred thousand pounds from Puerto Vello, besides silks, spices, and the like! Then what must be the spoil of Panama?"

"Nay, nay," said I uneasily, for now I began to fear the influence of such talk on the men; "this is all an ill business. Morgan and his fellows are but pirates, letters of commission or no, and it will be a wonder if they do not end their days on the gallows, which at least they deserve!"

But here some grumbling arose from our fellows. "Vast, Master Ardick; brace not so sharp up," said one. "A commission from the King is deep water enough for me," said a second. "Who would

be nice of a Spaniard?" said a third. And so the murmur went around.

"Nay, then, listen an' you will," I said, with some disgust. "Little good will it do you, unless you mean to join Morgan yourselves, and that, I conceive, you can scarce do at present."

With this I withdrew a bit into the background, yet not so far, I must admit, but I could hear the further talk.

"Panama taken," pursued the sailor, who was now quite at his ease, and flourished his pipe in an important style, "there will be some small jollity for poor Jack. Not less than a month in the city, I will be bound, and no man overhauled for steering his own course! You shall conceive me, mates, what that may mean! Rare women, I am told, there be in Panama, and not least a considerable nunnery. Besides, there are the old wines and the noble pieces of eight!"

Our foolish fellows must break out again in applause.

"What is the last great thing Morgan has done?" presently asked one.

"Why, the taking of Maracaibo," answered the orator, in a little surprise. "Know you not of that? Nay? Then listen. Morgan sailed there with a small fleet, and after much fighting took the town and looted it. He got considerable store of money and rich laces and silks, and matters like those, and also quite a company of beautiful women. He remained a little time, and was on the point of departing, when certain of a fleet of Spanish war ships arrived. You must know that Maracaibo is not just

upon the sea, but rather withdrawn a little, with a considerable lake and stream between. The dons garrisoned the forts, of which there were two, and made ready to move upon Morgan. He, as it appeared, was in something of a trap, for beyond the lake there are great bogs and almost impassable forests. Moreover, the Indians hereabouts are friendly to the Spaniards. But Morgan called a council of his captains, and when he had taken their minds conceived straightway what he would do. He first feigned to be making ready to land and march by the rear of the forts, and while this was doing withdrew his largest ship and filled her with all manner of combustibles. He then had the captives and the plunder into boats—this done covertly—and prepared to start. By this time the dons had fallen into his trap, which is to say, they thought he was about to assail them from the rear, wherefore they called all hands and with labour dragged over their big guns and pointed them from that side. No sooner was this done than Morgan gave the signal, and down he and his fleet moved, the fire ship in advance. Up against him came a goodly Spanish vessel, one that had newly arrived, and straight she and the fire ship fetched to a grapple. Then, my mates, conceive me the Spanish curses! For the stuff in the fire ship was touched off, and at the same time Morgan abandoned his other ship, and in the boats alone swept on and passed the forts. He gave them a broadside from his small arms and two swivels, and continued without scathe out of cannon shot, and thence, at his leisure, to the sea. The other Spanish ships perceiving him coming, and their own

flagship in flames, fetched about and incontinently fled. Thus he escaped his enemies, and after a little delay was back once more in Jamaica, where he is now, as I have told you, ready to bring more glory to England, and put more gold in the lean purses of her tars."

By this time I had fully resolved that the fellow was but a windy fore-castle orator and harmless of himself, so he did not lead away men of weaker understanding. Our crew continued to question him, and he related more doings of Morgan, and so they went on till the matter was, as I conceived, talked out. We had a little discourse of other things, and presently the two captains came up from below, and our visitors knocked the ashes from their pipes and hied them to their boat. The other captain gone, we got the cloths upon the ship, and shortly she was drawing away on her course.

The Happy Bess speedily followed our example, and in a brief period after her canvas snowed down from her yards was a mere picking out of white on the northeastern seaboard.

Matters on the Industry now went on as before, and, except that we had more Morgan talk and a little mooning and sighing from some of the men, there was nothing to disturb the former monotony. We continued to drop our latitude, the wind holding as it was, and in a little better than two days more were almost due east of the Bermudas.

One evening, being newly come out to take charge of my watch, I lighted my pipe and sauntered off leisurely to the poop, meaning to take a look at our course. I had proceeded as far as the ladder,

and I think even had one foot upon it, when I heard my name sharply yet stealthily called. I halted, in some surprise, and found that the speaker was old Jack Lewson.

"St! Master Ardick," he said, shuffling up hurriedly. "Belay jaw tackle and stow this away. Overhaul it when nobody is looking."

He thrust a bit of paper into my hand and slipped away. The poop was partly in shadow, and helped cover his movements till he had reached the opposite bulwark, when he pulled up and quietly lighted his pipe.

What could be in the wind?

CHAPTER V.

OF A VERY STIRRING PIECE OF BUSINESS.

I WAS eager and I might say anxious to know what the slip of paper contained, and determined to examine it without delay. I would not take it to the bittacle, for there the helmsman might see me, and yet I was for making use of the bittacle lanthorn. I ascended the poop ladder, turning over a little plot in my mind, and when I was nearly up with the bittacle box I stopped and uttered a sharp exclamation.

"A shilling!" I growled. "Curses light on the villainous tailor that must leave a pocket as open as a chimney! I must have a fling of your lanthorn." I took it out of the box without waiting for his consent, and whisked it around to the hither side. The

fellow dare not leave his tiller, even had he sufficient interest or curiosity to do so, and for the instant I was safe. I held the paper low that none forward could make me out, and on spreading it open discovered that it bore a few lines of most villainous, ugly writing. They had the seeming, indeed, of having been traced with a bit of charcoal or the point of a charred stick. I brought all my clerkly powers to bear, and, in quicker time than I could have thought possible, finally deciphered the words. Luckily they were few in number. "Men be going to mutinize" (so the missive ran). "Fower days. The mate, hee is the leeder. I am watched."

It seemed to me at that moment that the fellow at the wheel must have heard the throb my heart gave. I looked at him as I straightened up—at his black outlines, as he bowed over the tiller tackle—and hung for the moment all in the wind. I have it in my mind that I saw, somewhat as one sees in a dream, the various details of my surroundings—the great falling shadow of the lateen; the far-off, light sky, with its few stars; the vague expanse of the sea, with its slow heave and fall, caught now and again with a faint sparkle. I think my physical eyes took in these things even while my mind was fluttering in the wind, so to speak; but at least I know that I presently shook off the bewilderment, and, though I was still under a vast strain, I quietly picked up the lanthorn and marched back and restored it to its place.

"Good luck," I said by way of explanation. I stopped a moment and peered at the compass card. "Steers easy, I am guessing."

"Aye, sir, with now and then a kick," answered the man a little gruffly.

I left him and walked leisurely to the head of the ladder, whence, with a careless air, I surveyed the deck. By the faint light of the stars I could make out the dim shapes of two of the men, and a red spark by the foot of the mainmast, where a third was at the moment starting his pipe. None were very near, which was the thing I would know. The foot of the poop must lie well in shadow, so that one slipping up to the companion and slyly opening it would run but small risk of being seen. I was heavy and heartsore under the sudden smiting of this business, and could not yet persuade myself that it was all true, or bring myself into the heart of it to appreciate it. Wherefore, as I began now to descend the poop ladder I did so in a stiff, mechanical fashion, as one moves at a word of command, and not of his own free will. I would not refine upon this, and yet, to put you clearly in my place, I must declare to you that what I was now doing seemed distorted and away from the reality of things, and in a sort monstrous. That these fellows, with every seeming of decency, if not honesty, should turn outlaws and desperadoes, and come, perhaps, to cruel murderers, did to me almost pass belief. "Never," I was thinking but a little season before, "was a set of sea dogs better treated, and sure few crews ever grumbled less, Englishmen though most of them be." And now they make a single step of it to rogues and gallows birds! And the mate? Seldom, I trow, does the cabin conspire with the fore-castle in a thing like this! Ah, the monstrous villain! But I was ready to believe it of

him. Yes, Nature had fitted him with a figurehead to label him plainly pirate and murderer!

I can not pretend that just these reflections, or all of them, passed through my mind as I descended the ladder and stole along the deck. Some of them did, I am sure, and some may slip out of my imagination now, as I fire up in the thought of it, and seem to belong to that time. Be that as it may, I had dreadful reflections enough, I will be bound, as I whipped along the deck and stole up to the companion door.

I threw one swift glance around and saw no one apparently looking. The two nearest men had swung about and were facing aft, and the smoker had hitched partially around, giving me the square of his shoulder. Now was my opportunity. I darted in, closing the door after me. A glance showed that a lighted lanthorn hung against the mast, but the berth was empty. I stopped for nothing further, but strode long and softly toward the captain's cabin. This was the first—counting from the starboard side—of the three after-rooms, the next being occupied by the mate and the third by the supercargo. I skirted the table and reached the door and put out my hand to rap gently upon it. While yet my knuckles were presented, the door farthest on my right—that is to say, the supercargo's—abruptly opened, and Mr. Tym himself put out his head.

I fell back a step, not being prepared for this interruption, and ere I could speak or utter a caution he strode out and hailed me sharply:

“Stand! What do you seek?”

“Hist, hist!” I said, in a sharp whisper. “A word with you, if you will, but no noise.”

By this time he recognised me, which now I saw that he had not at first, and he fell back without a word, and motioned for me to enter. I whipped in with all speed, and immediately that I was past him he gently closed the door. He had not turned in, it seemed, but was sitting up fully dressed, a book open on the table supplying the reason. The berth lantern was lighted, as was likewise a small lamp, the latter set in a fixture against the bulkhead.

I immediately advanced my lips to his ear, and acquainted him, in the fewest words possible, with what was doing. "Speak cautiously, sir," I concluded, "for you know the mate's berth adjoins this."

He took away his head, and looked at me as one thunderstruck. Instead of answering, he plucked off his barnacles and put them in the case, and walked to the window. I conceived that he might be collecting his wits, which must be a little shaken, and that without any impairment of his courage. But in a moment he was back, and now his countenance had such a high, bold aspect that it was impossible to mistake it. Clapping up his hand to guide the sound, he said in my ear :

"We will confound the arch villain. Stay but a moment, till I can prepare, and we will be about it."

My own spirits and courage rose at this, and I stood up very sturdily, as I nodded assent.

He thereupon softly advanced to the wall, whence he took down his sword and buckled it on, and from beneath his bunk produced a box, which proved to contain a brace of pistols, with powder and ball.

He handed these weapons to me with a sign to

load them, and while I was obeying him he took from a covered shelf against the bulkhead a little iron tool, which at first I took to be a kind of awl, and this he proceeded to screw into the wooden cap of his arm, having first removed the iron hook. I guessed that this must be a kind of pointed dagger or stiletto, but had not the time then to determine. I went on with the charging of the pistols, but lacking practice (and I dare say being a trifle unsteady), I made but slow work of it, and was relieved when Mr. Tym could help me, which he did with a rapidity and deftness that speedily concluded the business.

I was now ready to hear him declare his plan, but he first took from a nail a coil of small cord, after which he whispered in my ear :

“Before aught else is done we must secure the mate. That stands clear in my mind. And we may not wait to summon the captain, lest the fellow take the alarm. Mark me, I will knock on his door, and say I desire to speak with him. On his appearance we will each clap a pistol to his head—take you this—and compel him forth and bind him. For the carrying out of that I have this cord, which is passing effectual for the purpose. Pradey secured, the backbone of the mutiny is broken, and the captain must deal with the rest. Art ready?”

“Aye,” said I steadily, but with no little stirring of the pulse, “quite ready.”

He softly opened the door, and we stole out.

The lanthorn was burning, but now very dimly, for it was a candlelight, and the wick grievously needed snuffing. The rats seemed to be bold, or else the stillness and the suspense of the moment

made them seem so, for, as I crossed the threshold, I heard a sharp, sudden little knocking from somewhere in the shadow of the table. It gave me a start, and I glanced that way, only to discover that which affected my nerves a vast deal more. A tall but stooped figure made a scramble from all-fours to its feet, and with one long, straddling bound was bursting out of the companion.

"Pradey!" yelled the supercargo, and let fly with his pistol.

I could see that he was too late, and thereupon, with a shock of alarm and mortification, I made a dash of it also, and flew through the open door. The mate was bounding off the quarter-deck to the main, shouting out something which I did not catch, and in a veritable fury I let go my pistol. I could not have made a close shot, but his yelling increased, and now I could see the crew pouring out of the fore-castle hatch, and the watch running toward him. I had the sense to perceive that all was up, and sullenly retreated, stopping at the companion to shoot the bolt of the door.

When I turned about, though the place was still a little smoky, I made out both the supercargo and the captain, the latter in his shirt, with a drawn sword in his hand.

"Pray you dress," said Mr. Tym, with excellent coolness, as the captain stood fast, glaring fiercely toward the companion. "Nay, we are safe enough for the moment," he added, glancing down at the door leading into the 'tween-decks, which I now perceived he had secured.

"The abominable villain!" growled Sellinger, re-

laxing his warlike attitude, however, and lowering his point. "I will take your advice, and be with you presently."

He withdrew into his berth, and Mr. Tym said to me, almost humorously :

"Abominable or not, he played a shrewd part, and is like to reap the reward of it. A very pretty piece of eavesdropping, indeed. I pray you snuff that candle, which offends my nose as well as burns illy."

"Here is the old fellow in his fighting mood," I said to myself, as I obeyed him and snuffed the candle. "I think I can conceive him now as he was at Naseby. Yea, and when he made the captain and crew of the lugger to prefer the gale to his anger. How will it be with us now?" I asked aloud. "Can we make a sufficient defence, think you?"

"Nay," he answered coolly, "not if they stand to it with heart. You conceive that they have in all points the advantage. They can starve us out—for we have nothing beyond a few biscuits, and no drink but wine—or can batter in the doors, and bear us down by main force; or they can set a watch upon us, and keep us boxed up here till they reach some convenient point, when they can scuttle the ship, and leave us in the plight of so many inconvenient kittens."

"Stay!" I cried, as a sudden thought struck me. "I think they will be at none of that. I mean the scuttling. Remember you not the magpie from the Happy Bess? He that yarned so concerning Morgan? I am ready to swear that his talk and the mate's scheming have brought this about. These rogues will be for turning pirates."

I had just uttered this when Captain Sellinger came out of his cabin. He was fully dressed, save for his coat, and was now armed with a brace of pistols in addition to his sword.

"What was that talk of pirates?" he asked, having, it seemed, caught my last word.

"Why," said I, "that it seems to me these fellows will be for mastering the ship and then joining Captain Morgan. They have been inclined thereto, I am sure, from the enticing yarns of that sailor from the Happy Bess, and also worked upon, I doubt not, by the mate."

"I believe you have hit the nail on the head;" cried the captain, with a savage slap on the table. "Oh, that snake! Aye, he is at the bottom of it. These simpletons would not have risen but for him. On my soul, never was a crew better treated. Such pork and such beef, and such soft tack on Sundays, and then the scouse and the ale! Ah, well, it avails not talking of it. What is your counsel, Master Tym? What may we do in such a strait?"

I perceived here that Captain Sellinger was not of the parts for an emergency like this that Captain Houthwick was. He was brave enough, and so that there was one above him to take the responsibility, could be sufficiently cool—as witness his handling of the gun in our brush with the Dutchman—but when he must himself be at the head he was like to fall into a state of uncertainty, whence he might be expected either to do too little or too much. Besides, in the present matter he was somewhat overborne by his anger and just indignation.

"My counsel is of the simplest," answered Mr. Tym without hesitation. "We should stand clear of the doors, lest they take it into their heads to shoot through, and watch sharply every point at which they might seek to catch us at advantage. For instance," he added abruptly, and with a wonderful sort of smile, "they might appear yonder."

Quick as thought his pistol went up, and broke into an instant report. He had aimed at a spot just at my back, and by the shattering of glass, even before I could turn my head, I knew it to be one of the grated windows. As I whirled about some bits of the glass fell down within, and it seemed to me that I heard a faint, distant shriek.

"If I did not hit him he will drown," said the old man coolly, as he proceeded to recharge the pistol. "Pradey has too much business on his hands to tarry to pick him up."

I was a little startled at the beginning of this episode, but presently recovered my composure, and imitated Mr. Tym in reloading my weapon. I had scarce poured the powder into the pan when I heard the movement of feet on deck.

"I think they are coming," I said as coolly as I could. Secretly my heart began to thump. "Aye, and another gang advances 'tween-decks," I added, as I also heard a stir there.

"Stand ready," said the supercargo, in low, hard tones. "All together with the pistols, and then a rush. Yet tarry till the rams, or what else they may batter with, have made a fair opening. Master Ardick, you have no sword; therefore remain somewhat back. Also I would counsel you to whip yon cloak

about your left arm, that it may serve in a sort as a shield. Pistols forward, friends! They come!"

CHAPTER VI.

OF THE STAND THAT WE MADE, AND DIVERS EVENTS
THAT FOLLOWED.

I KNOW not what manner of implements the fellows used, but they were passing effectual, for both doors crashed in at the first assault, and we caught sight of their pack of bodies and bristle of weapons. But an instant so, and then we all let go in a volley, making a tremendous noise in the small place and confusing everything with smoke. One fellow in the opening of the companion fetched a dreadful howl, as high-pitched as a dog's, and before the sound was well out of him, thrust headlong forward and crashed down at our feet. The gang in the door thereupon set up a great roaring and cursing, and in the midst of it four or five of them dashed recklessly in. The foremost bent forward, and I saw his hand go out with a pistol in it, but before he could fire the captain let bang at him, and he fetched up short, and gave a queer sort of writhing bow and fell back upon the threshold. The others hung in the wind a moment, but presently came floundering over the body, whereupon Captain Sellinger raised a great shout and set upon them with his sword. I had a moment now to glance over my shoulder, and perceived that Mr. Tym was holding the others at bay, they, indeed, crowding together, cursing and stamping, but not offering to advance.

Encouraged at this, and wishing to be performing some part, I caught up Mr. Tym's cloak, which I had before neglected, wound it around my left arm, and, having exchanged the pistol for my sheathknife, advanced a pace and made ready to fall on. By this time the light in the place was exceeding dim, the smoke, though in part drawing up through the companion, continuing also about the lanthorn, till it had the seeming of a beacon in a fog. Nevertheless, upon looking with some intentness, I made out that the fellows the captain was fighting were three of the ordinary sailors, by name Tom Doll, Will Minton, and Jack Walling, all men of fair courage but not extraordinary able of body or of known skill with weapons. This heartened me, somewhat, for I should have misliked to come to hand blows with a fellow like Lovigne, for instance. I mean I should have shrunk from it in especial, armed as I was. As for the sailors, they seemed to carry hangers and knives, the first of which they must have seasonably stolen from the arms chest, else they could not have popped down with them at this short notice.

The captain had now brought the three men to bay, their backs to the foot of the companion, where he was pressing upon them fiercely, his long sword a little cramped for room, yet of great avail in the thrusts he was speeding. Tom Doll was pinked in the left arm, and seemed to have lost all heart, and the others were barely able, by desperate thwacks at the sword, to keep its point out of their ribs.

"Have at one of these fellows, sir!" I shouted to the captain, and, discretely picking out Doll, I made a bold dash, and so dismayed the rascal that he

fetched his blow at me before the time, and I closed with him ere he could get his hanger up again, and dug my knife into his side. He collapsed like an empty sack, uttering a direful groan, and at the same moment the captain run Minton through the heart. Walling, who was an active fellow, thereupon whirled short, and with one flying bound cleared the door and landed well out upon the deck.

"That gives us riddance of so many of the rogues!" puffed the captain, who was by this time very short of breath. "Stay you here, Ardick, and guard the companion while I go to Tym's assistance. By St. Paul! he has little need of it, such poltroons as these fellows be!"

Mr. Tym had now fallen back a pace from his first station, for some of his adversaries had obtained pistols, and as we joined him they let go a sort of scattering volley. Their range was limited on account of the walls of the stairs, and no harm was done. There was a bit of silence, but not to mention, and immediately the whole gang came bursting up. Then it was that the supercargo acquitted himself rarely. Forward he darted, and before the first fellow, who happened to be Pierre Lovigne, could order his guard, the little lithe man stooped, whipped in, and passed his sword a foot through the burly rascal's midriff. Back two paces then, and, as the next fellow pressed on, the sword flew round, and with a sidelong stroke shore away two or three of the rascal's fingers. It was all while I seemed to be getting one long breath and letting it out again!

"Have at ye, scum!" yelled the captain, fired at this feat of arms, and he brandished his sword

and ran in upon the now crowded and confused seamen.

Mr. Tym saw the opportunity and sprang to his side, and together they thrust and slashed so fiercely, and yet with such deadly skill, that three more of the sailors were either killed or desperately wounded, and the others broke and poured headlong down the steps.

The captain's blood was up, and he made to follow, but Mr. Tym caught him by the sleeve, and in a word or two showed him the danger of it, so that he reluctantly gave over.

All this time that arch traitor, the mate, had kept in the background, but now we heard his voice, and I conjectured that he was raving and perhaps trying to rally his men. It seemed that he had been in the rear of those who came up from 'tween-decks, but either from necessity or inclination had fallen back when Mr. Tym and the captain made their final onslaught.

But do what he could the fellows he was talking to had no heart for further ventures, and we heard them break away from him and retreat to the forward parts of the ship. He must have followed, for it was immediately quiet 'tween-decks, and so that point of our defence seemed to be safe enough. As for the companion, it still stood open, just as they had broken it in, but the misused door only banged at will with the motion of the ship, and no one appeared to be near it or to guard it.

We now had a little breathing time, and the captain improved it in a literal sense, for he sat down, puffing like a grampus, and wiping the sweat from

his face. Mr. Tym was a gory sight, his sleeves mete for a butcher's, and his face and shirt front bespattered. Likewise his wig was gone, which gave his white, cropped head a strange, pugnacious look, but he seemed as active and unspent as ever. Except for a small cut on his neck and a bruise on his left arm, he declared himself without scathe, and it seemed that the captain had fared as well, as he had only a light prick or two. As for myself, I was quite unhurt.

We were now minded to investigate the condition of the fallen mutineers, and found all dead but one, and he in extremity. He was one Ned Mac Snee, a Scotchman, a quiet sort of fellow, but incontinently carried away by the Morgan business. We placed him in as easy a posture as we could, and examined his wound, which we found to be a grievous stab among the ribs. It was small, as though made by a thick-bladed dagger (upon which I thought I perceived the work of Mr. Tym's chisel-like fixture), but was deep, and had already let out near all the man's blood. He tried to speak, I think to express his contrition for what he had done, but was unable to fetch out any sound, and presently, with a little struggle, he expired. I was sincerely sorry for his death, which I had time to bestow some thought upon, as I had not the others, and, moreover, the fellow was not by nature so very evil, but had rather been led to the ill deed by the counsel of stronger minds and the deceit of his own imagination. However, it was useless thinking upon it now, and I covered his face and we fell back to take a little counsel together. Captain Sellinger was for bringing the

affair to a head without further parley, and would have us sally out and fall upon the fellows and cut them down if they would not surrender. Mr. Tym opposed this, saying we were still three against eight, not including the wounded sailor and old Lewson (the latter would hardly desert to us as yet), and in the open deck we could not expect to work such havoc as we had in the cabin. In the attack here they had fallen on without order or precision, crowding together till they could not get the avail of their weapons, and missing their shots because of their hastiness, but on deck they could spread out and encompass us front and rear, and would be certain to be more circumspect. But for the surprise into which they had been thrown by the sudden call of the mate, it was doubtful if we could have gained the day as it was. "Better to wait then," urged Mr. Tym, "and let the rascals call for a truce, which doubtless they will soon do, being now a light crew for the ship, and likewise lacking nautical instruments, those being all here in the cabin."

By these arguments Mr. Tym finally prevailed, and the idea of an assault was abandoned. I, for my part, heartily agreed with Mr. Tym, for I had my bellyful of fighting for one night, and, moreover, could see no wisdom in periling our heads when a little prudence might protect them. This plan of waiting, then, being decided upon, we fell to work mending the condition of the cabin, dragging the eight bodies down into the 'tween-decks, and putting in place as well as we could the broken doors, which we found means to brace so that they would stand. Having completed these and some further better-