WILLIAM HENRY GILES KINGSTON

HURRICANE HURRY

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W.H.G. Kingston

"Hurricane Hurry"

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Chapter One.

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On the north-east side of the street, about midway between the fish and flesh markets in the seaport town of Falmouth, and at about the silent and solemn hour of thirty-six minutes past one by my father’s watch, on the morning of the 28th day of December, of the year of grace 1752, His Gracious Majesty George the Second being King of Great Britain and Ireland, (it is necessary in important matters to be particular). I was introduced with the usual forms and ceremonies into the ancient family of the Hurrys, as the undoubted child of my father Richard and my mother Joan, the ninth, and as it subsequently proved, the last of their promising offspring. On the 29th day of the January

following, the Reverend Edward Walmsley, rector of the parish, baptised me by the names of Hurricane, with the addition of Tempest, which were selected by my parents, after numberless consultations, in compliment to my maternal grand-uncle, Sir Hurricane Tempest, Alderman of Bristol, though it did not appear from his remark when informed of the occurrence that it was likely to benefit in the remotest manner from the delicate attention which had been paid him.

My early days were not remarkable, I got through the complaints incident to childhood in a manner satisfactory to my mother and the doctor, while my elder brothers and sisters took very good care that I should not be spoilt by over-indulgence. My brothers, as they advanced towards manhood, were sent into various professions, and as none of them had chosen the sea, it was decided, without my opinion being asked, that I should be made an offering to Neptune.

That I might be prepared for my future calling, I was sent to reside with my brother-in-law Jack Hayfield, in the neighbourhood of Bideford, North Devon, to allow me the vast benefit of attending the school of worthy Jeremiah Sinclair, kept over the marketplace in that far-famed maritime town. I still love the recollection of the old place, with its steep streets, its broad quays, and its bridge of many arches; to my mind a more picturesque bridge does not exist in all the world, nor, when the tide is in, a prettier river. On the bosom of that river I gained my first practical experience of affairs nautical, and many a trip I made down to Appledore with my schoolfellow Ned Treggellis, in a boat

which, had not a special providence watched over us, would speedily have consigned us to the muddy bottom of the stream. An oar served us as a rudder, another as a mast, with a piece of sacking as a sail spread on a condemned boat-hook, while one of us was constantly employed in baling out the water which came in through leaks unnumbered—a state of affairs we had learned to consider normal to our craft.

From Sinclair’s school, in order to receive the finishing-touches to my education, I was removed to old Allen’s well-known Mathematical Academy in Cold Harbour.

It is just possible that I might have reaped some amount of benefit from the mental provender served out in those nurseries of genius, but unfortunately for me Jack’s appreciation of the advantages of knowledge was such that he considered the time squandered devoted to its acquisition. Frequently, therefore, when I was supposed by my good sister Mary, his wife, to be on my way to school, I had been waylaid by him, and was employed with another boy in setting springles, marking woodcocks, or in some other equally intellectual pastime. Whatever I may now think about the matter, I was then convinced that Brother Jack was one of the kindest and best fellows in the world; and when I fell asleep in my chair during the evening, my somnolency was attributed to the assiduity with which I had applied to my studies during the day. I have since then had not a little reason to regret honest Jack’s ignorance and my own folly in listening to his persuasions.

My frequent companion on the occasions I have spoken of was Tommy Rockets, the son of a poor widow who lived

near Jack’s house. He was somewhat younger than myself and small for his age, but a sharp, intelligent little fellow, though amusingly ignorant of affairs in general. His chief employment was acting the part of a scarecrow by frightening birds from the cornfields, and running on errands into Bideford for any of the neighbours, by which means he enabled his mother to eke out her scanty pittance. I used to share with him my school pasty, and now and then I saved a piece of bread and cheese, or I would bring him a cake or a roll from Bideford. He never failed to carry a portion to his mother, sharp-set as he always was himself. The poor fellow soon conceived a strong affection for me; and when I was going off to sea he cried bitterly at the thoughts of parting from me. I also had a regard for him, and, forgetting how small and young he was, I took it into my head that I would carry him with me. We were sitting on a grassy bank under a tree, with a series of undulating hills and the blue ocean beyond, when I broached the subject.

“Would’st like to come to sea with me, Tom?” said I broadly.

“What, to them furrin parts across the water?” he asked, pointing seaward with his chin. “No; I’d bee afeared, Master Hurricane, I would. What makes you go now?”

“To fight the Frenchmen, of course,” I replied. “It’s peace just now, they say, though I thought we were always at war with the French; but it won’t last long, that’s one comfort.”

“Well, now, I’d rather stay at home with mother than go and fight the furriners—that I would,” said Tommy, with much simplicity.

“Oh, you’ve no spirit, boy!” I replied, with a look of contempt. “Wouldn’t you like, now, to be sailing round the world with Commodore Byron, who’ll fill his ships with rubies, and pearls, and gold, and precious stones, and all sorts of things. Why, Tommy, you would come back with more riches in your waistcoat-pocket than you ever thought to possess in your life.”

Tommy’s eyes sparkled as I spoke. “What, enough to make my mother a lady!” he exclaimed. “Well, then, Master Hurricane, if so be you can take me to them parts, when I’m big enough I’ll go with ye.”

“Well, we’ll see about it,” said I, with a patronising air; “but it is not all gold-picking, remember. There’s plenty of fighting and prize-taking besides. You’ve heard speak of Admiral Hawke?”

“No,” said Tommy, “I ne’er did.”

“I’d have given my right hand to have been with him when he beat the French in Quiberon Bay. That was a glorious day for old England, let me tell you.” I was able to expatiate on the subject, as the last time I was at home my father read me a full account of the battle which took place in 1759, the year preceding the death of his Majesty George the Second, and about five years before the time of which I am now speaking. It was the most memorable action of my early days. The French fleet was commanded by Monsieur de Conflans, whom a short time before a violent gale had compelled to take shelter in Brest harbour, while the English had anchored in Torbay. The two fleets were about equal. After cruising for some time the enemy again took shelter in Quiberon Bay, on the coast of Bretagne, in France, where

they were pursued by the English. A strong gale had sprung up and a heavy sea was running, but, undaunted, the brave Hawke stood on. The Frenchmen hoped to lead his fleet to destruction among the rocks and shoals of that dangerous coast. Unwilling to fight, yet too late to escape, the French admiral, when he saw the English approach, was compelled to make sail. Hawke pursued them and ordered his pilots to lay him alongside the Soleil Royal, which bore the flag of the French admiral. The Thesée, a seventy-four-gun ship, ran between them, and a heavy sea entering her ports, she foundered. The Superbe, another Frenchman, shared the same fate. Several other French ships struck their colours; many were driven on shore, among which was the flag-ship, which was set on fire and destroyed. A great number of the French were killed, but the English lost only one lieutenant and thirty-nine men killed, and about two hundred wounded. But I must not stop to describe the gallant actions which occurred during my boyhood. Lord Anson, one of the most experienced of navigators, died two years only before I went to sea. Captain Byron sailed that same memorable year, when my country first had the benefit of my services, on his voyage of discovery into the pacific, and returned in 1766. Captains Wallis and Carteret sailed on exploring voyages at the same time. I happened to have heard of Mr Cook, but it was not till many years after this that he became known to fame as one of the most talented and scientific of English navigators; indeed, he did not return from his great voyage till eleven years after this. He lost his life in his last voyage in 1779.

A number of gallant actions were fought at the end of the war, sufficient to fire the ardour of any youth of spirit to whom they were recounted. Captain Hood's capture of the Warwick, a sixty-gun ship, which had been taken from the English, was one of the most celebrated. At this time, however, she carried but thirty-six guns, with 300 men, including a company of soldiers. Captain Hood attacked her in the Minerva frigate of thirty-two guns and 220 men, and after an hour's fight, with a heavy sea running, both ships having lost their masts, he captured her and took her to Spithead. A still more remarkable action was that of the Bellona and Brilliant, Captains Faulkner and Loggie, and a French ship of the line and two heavy frigates, which resulted in the capture of the first and the flight of the latter. There were also numerous actions fought between packets and privateers, and other small craft, with the enemy, which seldom failed to add to the honour and glory of our country. Though ignorant of other lore, I greedily devoured all the accounts I could find of these events, and having once made up my mind that the sea was to be my profession, I resolved, when opportunities should occur, to imitate them to the best of my power.

But to return to my friend Tommy. Just before I sailed I went to pay his mother a visit. I found the widow sitting, as was her wont, knitting at her window, waiting for her son's return. I went not empty-handed, for besides my pasty, which I had saved, I had bought a loaf and a lump of cheese and a bundle of lollipops at Bideford. First presenting her with these treasures and emptying my pockets of the very small amount of cash they contained, I opened the business

I had at heart. Poor Mrs Rockets burst into tears when I asked her to let her Tommy go to sea with me.

“Oh, Master Hurricane!” said she, “I feel all your kindness to a poor creature like me and my boy, and I would not deny you anything, but, oh, sir, he is my only child, my only comfort in life, and I cannot part with him!”

All the arguments I could use and the brilliant hopes I held out were of no avail for a long time, till at last, with a sad voice, she consented, when he grew bigger, should he then show a strong wish to go to sea, to allow him to accompany me.

I met Tommy on my way home and told him that he must make haste and grow big that he might go to sea and fill his pockets with pearls and diamonds for his widowed mother. In many a dream which I had thus conjured up, both by day and night, did the poor lad indulge as he was scaring off the crows in the fields or lying on his humble pallet in his thatched-roof hut near Bideford.

It was at Whitsuntide of the year 1764, I then numbering eleven summers, that I was placed on the books of the Folkstone cutter, commanded by a particular friend of my father’s, Lieutenant Clover; the amount of learning I possessed on quitting school just enabling me to read a chapter in the Bible to my old blind grandmother (on my mother’s side), who lived with us, and to tell my father how many times a coachwheel of any diameter would turn round in going to Penryn. Having received my father’s and mother’s blessing and a sea-chest, which contained a somewhat scanty supply of clothes, a concise epitome of navigation, an English dictionary, and my grandmother’s

Bible—the only gift of value the kind old lady had it in her power to bestow—I was launched forth into the wide world to take my chance with the bustling, hard-hearted crowd which fills it. I was speedily removed from the cutter into his Majesty's packet the Duncannon, Captain Charles Edwards, in which vessel I crossed the Atlantic for the first time; and after visiting Madeira and several of the West India Islands I returned to Falmouth on the eve of Christmas, 1767. I next joined the Duke of York, Captain Dickenson, in which vessel I made no less than sixteen voyages to Lisbon. As, however, I had grown very weary of the packet service, I was not sorry to be paid off and to return once more home, if not with a fuller purse, at all events, a better sailor than when I left it. I was not long allowed to enjoy the luxury of idleness before my father got me appointed to the Torbay, seventy-four, commanded by Captain Walls, who was considered one of the smartest officers in the service, and I was taught to expect a very different sort of life to that which I had been accustomed to in the slow-going packet service. There were several youngsters from the neighbourhood of Falmouth, who had never before been to sea, who were appointed to the same ship. One of them, my old messmate poor Dick Martingall, used to speak of the unsophisticated joy with which his old mother, in her happy simplicity, announced to him the fact of his appointment. She came to his bedside long before the usual hour of rising and awoke him.

"Richard, my dear son, Richard!" she said; "get up, thou art made for ever!"

"What am I made, mother?" he asked with astonishment, rubbing his eyes, which were still full of sleep.

“Oh, my boy, my dear boy!” replied the good lady, her countenance beaming with satisfaction, “thou art made a midshipman!”

Alas! little did his poor old mother dream of the sea of troubles into which her darling boy was about to be launched, what hardships and difficulties he was doomed to encounter, “the snubs that patient raids from their superiors take,” or she would not have congratulated herself on the event, or supposed that by his being made a midshipman he was made for ever. Yet in his case it was so far true, poor fellow, that he was never made anything else, as he was carried out of the world by fever before he had gained a higher step in rank.

The tailors in Falmouth and its neighbourhood who were employed in fitting us out were delightfully innocent of all notion of what a midshipman’s uniform should really be, and each one seemed to fancy that he was at liberty to give full scope to the exuberance of his taste. Their models might have been taken from the days of Benbow, or rather, perhaps, from the costumes of those groups who go about disguised at Christmas-time enacting plays in the halls of the gentry and nobility, and are called by us west-country folks “geese-dancers.” As we met on board the cutter which was to carry us to Plymouth we were not, I will allow, altogether satisfied with our personal appearance, and still less so when we stepped on the quarter-deck of the seventy-four, commanded by one of the proudest, most punctilious men in the service, surrounded by a body of well-dressed, dashing-looking officers.

Tom Peard first advanced, as chief and oldest of our gang, with a bob-wig on his head surmounted by a high hat bound by narrow gold lace, white lapels to his coat, a white waistcoat, and light-blue inexpressibles with midshipman's buttons. By his side hung a large brass-mounted hanger, while his legs were encased in a huge pair of waterproof boots. I followed next, habited in a coat all sides radius, as old Allen would have said, the skirt actually sweeping the deck, and so wide that it would button down to the very bottom. My white cuffs reached half way up the arm to the elbow; my waistcoat, which was of the same snowy hue, reached to my knees, but was fortunately concealed from sight by the ample folds of my coat, as were also my smallclothes. I had on white thread stockings, high shoes and buckles, and a plain cocked hat—a prodigiously long silver-handled sword completing my costume.

Dick Martingall's and Tom Paynter's dresses wore not much less out of order, giving them more the appearance of gentlemen of the highway than of naval officers of respectability. One had a large brass-mounted sword once belonging to his great-grandfather, a trooper in the army of the Prince of Orange; the other, a green-handled hanger, which had done service with Sir Cloudesley Shovel.

Often have I seen a set of geese-dancers compelled to make a hurried flight before the hot poker of some irate housekeeper disturbed in her culinary operations, and much in the same way did we four aspirants for naval honours beat a precipitate retreat from the deck of the Torbay as, with a stamp of his foot, our future captain ordered us to be

gone and instantly to get cut down and reduced into ordinary proportions by the Plymouth tailors.

As may be supposed, the operation was almost beyond the skill of even the most experienced master of the shears, and we were all of us compelled, much to our dismay, to furnish ourselves for the most part with new suits. On our return on board, however, we were complimented on our appearance; and as our tailor agreed to receive payment from our first instalment of prize-money, we were perfectly content with the arrangement.

After spending a few months in channel cruising—the Torbay being ordered to lay as guard-ship at Plymouth—such a life not suiting my fancy, I quitted her and joined his Majesty's sloop of war Falcon, captain Cuthbert Baines, fitting out for the West India station.

As in those days I kept no regular journal, I have only a few scattered notes written in an old log-book to guide me in my account of the events of that period of my career. A few are still vivid in my memory as when they first occurred, but many have escaped me altogether, or appear like the fleeting phantoms of a dream of which it is impossible to describe the details. I must therefore be allowed to pass rapidly over that early portion of my naval life and go on to the time when I had passed my examination for a lieutenant's commission and trod the quarter-deck as a master's mate.

On the Falcon's leaving Portsmouth we touched at Falmouth or our way down channel, when I had the opportunity of taking leave of my family—with some of them, alas! it was an eternal farewell. This is one of the

seaman’s severest trials; he knows from sad experience that of the many smiling faces he sees collected round the domestic hearth some will too surely be missing on his return, wanderers, like himself, far, far away, or gone to their final resting-place.

We made a stay of a few days at Madeira, and without any occurrence worthy of note reached English Harbour, Antigua, October 21st, 1771, where we found lying several ships of war under the flag of Rear-Admiral Mann.

I have not hitherto mentioned the names of my messmates. Among others, there were William Wilkins, John Motto, Israel Pellew (see note), and Alexander Dick. We were a jovial set and generally pulled well together; but on one occasion the apple of discord was thrown in among us, and Alexander Dick, the surgeon’s mate, and I fell to loggerheads in consequence of some reflections I thoughtlessly cast on the land of his nativity—to the effect, as far as my recollection serves me, that nothing better was to be found there as food for the people than sheeps’ heads and boiled bagpipes; to which he retorted by asserting that we west-country folks were little better than heathens and had no more manners than blackamoors. As neither of us would retract what we had said, it was decided that our dispute could alone be settled by mortal combat. Pistols, we were aware, were the most gentlemanly weapons to be employed on such occasions; but we found that it would be impossible to obtain them in a hurry without to a certainty betraying our intentions. It was therefore settled by our seconds and ourselves that we should decide the knotty question with our hangers as soon as we could manage to

get on shore after reaching port. All four of us therefore, having got leave the morning after our arrival, left the ship soon after daybreak in a shore-boat and pulled off to a retired part of the harbour. Here we landed, and telling our black boatmen to wait our return, we walked away arm-in-arm to a spot where we thought no one would observe us. Having thrown off our coats and tucked up our shirt-sleeves, the word was given, and, drawing our hangers, we advanced towards each other with furious passes, as if nothing but the death of one of us could satisfy the rancour of our enmity, and yet at that very moment I believe neither of us recollected the origin of our quarrel. Dick first gave me a cut on the shoulder, which so excited my fury that I was not long in returning the compliment by bestowing a slash across his arm, which made him wince not a little, but before I could follow it up he had recovered his guard. In a moment I was at him again, and as we were neither of us great masters of the noble art of self-defence, we kept hewing and slashing away at each other in a most unscientific manner for several minutes, till we were both of us covered with gashes from head to foot, and the blood was flowing copiously down into our very shoes. At last, from very weariness and loss of blood, we dropped the points of our swords as if by mutual consent. Our seconds now stepped forward.

“Hurry, my good fellow,” said my second, “one thing I see clearly. This matter cannot be settled satisfactorily with cold steel—it’s too much like the custom of piccarooners. We must wait till we can get hold of pistols, and arrange the affair in a gentlemanly way. That’s my opinion, and I

daresay you and Mr Dick will agree with me." In honest truth, both my antagonist and I were in such a condition that we were perfectly ready to agree to any arrangement which would prevent the necessity of continuing the painful operation we had both been inflicting on each other. All four of us therefore sat down on the sands, and Dick, pulling out some lint and bandages from his pockets, our seconds, under his directions, bound up our wounds. When this at length was done we found it, however, impossible to get on our coats again. We were therefore obliged to carry them over our shoulders as we walked to the boats. When the Negro boatmen saw our pale faces and halting gait, as with difficulty we stepped into the boat, they grinned from ear to ear, full well guessing what had occurred, and doubtlessly thinking, as will, I suspect, my readers, that we were very great fools for our pains. Ay, truly we were far worse than fools, for in obedience to the customs of sinful men we had been disobeying the laws of God, and committing a very great crime as well as a very great folly, but we did not think so then, nor did I till very many years afterwards.

Our intentions had not been kept so secret but that they had become known on board, and, our appearance on our return fully corroborating the truth of the reports which had been going about, we were put under arrest by Captain Baines, who then sent for us, to know the cause of our quarrel. We explained it as well as we could; but, as may be supposed, we neither of us had a very good case to make out. "Well, gentlemen," said our commander, "this is a point I do not wish to decide myself, but I shall leave it to the arbitration of the gun-room officers, and to their decision

you must bow.” The next day, therefore, the gun-room officers held a court, and, feeling very stiff and very sore, and looking, I doubt not, very foolish—though we did our best to appear like heroes—we stood before them. Having both of us pleaded our cause, it was decided that we had no business to use the language we had employed, and that we were both in the wrong. We were in consequence ordered to shake hands, and be friends, or else to look out for squalls. Had we possessed more sense, this we might have done before we had cut each other half to pieces, not to speak of spoiling a shirt and a pair of breeches apiece. Thus ended the first and only duel in which I was ever engaged, and Dick and I from that time forward became very good friends.

About this time, some serious disputes having arisen with the Caribs of Saint Vincent, who had become very troublesome to the settlers, the British Government formed the design of removing them altogether from the island and of placing them on some part of the mainland, where they might enjoy their own manner of life without interfering with civilised people. To effect this object an expedition was sent to the island under the command of Major-General Dalrymple, consisting of two regiments from America and various bodies of troops collected from the other islands and from on board all his Majesty’s ships of war on the station. At this distance of time of course I cannot pretend to be able to give any minute description of the details of the affair. I know that there were some gentlemen who acted as commissioners who went on shore to try and arrange matters with the Caribs; but the savages, after agreeing to

terms, not showing any intention to abide by them, the troops were ordered to land. It was very easy to give the order, but not so easy to execute it, for at the time there happened to be an unusually heavy surf breaking on the shore. It would have been wiser in my humble opinion to have waited till the surf had gone down, or to have selected some other spot for disembarkation to that fixed on; but, strange to say, the authorities did not happen to ask my opinion, simply, I suppose, because I was a midshipman, and the landing commenced. The boats, pulled by the seamen and crowded with soldiers, made for the shore. Some reached it in safety by taking the proper moment to dash through the surf, but others were not so fortunate. One boat from our ship had put off; the men in high spirits at the thought of a brush with the Niggers, as they called the unfortunate Caribs. I was watching them from the deck as they approached the shore, when a heavy roller went tumbling in after them. The men saw it coming and pulled for their lives, but it was too quick for them, and catching the boat turned her over as if she had been a mere cockleshell. In an instant some thirty poor fellows were struggling in the surf. Many sunk at once, others made way for the shore, but they had a remorseless enemy on the watch for them, and several, with a shriek of agony which reached almost to the ears of those on board the Falcon, were drawn under by those monsters of the deep, the voracious sharks. Others, when nearly touching the sand, were washed out again by the reflux of another roller following up the first. It was doubly sad, because before it was possible to send any help to them their fate was sealed.

Several other boats met with a like accident, and before the troops were all landed a large number both of seamen and soldiers were lost. The survivors formed on the beach and then advanced rapidly into the country, where the Caribs were drawn up in strong force to receive them.

The enemy, having the advantage of a knowledge of the country, chose their own ground for encountering our troops, and, truth to say, generally had the best of it. I do not wish to enlarge on the subject. I know that we gained very little honour and glory, but, after losing a considerable number of men, some from the bullets of the enemy and others from sunstrokes, the troops were ordered to embark again. Afterwards we heard that the Caribs were allowed to remain in possession of their rights. I suspect, however, that they did not retain them for any long period after this time.

I remember nothing of any particular importance happening to me till August, 1772, when we were lying in English Harbour, Antigua, in company with his Majesty’s ships Chatham, Sea-horse, and Active. I have good reason to remember the harbour well. It is small, but very pretty. The inner part is encircled by hills of various shapes and sizes, the outer is formed by a rocky ridge, with a fort on it guarding the narrow entrance. The capital, Saint Johns, is at the other side of the island, so that we were not able to get there as often as we wished. With little or no warning one of the most terrific hurricanes I ever encountered came down upon us, and before we could get our topmasts housed our masts went by the board, and at the same instant breaking from our anchors we were all driven on shore together. It was a case in which seamanship was of no avail, for before

we could make any preparations to avert the evil the catastrophe had occurred. The same blast levelled with the ground all the stores and houses in the dockyard, as also the Naval Hospital and all the dwelling-houses and other buildings which it encountered in its course. Before we could attempt to heave the ships off we were obliged to clear them of everything, down to the very kelson, and even then we could not move them till we applied the most powerful purchases which could be invented. The Falcon had received so much injury that we were compelled to heave her down to repair her before she was fit for sea. While this operation was going forward I had the misfortune to break my right knee-pan, and for very long it was doubtful whether I should ever again have the free use of my leg. For sixteen weeks I remained in hospital, but at length, to my great satisfaction, was pronounced fit for duty.

I was now no longer a mere youngster, and had seen already a considerable amount of service. Early in 1773 I was appointed acting-lieutenant of the Falcon by Vice-Admiral Parry, who had superseded Admiral Mann. I now assumed the lieutenant’s uniform and walked the deck with no little amount of pride, hoping to be confirmed in my rank when at the expiration of her time on the station my ship should return to England. The change from a midshipman’s berth to the gun-room was very considerable, and as I shone away in what the Orlopians term white boot-tops, I was looked upon by them, with no little amount of envy. I was doomed, however, in this respect to suffer disappointment. In August, 1774, the Falcon returned home, the captain, the lieutenant of marines, another midshipman,

and myself, being the only officers on board who had left England in her—the rest having died or changed into other ships. I must mention the kindness I ever received from Captain Baines while I remained with him. After I left the Falcon I served in the Folkstone cutter stationed at Bideford, and then joined the Wolf sloop of war, Captain Hayward. In the space of a few months I attended the funerals of his wife, his child, and lastly of himself. On quitting the Wolf I began what I may look upon as a new era in my life, and it is therefore a fitting period to commence a fresh chapter.

Note. Afterwards Sir Israel Pellew, the brother of the famous Lord Exmouth.

Chapter Two.

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I had enjoyed the *otium cum dignitate* of a midshipman's life on shore scarcely more than six weeks when, in September, 1775, the shrill bugle-blast of war sounded the knell of the piping tunes of peace; and I received the very

satisfactory intelligence that I was rated as master's mate on board the Orpheus frigate, of fifty-two guns, Captain Hudson, then fitting for sea with all possible despatch at Plymouth, and destined for the North American station. I had hoped to have been confirmed in my rank as a lieutenant; but, disappointed in this, I was too glad under present circumstances to get afloat on any terms.

The peace which had now lasted for nearly ten years was thus abruptly terminated by the outbreak into open rebellion of the North American colonies, which led on to their Declaration of Independence. I was never anything of a politician, and I must confess that at that period of my existence I troubled myself very little about the rights of the case, though even then I had a lurking idea that the colonists were not quite the ragamuffins some people would have had us suppose. They had no fancy, it appeared, to pay taxes without having a voice as to the employment of their money or interest in the objects on which it was expended. The British Government and the upper classes generally at home had always treated the inhabitants of the colonies as if they considered them an inferior race, and almost beyond the pale of civilisation. This conduct had naturally caused much discontent and ill feeling, and made the colonists more ready to resent and oppose any attempt to curtail their rights and privileges. What was called the Stamp Act met with the first organised opposition. The Government offices were in many places pulled down, while the Governor of New York and other promoters of the Act were burnt in effigy. Many influential colonists then bound themselves to make use of no articles on which duties had

been levied; while the people of Boston, proceeding a step farther, rather than pay the duty imposed by the British Government, threw into the sea the cargoes of several ships sent there by the East India Company laden with tea. This proceeding of the inhabitants of Boston induced the British Government to send General Gage, with an army, to take up his quarters there, with the intention of coercing them.

The belief that arbitrary Government was about to be established throughout the colonies made the people in every direction rise in arms. A rebel force, consisting of several thousand men, began to collect in the neighbourhood of the above-mentioned city. Petition after petition and remonstrance after remonstrance had been sent over to England in vain. The great Lord Chatham and the famous Mr Edmund Burke had pleaded the cause of the patriots with all the mighty eloquence they possessed; but without altering the resolution of the King or the Government. The celebrated Dr Franklin, already well known in England and America as a philosopher as well as a statesman, had come over to England to plead the cause of his countrymen, but had returned hopeless of effecting his object. What treatment, after this, could the colonists expect, if they yielded to the dictates of the mother-country?

The crisis at length arrived. There was at Concord, near Boston, a large magazine of military stores. General Gage sent a force to destroy it. The patriots collected in considerable numbers to oppose the British troops, and drove them back, with a heavy loss, into the city. This engagement, though little more than a skirmish, was called

the Battle of Lexington. If its results were to be taken into consideration, few battles have been of more importance. Brethren had shed each other's blood. Both parties were exasperated beyond control. The patriots felt their power; the royalists burned to wipe out the disgrace their arms had received. General Gage now regularly fortified Boston, which was in its turn besieged by the rebels. The whole continent was up in arms. Another successful enterprise had been undertaken by a leader of irregulars, who had seized the Ports of Ticonderoga and Crown Point, which gave the patriots the command of Lake George and the head of Lake Champlain, always recognised as the keys of Canada.

The patriots had by this time formed a regular Government. Each of the colonies had sent delegates to a general assembly held at Philadelphia, to which the name of the Congress was given. The Congress had authorised the formation of an army and had appointed as Commander-in-chief a gentleman of Virginia of good repute, Colonel George Washington. He was well known as a bold leader in frontier warfare against the Indians, and had also seen service against the French; besides this, he was a man of the highest moral qualities, which had gained him the respect of his fellow-colonists.

The event which had induced the Government to despatch my ship and others so hurriedly to the North American station was the battle of Bunker's Hill, the news of which had just been received. The engagement itself would not have been of much consequence had it not proved that the rebels were resolved to fight it out to the last. The Americans, besieging Boston, had fortified a height above

the city called Bunker’s Hill. General Gage resolved to dislodge them and to endeavour to raise the siege. Our troops, after much hard fighting and considerable loss, claimed the victory, having driven the enemy from the heights; but the Americans quickly rallied, and, many reinforcements coming up, the city was more closely invested than ever.

I frequently heard the subject of the rebellion discussed by my friends during my stay at home, and I cannot say that generally their sympathies were in favour of the colonists. A few took the view of the case entertained by Lord Chatham, Mr Burke, and a small band of enlightened men in advance of their age; but they mostly sided with the King and the Tories, and considered that the presumption of the colonists must be put down with a high hand. They little knew of what stuff the descendants of the Pilgrim Fathers—the sturdy Puritans, the dashing Cavaliers, the prim Quakers, and of many other classes whom persecution, poverty, or their crimes, had driven from Europe—were made, as I had full many opportunities afterwards of discovering. A just and judicious policy which at once would have granted all the rights the colonists demanded would have preserved the dignity of the mother-country and saved oceans of bloodshed; but it was ordained otherwise. The falsehood of traitors had taught our too credulous King to disbelieve in the loyalty as well as the courage of his trans-Atlantic subjects; and his ministers, in spite of all the warnings and the earnest entreaties of the colonists, persisted in forcing on them their obnoxious measures. I must again repeat, that at the time I allude to I did not see things in the serious

light in which I have described them. It would never do if midshipmen were to turn politicians; still, I could not help hearing what others said on the subject, and I had plenty of time to think of what I had heard. The general cry was —“Crush the audacious rascals! Put down the traitorous villains with a strong hand! What, venture to disobey the authority of their lawful master and sovereign, King George? They will soon learn reason at the point of the sword!” Such were the sentiments shared by most on board, as well as throughout the army and fleet.

Had it not been for this outbreak of war, I had proposed volunteering to sail with Captain Cook, who had just then returned from his famous voyage in the Resolution with Captain Furneaux, who commanded the Adventure; and it was reported that he was about to start on another and still more important expedition, which he actually did on the following year.

During my stay on shore I had gone over to see my sister Mary and my brother-in-law, Jack Hayfield. Jack was the same good-natured, thoughtless creature as before, and had done as little to better himself as he had to improve me. I made inquiries for Tommy Rockets, whom I found was still at home, so I set out to see him and his mother, not forgetting what I knew would prove a welcome present to the poor woman. I found her looking more careworn and poverty-stricken than ever. She did not know me when I entered her cottage, for I was much grown and thoroughly sun-burnt.

“Well, dame,” said I, “how goes the world with you?” She looked at me hard, surprised that a stranger should make such an inquiry; then, suddenly recognising me, she sprang

up, and in her joy was about, I believe, to kiss me as she would have done Tommy, when, recollecting herself, she took my hand, which I put out, and pressed it warmly. After I had told her somewhat of my adventures I asked her whether she would allow Tommy to accompany me the next time I went to sea. The poor woman turned pale at the question, but at last gasped out—

"If the lad wishes it, if it's for his good, I dare not say him nay—but, oh, Master Hurricane, you'll look after him—you'll befriend him—you'll protect him—he's my only child, and he's very simple and ignorant of the world's ways." I promised her that I would do my best for him, though I warned her he must trust to his own good conduct; and soon after Tommy came in. I saw at a glance that he had the stuff in him to make a sailor. He had grown into a stout, broad-shouldered lad, though still rather short, with fists big enough to fell an ox, a round, bullet head covered with curly hair, and a thoroughly honest, good-natured countenance, not wanting in intelligence, though a snubby nose, small eyes, and thickish lips formed his features. He had a strong struggle in his bosom, I saw, before he could make up his mind to tell his mother that he would accept my offer; but he could do little for their mutual support while he remained on shore, and I left him attempting to comfort her by telling her of the wealth with which he would ere long return to her.

As soon as I got my appointment I sent directions to Tom to join me at Plymouth, with a small sum to fit him out, being very certain that he would at once be taken on board. I had a wide round of farewell visits to pay to numerous friends who had been kind to me during my stay on shore.