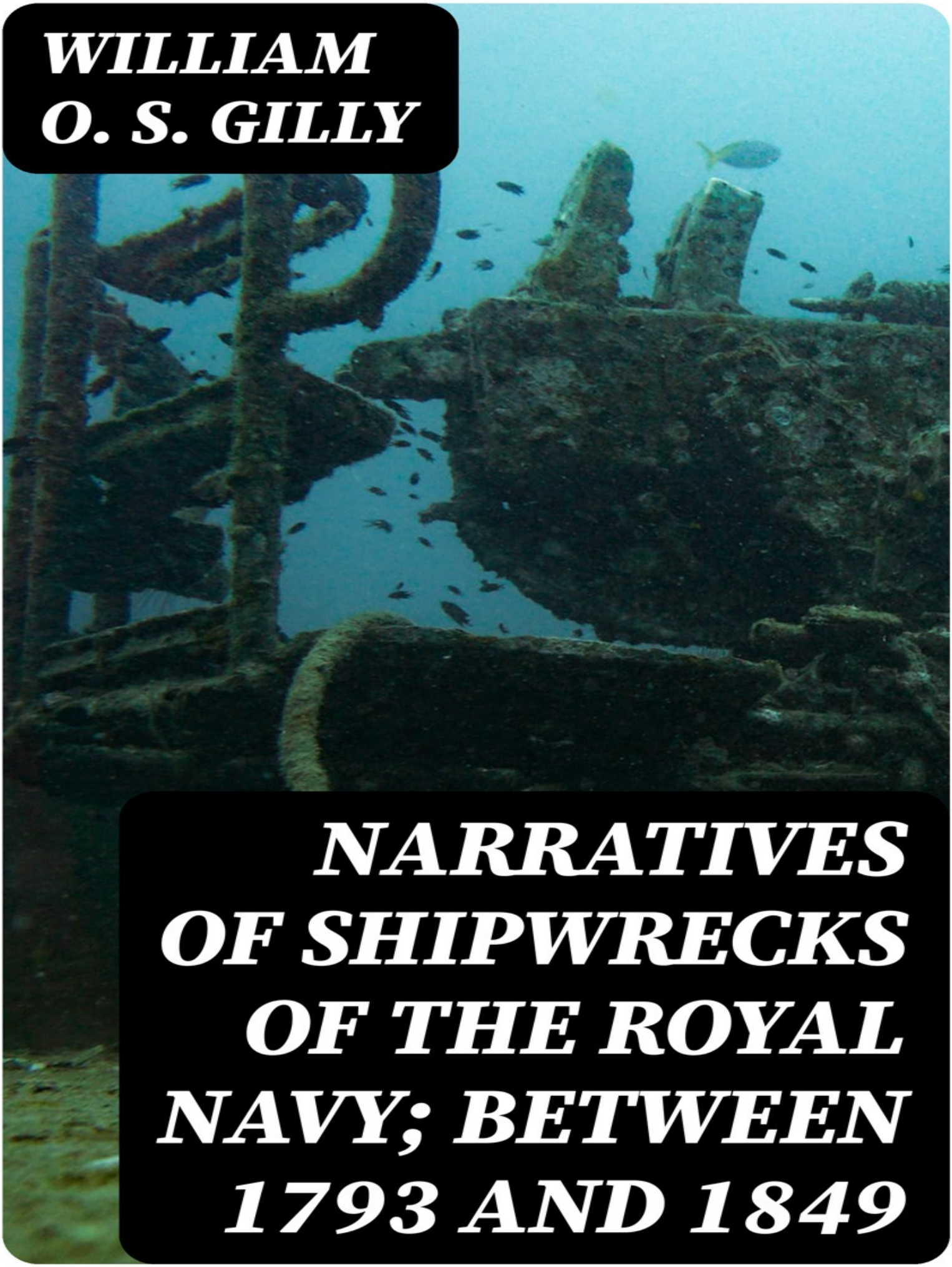

WILLIAM O. S. GILLY

NARRATIVES OF SHIPWRECKS OF THE ROYAL NAVY; BETWEEN 1793 AND 1849

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PREFACE.

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At the request of my son, the Author of this volume, I have undertaken to write the Preface, and to say a few words on the very peculiar and noble traits of character, which distinguish the British seaman on all trying occasions, and especially in the terrible hour of shipwreck.

Many circumstances have combined to make me take a warm interest in all that concerns the navy. In early life, having passed several months in a line-of-battle ship during the war with France, I was an eye-witness of scenes and events, which called forth some of those qualities that are illustrated in the following pages. For the restoration of my health, in the year 1811, I was advised to try the effects of sea air and a change of climate, and was glad to accept the opportunity offered me, by the captain of an eighty-gun ship, to take a cruise with him off the southern parts of the French coast.

On one occasion, in a severe tempest in the Bay of Biscay, a flash of lightning struck the ship and set her on fire. The calmness with which orders were given and obeyed, and the rapidity with which the fire was extinguished, without the least hurry or confusion, made a deep impression on me. This was afterwards increased by the conduct of the crew in a severe gale of wind, when it was necessary to navigate one of the narrow channels, by which the squadron that blockaded Rochelle and Rochfort was frequently endangered. The vessel had to pass between two rocks, so near that a biscuit could have been thrown

from the deck on either. An old quarter-master was at the wheel; the captain stood by to con and to direct his steering. At one fearful crisis, every blast threatened to shiver a sail, or to carry away a spar, and a single false movement of the helmsman, or the slightest want of steadiness or of obedience on the part of any man on duty, would have been fatal to the life of every one on board.

> As they drifted on their path
> There was silence deep as death,
> And the boldest held his breath
> For a time.

When the danger was over, the captain thanked the officers and men for their conduct, and gave a snuff-box with five guineas in it to the quarter-master, in admiration of his steady head and iron nerves.

I mention these incidents in my early experience as a sort of apology for a landsman's presumption, in venturing to write this Preface to a series of nautical details. In after years, the death of a dear brother, a lieutenant in the navy, who lost his life in a generous attempt to save a vessel from shipwreck on the coast of Sussex, moved me to a still deeper concern for those whose employment is 'in the great waters.'

My early observation of the hazards of a sailor's career, and my brother's sudden call to his last account, in the awful perils of a storm at sea, taught me to reflect with painful solemnity on the many thousand instances, in which our naval protectors are summoned in a moment, prepared or unprepared, to stand before the throne of the Eternal.

Often have I asked myself and others, Can nothing be done to elevate the hopes, and to place the fortitude of these men on a firmer foundation than that of mere animal courage, or the instinct of discipline? The present is an opportunity of pleading for the sailor which I should be sorry to lose, and of suggesting something, which may establish his good conduct on a basis more durable, and more certain, than even the well-known courage and discipline of a British tar.

I shall begin by noticing the extraordinary displays of self-possession, self-devotion, and endurance, which shed lustre on our naval service; and I will close my remarks with hints for the improvement of these noble qualities.

The intrepidity and mental resources of a brave man are more discernible in the hour of patient suffering, than in that of daring action: and the contents of this volume form a record of heroic doings and endurances, which exhibits the British seaman as a true specimen of the national character. Duty is his watchword, and the leading principle by which he is governed. Nelson knew the spirits he had to deal with, when he hoisted the memorable signal, 'England expects every man to do his duty.' He was well aware that the men who could patiently and calmly face the toil and danger of a blockading fleet, day and night, on the stormy waves of the Bay of Biscay, or on the lee shores of the Mediterranean, such as his fleet had had to encounter, wanted no other stimulus, in the presence of the enemy, than that which he so confidently applied. Napoleon found to his cost, on the field of Waterloo, that the word *Glory* had no longer any power to launch his battalions successfully against troops,

who had learnt in the British school of duty and obedience to confront death, not only in the impetuous battle-charge, but in the more trying season of long endurance in the Lines of Torres Vedras. Men who can wait, and bear and forbear, and remain steadily at their post under every provocation to leave it, are invincible opponents. The cool determination which resisted the onset, and withstood the furious rush of the French Guards, was part and parcel of the same character which made heroes of the comrades of Nelson. To obey implicitly, and to feel that no quality is superior to that of obedience,—to wait for your commander's word,—to keep order,—to preserve presence of mind,—to consider yourself one of many, who are to follow the same rule, and to act in unison with each other,—to regulate your movements according to the demands of the common safety,—to consider your honour to be as much at stake in submitting to a command to remain stationary and not to stir, as to dash forward,—these are the peculiarities, which constitute the substantial excellence of the national character; and the shipwrecks of the Royal Navy illustrate this national character even more than the battles of the Nile and of Trafalgar. The perils of a shipwreck are so much beyond those of a battle, that the loss of life, when the St. George, the Defence, and the Hero, were wrecked in the North Seas, in 1811, was far greater than that on the part of the English in any naval action of late years. In order to place the qualities of obedience and endurance—so characteristic of the British seaman—in the strongest light, and to show by contrast that the possession of them is the greatest security in danger, whilst the want of them ensures destruction, I

commend the following statement to the attention of all who shall read this volume.

In the year 1816 two stately vessels were sailing on the ocean, in all the pride of perfect equipment and of glorious enterprise. The one was an English frigate, the Alceste, having on board our ambassador to China; the other was a French frigate, the Medusa, taking out the suite of a governor for one of the colonies of France on the coast of Africa. The importance of the mission on which each ship was despatched, and the value of the freight, would seem to assure us that the Alceste and the Medusa were officered and manned by the best crews that could be selected. Two nations, rivals in science and civilization, who had lately been contending for the empire of the world, and in the course of that contest had exhibited the most heroic examples of promptitude and courage, were nautically represented, we may suppose, by the elite who walked the decks of the Alceste and the Medusa. If any calamity should happen to either, it could not be attributed to a failure of that brilliant gallantry, which the English and French had equally displayed on the most trying occasions.

But a calamity of the most fearful nature did befal both, out of which the Alceste's crew were delivered with life and honour untouched, when that of the Medusa sank under a catastrophe, which has become a proverb and a bye-word to mariners. Both ships were wrecked. For an account of the good conduct, of the calm and resolute endurance, and of the admirable discipline to which, under Providence, the preservation of the crew of the Alceste is to be attributed, see pages 204-226 of this volume. A total relaxation of

discipline, an absence of all order, precaution, and presence of mind, and a contemptible disregard of everything and of everybody but self, in the hour of common danger, filled up the full measure of horrors poured out upon the guilty crew of the Medusa. She struck on a sand-bank under circumstances which admitted of the hope of saving all on board. The shore was at no great distance, and the weather was not so boisterous as to threaten the speedy destruction of the ship when the accident first happened.

There were six boats of different dimensions available to take off a portion of the passengers and crew: there was time and there was opportunity for the construction of a raft to receive the remainder. But the scene of confusion began among officers and men at the crisis, when an ordinary exercise of forethought and composure would have been the preservation of all. Every man was left to shift for himself, and every man did shift for himself, in that selfish or bewildered manner which increased the general disaster. The captain was not among the last, but among the first to scramble into a boat; and the boats pushed off from the sides of the frigate, before they had taken in as many as each was capable of holding. Reproaches, recrimination, and scuffling took the place of order and of the word of command, both in the ship and in the boats, when tranquillity and order were indispensable for the common safety.

When the raft had received the miserable remnant, one hundred and fifty in number, for whom the boats had no room, or would make no room, it was found, when it was too late to correct the evil, that this last refuge of a despairing

and disorderly multitude had been put together with so little care and skill, and was so ill provided with necessaries, that the planking was insecure; there was not space enough for protection from the waves, and charts, instruments, spars, sails, and stores were all deficient. A few casks of wine and some biscuits, enough for a single meal only, were all the provision made for their sustenance. The rush and scramble from the wreck had been accomplished with so little attention to discipline, that the raft had not a single naval officer to take charge of her. At first, the boats took the raft in tow, but in a short time, though the sea was calm and the coast was known to be within fifteen leagues, the boats cast off the tow-lines: and in not one of the six was there a sufficient sense of duty, or of humanity left, to induce the crew to remain by the floating planks—the forlorn hope of one hundred and fifty of their comrades and fellow-countrymen! Nay, it is related by the narrators of the wreck of the Medusa, that the atrocious cry resounded from one boat to another, '*Nous les abandonnons*!'—'we leave them to their fate,'—until one by one all the tow-lines were cast off. During the long interval of seventeen days, the raft struggled with the waves. A small pocket compass was the only guide of the unhappy men, who lost even this in one of the reckless quarrels, which ensued every hour for a better place on the raft or a morsel of biscuit. On the first night twelve men were jammed between the timbers, and died under the agonies of crushed and mangled limbs. On the second night more were drowned, and some were smothered by the pressure towards the centre of the raft. Common suffering, instead of softening, hardened the

hearts of the survivors against each other. Some of them drank wine till they were in a frenzy of intoxication, and attempted to cut the ropes which kept the raft together. A general fight ensued, many were killed, and many were cast into the sea during the struggle; and thus perished from sixty to sixty-five. On the third day portions of the bodies of the dead were devoured by some of the survivors. On the fourth night another quarrel and another fight, with more bloodshed, broke out. On the fifth morning, thirty only out of the one hundred and fifty were alive. Two of these were flung to the waves for stealing wine: a boy died, and twenty-seven remained, not to comfort and to assist each other, but to hold a council of destruction, and to determine who should be victims for the preservation of the rest. At this hideous council twelve were pronounced too weak to outlive much more suffering, and that they might not needlessly consume any part of the remaining stock of provisions, such as it was, (flying fish mixed with human flesh.) these twelve helpless wretches were deliberately thrown into the sea. The *fifteen*, who thus provided for their own safety by the sacrifice of their weaker comrades, were rescued on the seventeenth day after the wreck by a brig, sent out in quest of the wreck of the Medusa by the six boats, which reached the shore in safety, and which might have been the means of saving all on the raft, had not the crews been totally lost to every sentiment of generosity and humanity, when they cast off the tow-lines.

In fact, from the very first of the calamity which befel the Medusa, discipline, presence of mind, and every generous feeling, were at an end: and the abandonment of the ship

and of the raft, the terrible loss of Life, the cannibalism, the cruelty, the sufferings, and all the disgraceful and inhuman proceedings, which have branded the modern Medusa with a name of infamy worse than that of the Gorgon,—the monster after which she was called,—originated in the want of that order and prompt obedience, which the pages of this volume are intended to record, to the honour of British seamen.

In the history of no less than forty shipwrecks narrated in this memorial of naval heroism,—of passive heroism, the most difficult to be exercised of all sorts of heroism,—there are very few instances of misconduct, and none resembling that on board the Medusa.

This contrast is marked and stated, not in an invidious spirit towards the French, but because there is no example on record, which furnishes such a comparison between the safety which depends on cool and orderly behaviour in the season of peril, and the terrible catastrophe which is hastened and aggravated by want of firmness, and confusion.

'It is impossible,' said a writer in the *Quarterly Review*, of October, 1817, 'not to be struck with the extraordinary difference of conduct in the officers and crew of the Medusa and the Alceste, wrecked nearly about the same time. In the one case, all the people were kept together in a perfect state of discipline and subordination, and brought safely home from the opposite side of the globe; in the other, every one seems to have been left to shift for himself, and the greater part perished in the horrible way we have seen.'[1]

I have brought the comparison between the two wrecks again under notice to show, that as certainly as discipline and good order tend to insure safety on perilous occasions, so, inevitably, do confusion and want of discipline lead to destruction. In the one case, intrepidity and obedience prompted expedients and resources: in the other case, consternation was followed by despair, and despair aggravated the catastrophe with tenfold horrors.

It is not to be concealed, that occasional instances of insubordination and pusillanimity have occurred in the British navy. Some such appear in this narrative, and they invariably have produced their own punishment, by leading always to disaster, and often to death; and they serve as beacons to point out the fatal consequences of misconduct, under circumstances either of drunkenness, disobedience, panic, selfishness, or confusion.

The selfish cowardice, noticed in page 94, on the part of the men in charge of the jolly-boat of the Athenienne, and of some of the crew of the launch of the Boreas, (see p. 136,) and the tumult, intoxication, and desertion of the majority of the crew of the Penelope, which were followed by the prolonged sufferings and painful deaths of the culprits, (see pp. 200-204,) are but a few dark spots in the shipwrecks of the Royal Navy, to set off by contrast the many bright pages, which describe innumerable traits of character that do honour to human nature.

As a direction to some of these noble traits, every one of which will make the reader warm to the name of a British sailor: and, if he be one himself, will bring the blood from his heart to his face in a glow of emulation and honest pride,—I

ask him to turn for examples of perfect discipline to pages 13, 23, 63, 70, 71, 75, 110, 173, 188, 194, 216, 223, 229, 231, 268, 269, 278, 279, 280. Here he will behold the portraits of men on the brink of destruction, steady, 'as if they were moving from one ship to another in any of the Queen's ports,' and unmoved by images of death under the most appalling forms; and he will say, 'Lo! these are triumphs of order and subordination, and examples of such resolute defiance of the terrors of the last enemy, when covered with the shadow of death, that no exploits in battle can exhibit fortitude that will compare with them.'

For instances of generous thought for others, of self-devotion and of disregard of personal safety, I refer the reader to pages 58, 59, 67, 68, 69, 96, 128, 129, 169, 186, 190, 194, 231, 234, 269, 270.

In the long list of heroes, which these references to examples of indomitable courage and unhesitating self-devotion will unfold, it is almost wrong to mark out one more than another for observation, and yet the following stand so prominently forward in the front rank of heroism, that it is impossible to refrain from noticing them. Captain Lydiard sacrificed his life in his desperate endeavour to rescue a boy from the wreck of the Anson, (pp. 128, 129.) Captain Temple, of the Crescent, and more than two hundred of his crew, displayed a noble disregard of themselves, when they permitted the jolly-boat, their own last hope of escape, to take off as many as it would hold, and leave them to perish. There was no rushing, no struggling, to get away from the sinking ship, but with orderly care they helped the boat to push off, bade her God

speed, and calmly waited their fate, (p. 153.) The resolution of Captain Bertram, of the Persian, to brave the danger of taking some men off a raft into his over-crowded gig, was generously followed by the crews of the other boats, who threw their clothing and provisions overboard to make room for the additional weight, (p. 191.)

I may refer also to the magnanimous contest between Captain Baker, of the Drake, and his officers and men, each insisting on being the last to make his way from the ship to a rock (p. 231), and which ended in Captain Baker refusing to stir until he had seen every man clear of the wreck. A second struggle for precedency in glorious self-devotion took place, when the same commander declared, that all his crew should pass from the rock to the mainland, by help of a line, before he himself would consult his own safety, (p. 234.) The rope broke, and the last means of communication between the rock and the shore was severed, while the captain of the Drake and three of his companions were waiting their turn to escape. They met their fate with intrepid composure, (p. 235.) Lieutenant Smith, of the Magpie, offered another memorable example, when his schooner was upset in a squall, and he took to his boat with seven men. The boat capsized, and while the struggling crew were endeavouring to right her, they were attacked by sharks. The lieutenant himself had both his legs bitten off; but when his body was convulsed with agony, his mind retained and exercised all its energies, and his last words were expressive of dying consideration for others. 'Tell the admiral, if you survive,' said he, to a lad named Wilson, 'that my men have done their duty, and that no blame is

attached to them. I have but one favour to ask, and that is, that he will promote Meldrum to be a gunner,' (p. 270.) And richly did Meldrum deserve the distinction. When all in the boat had perished but himself and another, a brig hove in sight, but did not seem to notice the speck on the ocean. Meldrum sprang overboard, and swam towards the ship, and was thus the means of saving his companion's life as well as his own.

In a volume like this, 'the dangers of the seas' come before the reader in such rapid succession, that he has scarcely time to think of the many other awful perils and sufferings, besides those of wind and storm, which put the mariner's fortitude to the test. The narratives in pages 2, 3, 9, 36, 69, 70, 113, 115, present to view the horrors of a ship on fire.

In pages 12, 169, 171, 196, 226, 242, we learn something of the terrible consequences of being exposed to fogs and mist, ice and snow. In page 27, we have a vivid picture of a combination of these terrors; and in pages 217, 268, the most appalling of all the dangers a sailor has to encounter is brought in view.

We will hope that the rigours and perils of the blockade system, which occasioned so fearful a loss of life at different periods of the late war, but especially in the disastrous year 1811, are at end for ever. From page 154 to 159, and from 168 to 186, the accounts of the loss of life in the Baltic and North Seas alone occur in fearful succession; and the magnanimity with which hundreds, nay, thousands of our bravest officers and men met death on that most perilous of all services, has rendered the names of British blockading

ships memorable in the annals of hardship, hardihood, and suffering. Many invaluable lives perished from the inclemency of the weather; men were frozen to death at their posts. It is recorded of one devoted officer, Lieutenant Topping, that rushing on deck in anxiety for his ship, without giving himself time to put on his clothes, 'in fifteen minutes he fell upon the deck a corpse, stricken by the piercing blast and driving snow,' (p. 169.)

In page 174, we read of the bodies of the dead, victims to the cold and tempest, piled up by the survivors in rows one above another, on the deck of the St. George, to serve as a shelter against the violence of the waves and weather. 'In the fourth row lay the bodies of the Admiral and his friend Captain Guion;' and out of a crew of 750, seven only were saved.

The Defence, the consort of the St. George, was cast away in the same storm: out of her complement of 600, six was the small remnant of survivors. This ship might probably have escaped, but her gallant captain (Atkins) said, 'I will never desert my admiral in the hour of danger and distress,' (p. 175.)

An instance of obedience and discipline, worthy of particular mention, occurred before the St. George went down. A few men asked leave to attempt to reach the shore in the yawl. Permission was at first granted, but afterwards withdrawn, and the men returned to their posts without a murmur. 'As if Providence had rewarded their implicit obedience and reliance upon their officers,' says the narrative (p. 173), 'two of these men were of the few (seven) that were saved.'

The question now arises, to what are we to attribute the extraordinary display of cool determination manifested by British seamen, in such trials of nerve as are described in the following pages? The series of shipwrecks extends from 1793 to 1847, a period of fifty-four years; and tragic scenes are described, many of them far exceeding the imaginary terrors of fiction, and all of them equal in horror to anything that the Drama, Romance, or Poetry has attempted to delineate.

We rise from the perusal with scarcely any other impression upon our minds than that of wonder and admiration, at the extraordinary self-command exercised when death was staring every man in the face. Doubtless there are some instances of misbehaviour, and of lack of firmness: it could not be otherwise. 'When the stormy wind ariseth, and they are carried up to the heaven and down again to the deep, their soul melteth because of their trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit's end.' But such examples are so few in the British navy, that we have little on this score wherewith to reproach our seamen.

To what, then, are we to attribute the manly bearing of British seamen, when the planks of their ship tremble under their feet, and the waves are yawning to swallow them up!

First.—To the early training which almost all our youth receive, in one way or other. It begins at school. The first principles of generosity, as of obedience and order, are taught in our schools: whether in the national and parochial schools, or at Westminster, Eton, and Harrow, and other schools of a higher order, where in his very games the boy

learns to exercise presence of mind, daring, and self-command. In our streets and play-grounds, where the humblest or the proudest are at their sports, the germ of the manly spirit is discernible in emulous contention as to who shall bear and forbear, remain at his post, give and take, with most patience and good-humour.

Foreigners have allowed that there is nothing like an English school to discipline a lad for the high places, or rough places, of after-life; and that our mixed schools of every grade are the seminaries, where one learns to lead, and another to follow, in the path of honour and duty.

Secondly.—To the habit which prevails so universally in this country, of giving place to those to whom deference is due, and of looking up to those, who are above us in station, with ungrudging respect and confidence. This goes with the man into all the walks of life. Some attribute it to the aristocratic feeling, which is said to be stronger in England than elsewhere: but it maybe more justly traced to that good sense, which is at work in all orders of our people, and which understands when to obey and to hearken. In the seaman it displays itself in a predisposition to regard his officer as one worthy of his confidence, and whom it is his safety as well as duty to obey in the hour of danger. And this confidence is justified by the almost unfailing manner, in which the officer shows himself deserving of the trust reposed in him, and takes the lead in the very front of danger, and exhibits in moments of doubt and difficulty all the resources of a cool and collected mind, at the very juncture when life and death depend upon his composure.

The leadership to which a British tar is accustomed, and which ever responds to his own confiding spirit, is one of the primary causes of his endurance and daring. His officer is the first to advance, the foremost to encounter, the last to hesitate, and the most willing to take more than his share of danger and of suffering; and this inspires the men with an emulation to do likewise.

Conduct such as that displayed by the captains and officers of the Queen Charlotte (pp. 37 and 41), of the Hindostan (p. 71), of the Athenienne (p. 96), of the Anson (p. 128), of the Dædalus (p. 189), could not fail of producing a sort of instinctive effect upon a ship's crew. Under the command of officers who never flinch from their duty, who share their last biscuit with the lowest cabin-boy, and who will not move from the vessel when it is sinking under them, until every other man has taken his seat in the boat, or planted his foot on the raft that is to carry him from the wreck, where can be the quailing heart or the unready hand?

Thirdly.—The blockading service has had much to do in training our seamen for passive heroism and enduring fortitude. During the long war with France, it was a service wherein all those qualities were called into action, which are of most value in sudden emergencies. Vigilance, promptitude, patience, and endurance, were tried to the utmost in the course of those wintry months, and tempestuous seasons, when single ships, squadrons, and fleets were cruising off the enemy's coast, and every man on board was perpetually exposed to something that put his temper or his nerves to the test. Then was the time to learn

when to keep a sharp look-out, to be on the alert in handling the gear of a vessel, to respond to the word of command at the instant, to do things at the right point of time, to hold life at a moment's purchase, and to stare death in the face without flinching. It was a hard and rigorous school; but if proficiency in readiness and fortitude was to be attained anywhere, it was in the blockading service, and there the heart of oak was tried, and the seaman was trained for the exercise of that discipline, of which this Record of Naval Shipwrecks presents so complete a picture.

But we will hope that the principal cause, to which we may ascribe the good conduct of our sailors in the trying hour, when there seems to be a span only between life and death, is the religious feeling which they bring with them to their ship from their homes, whether from the cabin on the sea-shore, or the cottage on the hill-side. The scene described in page 115, and the anecdote of the poor boy, in whose hand was found an open Bible when his corpse was cast on shore, show the power of religious feeling in the soul of the sailor. It may be a very imperfect feeling, but the sailor has it; and even in its imperfection it has a strong hold on his mind. From the first outbreak of the Revolution; the French sailor entered the service of his country as a volunteer or a conscript, embued with infidel notions: or to say the least, with the religious indifference which had become so common in France. Not so the English sailor. He was not one of the fools to say in his heart. 'There is no God!' It is not easy to define the nature of that awe which fills the mind of a religions mariner; but most certainly those 'who see the works of the Lord and his wonders in the deep,'

face danger more steadily, under the solemn belief that there is a ruling power to control the waters, and to say to the winds, 'Peace! be still.' They are predisposed to 'cry unto the Lord in their trouble,' and to implore Him to 'make the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof may be still:' and this fear of God, which is before their eyes, has its influence in making them willing to adopt every expedient proposed to them by their officers for their common safety. Under this higher impulse, the spirit of obedience works in them more confidingly; and humbled before the Supreme Power, they are prepared to yield submission to every intellect superior to their own. Now if there be a feeling of this kind already at work for good in the minds of our seamen, it is of the utmost importance to strengthen it,[2] to give it a sure direction, and to make it run in a deeper and a broader channel, by all the appliances of instruction and education.

To the credit of the official Boards, under whose administrative authority provision is made for the religious and educational improvement of men and boys in the Navy, very much has been done lately to secure this great object. Within my own memory few seamen could read, still fewer could write, but now the majority of them can do both, and they respond largely to the instruction they receive, by their intelligence and good conduct. There is no more imposing sight than that of the crew of a man-of-war, when assembled for divine service; and if the chaplain be a clergyman, who applies himself zealously to his duties, he has a congregation before him, who show by their attentive looks, that they are under the power of religious impressions. Almost all ships commanded by post-captains

have chaplains and naval instructors, and where there is no chaplain, the commanding officer is expected to read prayers on Sundays. In port the crews of the Queen's ships have the opportunity of observing the sacred day, either on board the flag-ship, the ordinary, or in the dockyard chapel. I believe every ship in the navy is provided with a library; and first, second, third, fourth, and fifth-rates have schoolmasters. To men and boys desirous of entering the service, the preference is given to those who can read and write; and an admirable regulation has lately been adopted, which will contribute further to advance our navy in the intellectual scale. Boys are entered as naval apprentices, to the number of one hundred each, at Devonport, Portsmouth, Sheerness, and Cork. They remain for one year on board the flag-ship, under a systematic course of education, and are then drafted into sea-going ships. The happy effects produced by mental cultivation were felt in an especial degree, when the Discovery ships, under Captain, now Sir Edward Parry, were blocked up with ice, and had to pass so many dismal days and nights in the Polar Sea. A school was established both in the Hecla and Fury, under able superintendence; and men, whose time would have hung heavily during their icy imprisonment, were kept in good humour and cheerfulness by the intellectual occupations in which they were engaged. Captain Parry's remarks in attestation of the moral effect produced by this means, and on the uninterrupted good order which prevailed among his men, are cited in page 243 of this work.

It would add greatly to the intellectual and spiritual improvement of our seamen, if a Chaplain-general were

appointed to take the oversight of the religious instruction, and an *Examiner* to direct the secular instruction, of the Navy. The former should exercise authority similar to that of an archdeacon, and the functions of the latter should resemble those of her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools. The impulse given to parochial education by the latter is beyond all calculation; and the difference of ecclesiastical discipline in a diocese, where there are active archdeacons and where there are not, is a matter of well ascertained fact.

The duties of a chaplain-general[3] should be to visit the naval posts, and to go on board the Queen's ships, (especially before they are despatched on foreign service,) for the purpose of reporting and advising. He should look out for and recommend competent chaplains,—consult with admirals and captains on the best mode of securing the regular performance of the sacred offices,—make inquiry into the state of the ship-libraries, keep them well supplied with religious books and tracts, and direct observation generally to the spiritual wants of ships and ports. He would thus be of infinite use in making religion an object of more and more thoughtfulness to those, who take an interest in the comfort and good conduct of the Navy: two things which always go together.

If an Inspector of all the naval schools and schoolmasters were appointed (Professor Mosely has now the inspection of the Dockyard Schools,) he should consider it to be part of his office to look to the libraries, and to recommend elementary books. His periodical examinations would be likely to stir up the same spirit of emulation on board ship, which has been the result in our towns and villages, where

the schools are visited by persons appointed by the Committee of Privy Council on Education. I am satisfied with throwing out these suggestions without dwelling further upon them, under the persuasion that every practical hint of the kind will be well considered, and acted upon (if it commend itself to their judgment,) by those who preside over naval affairs, and who have at heart the mental improvement of our seamen.

I have another suggestion to make, which is meant not for those only, who are officially interested in the condition of the navy, but for all who love and value it. The merchant service, the fisheries, and the coasting trade are the nurseries of the navy. Every shipmate and every boatman on the sea and on the river ought, therefore, to come in for a share of our sympathy, because he belongs to a class to which the Queen's ships must look for a supply of men. But none are exposed to more trials than they, and especially in the larger ports. Many of them come home from a voyage of danger and deprivation, full of excitement, and become victims of plunder and temptation; and the man who last week was impressed, by the perils of the tempest, with the terrors of the Lord, and was inclined to fear God and to serve him, is waylaid by unfeeling wretches, who first entice him into scenes of profligacy and blasphemy, and then cast him off, robbed of his money, seared in his conscience, and in a miserable condition of soul and body. Many benevolent efforts have been made to protect and fortify some of those who are thus beset, and to reclaim such as are not utterly lost; and associations have been formed for the purpose of affording temporary relief and instruction to seamen, who

might otherwise become outcasts, and perish in want and ignorance. I allude to such institutions as the 'Sailor's Home,' or 'Destitute Sailor's Asylum,' in London, for the reception of seamen who have squandered or have been despoiled of their earnings after their return from a foreign voyage, or who are disabled for employment by illness, age, or accident. There is also. 'The Floating Chapel,' opened to invite and enable mariners to avail themselves of the opportunity of attending Divine service, (under the Thames Church Missionary Society,) which moves from one thickly populated sailors' locality to another. The establishment of a district church and minister in a large sea-port parish, like that of St. Mary's, Devonport, to relieve the necessities of a district crowded with mariners, and rife with all the snares and temptations which entrap a sailor, and endanger his bodily and spiritual safety, is another undertaking worthy of notice.

Institutions like these must depend principally on public and voluntary support. There is much need for them in all our principal sea-ports; for who require them more than the men who are perpetually exposed to the double shipwreck of body and soul? The members of these and similar institutions are instrumental in preserving some from ruin—in restoring others to character and employment, to usefulness, to self-estimation, and to religious feeling; and in making both our merchant and naval service an example to the world of subordination and patient endurance.

The promoters of these institutions are not satisfied with providing a remedy for the evil which exists, but they do much to prevent the ills of irreligion and immorality, by

supplying seamen with instructive and devotional books, and by employing agents to go among them and to tell them where the offices of religion are performed. The countenance which admirals and captains, prelates and lords of the Admiralty, have given to them, are the best warrant for their necessity and usefulness. A short notice of 'The Swan' and its Tender, will not be thought out of place in this volume.

'The Swan' is a large cutter of about 140 tons. On her bows she bears an inscription which describes her as 'The Thames Church.' She conveys a clergyman and a floating sanctuary from one pool in the river to another, to carry the Word of God to those who do not seek for it themselves. Hers is a missionary voyage. She is freighted with Bibles and Testaments and Prayer-books, and religious tracts. She runs alongside colliers, outward-bound vessels, and emigrant ships especially, that the services, the consolation, and the instruction of the Church may be offered as a parting gift to those, who are taking a last leave of their native shores, and are saying farewell to weeping friends and kindred.

There is also a Tender, called 'The Little Thames Church,' which sails lower down the river, as occasion may require, fraught on the same holy errand. One extract from the last Report of the 'Thames Church Mission Society,' which is patronized by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishops of London and Winchester, will suffice to explain the nature of her mission.

'Sunday, February 24, Long Reach. Morning service. The congregation was 128 seamen. Afternoon, Bible class, 62.

Evening service, 132,—total 322. One of the captains observed that there was a great change for the better, which he was rejoiced to see: 'For,' said he, 'about four years ago I attended a service, and found that I was the only sailor that had come from the fleet; but this morning so crowded was the church, that I had some difficulty in getting a seat.''

It is by means such as these, which as a Christian nation we are bound to provide, that we might hope, not only to keep alive, but to improve the noble spirit which distinguishes the British Navy.

The discipline which now prevails would be established on the highest principle of obedience and action. The endurance, which now bears suffering with fortitude, would learn to submit to severer trials under the sanction of a higher teaching, and patience would have her perfect work. The courage and steadiness of a brave crew would receive an accession of energy from the hope that is set before them. The allegiance, which they owe to their Sovereign, would be strengthened by a sense of the more sacred duty which they owe to Him, by whom kings reign and rulers govern: and committing themselves habitually to the protection of Providence, they would face deprivation, fatigue, and danger with unshaken composure.—with a hand for any toil, and a heart for any fate.

WILLIAM STEPHEN GILLY.

Durham, Oct 28, 1850.

Footnote

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[1] See also an elaborate article on the same subject in the *Edinburgh Review*, September, 1818. No. 60.

[2] In September, 1849, five colliers were wrecked off the Gunfleet Sands. The crews were saved, and the following extract from the *Ipswich Express*, copied into the *Times* of the 12th of December, contains a proof of the strong hold which religious awe has on the minds of seamen:—'Yesterday (Monday) afternoon, the united crews, amounting to about thirty men, had a free passage to Ipswich by the River Queen. The scene on board was of the most extraordinary and affecting description. The rough, weather-beaten seamen, who had gone through the perils of that night with undaunted courage, were, in the review of it, completely overwhelmed with gratitude to God for His mercy in granting them deliverance. For the most part they were in the fore cabin of the steamer, and at one time all would be on their knees in devout prayer and thanksgiving to God, then a suitable hymn would be read, and the voices of those who had been saved from the yawning ocean would presently sound it forth in solemn thanks to God. From port to port they were entirely occupied in these devotional exercises, and the effect of them, and indeed the whole scene, upon several hardy sons of ocean who were on board, will never be forgotten.'

[3] His duties would be similar to those described in the following letter from a clergyman in one of the colonies, though more general in their extent:—'My own duties are pretty much those you would suppose. I visit the emigrant ships *immediately* on their coming into port, and am often on board before they drop anchor. I then inquire for the members of the Church of England, and for such others as may require the services of a Church of England clergyman; and having assembled them together, inquire as to the occurrences on the voyage, whether they have had schools, and a regular Sunday or daily service, whether there are children to be baptized, and a thousand other matters of a like nature, which it would be but tiring you to detail. We then appoint an hour for holding a thanksgiving service for their preservation from the perils of the sea, and their safe arrival in the colony. This service consists in the proper service for the day, with a short sermon suited to the occasion.'