FREDERICK MARRYAT

THE KING'S OWN

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Chapter One.

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However boldly their warm blood was spilt,
Their life was shame, their epitaph was guilt;
And this they knew and felt, at least the one,
The leader of the hand he had undone—
Who, born for better things, had madly set
His life upon a cast, which linger’d yet.
Byron.

There is perhaps no event in the annals of our history which excited more alarm at the time of its occurrence, or has since been the subject of more general interest, than the Mutiny at the Nore, in the year 1797. Forty thousand men, to whom the nation looked for defence from its surrounding enemies, and in steadfast reliance upon whose bravery it lay down every night in tranquillity,—men who had dared everything for their king and country, and in whose breasts patriotism, although suppressed for the time, could never be extinguished,—irritated by ungrateful neglect on the one hand, and by seditious advisers on the other, turned the guns which they had so often manned in defence of the English flag against their own countrymen and their own home, and, with all the acrimony of feeling ever attending family quarrels, seemed determined to sacrifice the nation and themselves, rather than listen to the dictates of reason and of conscience.

Doubtless there is a point at which endurance of oppression ceases to be a virtue, and rebellion can no longer be considered as a crime; but it is a dangerous and intricate problem, the solution of which had better not be attempted. It must, however, be acknowledged, that the seamen, on the occasion of the first mutiny, had just grounds of complaint, and that they did not proceed to acts of violence until repeated and humble remonstrance had been made in vain.

Whether we act in a body or individually, such is the infirmity and selfishness of human nature, that we often surrender to importunity that which we refuse to the dictates of gratitude,—yielding for our own comfort, to the demands of turbulence, while quiet unpretending merit is overlooked and oppressed, until, roused by neglect, it demands, as a right, what policy alone should have granted as a favour.

Such was the behaviour, on the part of government, which produced the mutiny at the Nore.

What mechanism is more complex than the mind of man? And as, in all machinery, there are wheels and springs of action not apparent without close examination of the interior, so pride, ambition, avarice, love, play alternately or conjointly upon the human mind, which, under their influence, is whirled round like the weathercock in the hurricane, only pointing for a short time in one direction, but for that time steadfastly. How difficult, then, to analyse the motives and inducements which actuated the several ringleaders in this dreadful crisis!

Let us, therefore, confine ourselves to what we do really know to have been the origin of discontent in one of these men, whose unfortunate career is intimately connected with this history.

Edward Peters was a man of talent and education. He had entered on board the — in a fit of desperation, to obtain the bounty for a present support, and his pay as a future provision for his wife, and an only child, the fruit of a hasty and unfortunate marriage. He was soon distinguished as a person of superior attainments; and instead of being employed, as a landsman usually is, in the afterguard, or waist, of the ship, he was placed under the orders of the purser and captain’s clerk as an amanuensis. In this capacity he remained two or three years, approved of and treated with unusual respect by the officers, for his gentlemanlike appearance and behaviour: but unfortunately a theft had been committed,—a watch, of trifling value, had been purloined from the purser’s cabin; and, as he was the only person, with the exception of the servant, who had free ingress and egress, suspicion fell upon him—the more so as, after every search that could be made had proved ineffectual, it was supposed that the purloined property had been sent on shore to be disposed of by his wife, who, with his child, had frequently been permitted to visit him on board.

Summoned on the quarter-deck—cross-examined, and harshly interrogated—called a scoundrel by the captain before conviction,—the proud blood mantled in the cheeks of one who, at that period, was incapable of crime. The blush of virtuous indignation was construed into

presumptive evidence of guilt. The captain,—a superficial, presuming, pompous, yet cowardly creature, whose conduct assisted in no small degree to excite the mutiny on board of his own ship,—declared himself quite convinced of Peters's guilt, because he blushed at the bare idea of being suspected; and punishment ensued, with all the degradation allotted to an offence which is never forgiven on board of a man-of-war.

There is, perhaps, no crime that is attended with such serious consequences on board a ship as theft. A succession of thefts undiscovered will disintegrate a ship's company, break up the messes, destroy all confidence and harmony, and occasion those who have been the dearest friends to become the greatest enemies: for whom can a person suspect, when he has lost his property, in so confined a space, but those who were acquainted with its being in his possession, and with the place in which it was deposited?—and who are these but his own messmates, or those in whom he most confided? After positive conviction, no punishment can be too severe for a crime that produces such mischief; but to degrade a man by corporal punishment, to ruin his character, and render him an object of abhorrence and contempt, in the absence of even bare presumptive evidence, was an act of cruelty and injustice, which could excite but one feeling; and, from that day, the man who would have gloried in dying for his country, became a discontented, gloomy, and dangerous subject.

The above effect would have been produced in any man; but to Peters, whose previous history we have yet to narrate, death itself would have been preferable. His heart

did not break, but it swelled with contending passions, till it was burst and riven with wounds never to be cicatrised. Suffering under the most painful burthen that can oppress a man who values reputation, writhing with the injustice of accusation when innocent, of conviction without proof, and of punishment unmerited, it is not to be wondered at that Peters took the earliest opportunity of deserting from the ship.

There is a particular feeling pervading animal nature, from which man himself is not exempt. Indeed, with all his boasted reason, man still inherits too many of the propensities of the brute creation. I refer to that disposition which not only inclines us to feel satisfaction at finding we have companions in misfortune, but too often stimulates us to increase the number by our own exertions. From the stupendous elephant, down to the smallest of the feathered tribe, all will act as a decoy to their own species, when in captivity themselves; and, in all compulsory service, which may be considered a species of captivity, man proves that he is imbued with the same propensity. Seamen that have been pressed themselves into the navy, are invariably the most active in pressing others; and both soldiers and sailors have a secret pleasure in recapturing a deserter, even at the very time when they are watching an opportunity to desert themselves.

The bonds of friendship seem destroyed when this powerful and brutal feeling is called into action; and, as has frequently occurred in the service, before and since, the man who was selected by Peters as his most intimate friend, the man with whom he had consulted, and to whom he had

confided his plans for desertion, gave information of the retreat of his wife and child, from which place Peters was not likely to be very distant; and thus, with the assistance of this, his dearest friend, the master-at-arms and party in quest of him succeeded in his capture.

It so happened, that on the very day on which Peters was brought on board and put into irons, the purser's servant was discovered to have in his possession the watch that had been lost. Thus far the character of Peters was reinstated; and as he had declared, at the time of his capture, that the unjust punishment which he had received had been the motive of his desertion, the captain was strongly urged by the officers to overlook an offence which had everything to be offered in its extenuation. But Captain A— was fond of courts-martial; he imagined that they added to his consequence, which certainly required to be upheld by adventitious aid. Moreover, the feeling, too often pervading little minds, that of a dislike taken to a person because you have injured him, and the preferring to accumulate injustice rather than to acknowledge error, had more than due weight with this weak man. A court-martial was held, and Peters was sentenced to death; but, in consideration of circumstances, the sentence was mitigated to that of being "flogged round the fleet."

Mitigated! Strange vanity in men, that they should imagine their own feelings to be more sensible and acute than those of others; that they should consider that a mitigation in favour of the prisoner, which, had they been placed in his situation, they would have declared an *accumulation* of the punishment. Not a captain who sat

upon that court-martial but would have considered, as Peters did, that death was by far the more lenient sentence of the two. Yet they meant well—they felt kindly towards him, and acknowledged his provocations; but they fell into the too common error of supposing that the finer feelings, which induce a man to prefer death to dishonour, are only to be recognised among the higher classes; and that, because circumstances may have placed a man before the mast, he will undergo punishment, however severe, however degrading,—in short, every “ill that flesh is heir to,”—in preference to death.

As the reader may not, perhaps, be acquainted with the nature of the punishment to which Peters was sentenced, and the ceremonies by which it is attended, I shall enter into a short description of it.

A man sentenced to be flogged round the fleet receives an equal part of the whole number of lashes awarded, alongside each ship composing that fleet. For instance, if sentenced to three hundred lashes, in a fleet composed of ten sail, he will receive thirty alongside of each ship.

A launch is fitted up with a platform and shears. It is occupied by the unfortunate individual, the provost-marshal, the boatswain, and his mates, with their implements of office, and armed marines stationed at the bow and stern. When the signal is made for punishment, all the ships in the fleet send one or two boats each, with crews cleanly dressed, the officers in full uniform, and marines under arms. These boats collect at the side of the ship where the launch is lying, the hands are turned up, and the ship’s company are ordered to mount the rigging, to witness that

portion of the whole punishment which, after the sentence has been read, is inflicted upon the prisoner. When he has received the allotted number of lashes, he is, for the time, released, and permitted to sit down, with a blanket over his shoulders, while the boats, which attend the execution of the sentence, make fast to the launch, and tow it to the next ship in the fleet, where the same number of lashes are inflicted with corresponding ceremonies;—and thus he is towed from one ship to another until he has received the whole of his punishment.

The severity of this punishment consists not only in the number of lashes, but in the peculiar manner in which they are inflicted; as, after the unfortunate wretch has received the first part of his sentence alongside of one ship, the blood is allowed to congeal, and the wounds partially to close, during the interval which takes place previously to his arrival alongside of the next, when the cat again subjects him to renewed and increased torture. During the latter part of the punishment, the suffering is dreadful; and a man who has undergone this sentence is generally broken down in constitution, if not in spirits, for the remainder of his life.

Such was the punishment inflicted upon the unfortunate Peters; and it would be difficult to decide, at the moment when it was completed, and the blanket thrown over his shoulders, whether the heart or the back of the fainting man were the more lacerated of the two.

Time can heal the wounds of the body, over which it holds its empire; but those of the soul, like the soul itself, spurn his transitory sway.

Peters, from that moment, was a desperate man. A short time after he had undergone his sentence, the news of the mutiny at Spithead was communicated; and the vacillation and apprehensions of the Admiralty, and of the nation at large, were not to be concealed. This mutiny was apparently quelled by conciliation; but conciliation is but a half measure, and ineffectual when offered from superiors to inferiors.

In this world, I know not why, there seems to be but one seal binding in all contracts of magnitude—and that seal is blood. Without referring to the Jewish types, proclaiming that “all things were purified by blood, and without shedding of blood there was no remission,”—without referring to that sublime mystery by which these types have been fulfilled,—it appears as if, in all ages and all countries, blood had been the only seal of security.

Examine the records of history, the revolution of opinion, the public tumults, the warfare for religious ascendency—it will be found that, without this seal, these were only lulled for the moment, and invariably recommenced until *blood* had made its appearance as witness to “the act and deed.”

Chapter Two.

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This is a long description, but applies
To scarce five minutes past before the eyes
But yet what minutes! Moments like to these
Rend men’s lives into immortalities.
Byron.

The mutiny at Spithead was soon followed up by that at the Nore; and the ringleader, Parker, like a meteor darting through the firmament, sprung from nothing, corruscated, dazzled, and disappeared. The Texel fleet joined, except a few ships, which the courage and conduct of the gallant old Admiral Duncan preserved from the contagion. Let me here digress a little, to introduce to my readers the speech made by this officer to his ship’s company on the first symptoms of disaffection. It is supposed that sailors are not eloquent. I assert that, with the exception of the North American Indians, who have to perfection the art of saying much in few words, there are few people more eloquent than sailors. The general object looked for, in this world, is to obtain the greatest possible effect with the smallest power; if so, the more simple the language, the more matter is condensed, the nearer we approach to perfection. Flourishes and flowers of rhetoric may be compared to extra wheels applied to a carriage, increasing the rattling and complexity of the machine, without adding to either the strength of its fabric or the rapidity of its course.

It was on the 6th of June that the fleet at the Nore was joined by the *Agamemnon, Leopard, Ardent*, and other ships

which had separated from Admiral Duncan’s fleet. When the Admiral found himself deserted by part of his own fleet, he called his own ship’s crew together, and addressed them in the following speech:—

“My lads! I once more call you together with a sorrowful heart, owing to what I have lately seen, the disaffection of the fleets: I call it disaffection, for the crews have no grievances. To be deserted by my fleet, in the face of the enemy, is a disgrace which, I believe, never before happened to a British admiral; nor could I have supposed it possible. My greatest comfort under God is, that I have been supported by the officers, seamen, and marines of this ship, for which, with a heart overflowing with gratitude, I request you to accept my sincere thanks. I flatter myself much good may result from your example, by bringing those deluded people to a sense of the duty which they owe, not only to their king and country, but to themselves.

“The British navy has ever been the support of that liberty which has been handed down to us by our ancestors, and which I trust we shall maintain to the latest posterity—and that can only be done by unanimity and obedience. This ship’s company, and others, who have distinguished themselves by loyalty and good order, deserve to be, and doubtless will be, the favourites of a grateful nation. They will also have, from their inward feelings, a comfort which will be lasting, and not like the floating and false confidence of those who have swerved from their duty.

“It has often been my pride with you to look into the Texel, and see a foe which dreaded coming out to meet us. My pride is now humbled indeed! our cup has overflowed,

and made us wanton—the All-wise Providence has given us this check as a warning, and I hope we shall improve by it. On Him, then, let us trust, where our only security is to be found. I find there are many good men among us: for my own part, I have had full confidence of all in this ship; and once more I beg to express my approbation of your conduct.

“May God, who has thus far conducted you, continue to do so; and may the British navy, the glory and support of our country, be restored to its wonted splendour, and be not only the bulwark of Britain, but the terror of the world.

“But this can only be effected by a strict adherence to our duty and obedience; and let us pray that the Almighty God may keep us in the right way of thinking.

“God bless you all.”

At an address so unassuming, and so calculated, from its simplicity and truth, to touch the human heart, the whole ship’s crew were melted into tears, and declared their resolution to adhere to their admiral in life or death. Had all the ships in the fleet been commanded by such men as Admiral Duncan, the mutiny at Spithead would not have been succeeded by that at the Nore: but the seamen had no confidence, either in their officers, or in those who presided at the Board of Admiralty; and distrust of their promises, which were considered to be given merely to gain time, was the occasion of the second and more alarming rebellion of the two.

The irritated mind of Peters was stimulated to join the disaffected parties. His pride, his superior education, and the acknowledgment among his shipmates that he was an injured man, all conspired to place him in the dangerous

situation of ringleader on board of his own ship, the crew of which, although it had not actually joined in the mutiny, now showed open signs of discontent.

But the mine was soon exploded by the behaviour of the captain. Alarmed at the mutinous condition of the other ships which were anchored near to him, and the symptoms of dissatisfaction in his own, he proceeded to an act of unjustifiable severity, evidently impelled by fear and not by resolution. He ordered several of the petty officers and leading men of the ship to be thrown into irons, because they were seen to be earnestly talking together on the forecastle,—and recollecting that his conduct towards Peters had been such as to warrant disaffection, he added him to the number. The effect of this injudicious step was immediate. The men came aft in a body on the quarter-deck, and requested to know the grounds upon which Peters and the other men had been placed in confinement; and perceiving alarm in the countenance of the captain, notwithstanding the resolute bearing of the officers, they insisted upon the immediate release of their shipmates. Thus the first overt act of mutiny was brought on by the misconduct of the captain.

The officers expostulated and threatened in vain. Three cheers were called for by a voice in the crowd, and three cheers were immediately given. The marines, who still remained true to their allegiance, had been ordered under arms; the first lieutenant of the ship—for the captain, trembling and confused, stood a mere cipher—gave the order for the ship’s company to go below, threatening to fire upon them if the order was not instantaneously obeyed. The

captain of marines brought his men to the “make ready,” and they were about to present, when the first lieutenant waved his hand to stop the decided measure, until he had first ascertained how far the mutiny was general. He stepped a few paces forward, and requested that every “blue jacket” who was inclined to remain faithful to his king and country, would walk over from that side of the quarter-deck upon which the ship’s company were assembled, to the one which was occupied by the officers and marines.

A pause and silence ensued—when, after some pushing and elbowing through the crowd, William Adams, an elderly quartermaster, made his appearance in the front, and passed over to the side where the officers stood, while the hisses of the rest of the ship’s company expressed their disapprobation of his conduct. The old man just reached the other side of the deck, when turning round like a lion at bay, with one foot on the *coamings of* the hatchway, and his arm raised in the air to command attention, he addressed them in these few words:—

“My lads, I have fought for my king five-and-thirty years, and have been too long in his service to turn a rebel in my old age.”

Would it be credited that, after the mutiny had been quelled, no representation of this conduct was made to government by his captain? Yet such was the case, and such was the gratitude of Captain A—.

The example shown by Adams was not followed—the ship’s crew again cheered, and ran down the hatchways, leaving the officers and marines on deck. They first disarmed the sentry under the half-deck, and released the

prisoners, and then went forward to consult upon further operations.

They were not long in deciding. A boatswain’s mate, who was one of the ringleaders, piped, “Stand by hammocks!” The men ran on deck, each seizing a hammock, and jumping with it down below on the main deck. The object of this manoeuvre not being comprehended, they were suffered to execute it without interruption. In a few minutes they sent up the marine, whom they had disarmed when sentry over the prisoners, to state that they wished to speak to the captain and officers, who, after some discussion, agreed that they would descend and hear the proposals which the ship’s company should make. Indeed, even with the aid of the marines, many of whom were wavering, resistance would now have been useless, and could only have cost them their lives; for they were surrounded by other ships who had hoisted the flag of insubordination, and whose guns were trained ready to pour in a destructive fire on the least sign of an attempt to purchase their anchor. To the main deck they consequently repaired.

The scene which here presented itself was as striking as it was novel. The after-part of the main-deck was occupied by the captain and officers, who had come down with the few marines who still continued steadfast to their duty, and one sailor only, Adams, who had so nobly stated his determination on the quarter-deck. The foremost part of the deck was tenanted by a noisy and tumultuous throng of seamen, whose heads only appeared above a barricade of hammocks, which they had formed across the deck, and out of which at two embrasures, admirably constructed, two

long twenty-four pounders, loaded up to the muzzle with grape and canister shot, were pointed aft in the direction where the officers and marines were standing—a man at the breech of each gun, with a match in his hand (which he occasionally blew, that the priming powder might be more rapidly ignited), stood ready for the signal to fire.

The captain, aghast at the sight, would have retreated, but the officers, formed of sterner materials, persuaded him to stay, although he showed such evident signs of fear and perturbation as seriously to injure a cause in which resolution and presence of mind alone could avail. The mutineers, at the suggestion of Peters, had already sent aft their preliminary proposals, which were, that the officers and marines should surrender up their arms, and consider themselves under an arrest, intimating at the same time that the first step in advance made by any one of their party would be the signal for applying the match to the touch-holes of the guns.

There was a pause and dead silence, as if it were a calm, although every passion was roused and on the alert; every bosom heaved tumultuously, and every pulse was trebled in its action. The same feeling which so powerfully affects the truant schoolboy—who, aware of his offence, and dreading the punishment in perspective, can scarce enjoy the rapture of momentary emancipation—acted upon the mutineers, in an increased ratio, proportioned to the magnitude of their stake. Some hearts beat with remembrance of injuries and hopes of vengeance and retaliation; others with ambition, long dormant, bursting from its concealed recess; and many were actuated by that restlessness which induced them to

consider any change to be preferable to the monotony of existence in compulsory servitude.

Among the officers, some were oppressed with anxious forebodings of evil—those peculiar sensations which, when death approaches nearly to the outward senses, alarm the heart; others experienced no feeling but that of manly fortitude and determination to die, if necessary, like men; in others, alas;—in which party, small as it was, the captain was pre-eminent—fear and trepidation amounted almost to the loss of reason.

Such was the state of the main-deck of the ship at the moment in which we are now describing it to the reader.

And yet, in the very centre of all this tumult, there was one who, although not indifferent to the scene around him, felt interested without being anxious; astonished without being alarmed. Between the contending and divided parties, stood a little boy, about six years old. He was the perfection of childish beauty; chestnut hair waved in curls on his forehead, health glowed on his rosy cheeks, dimples sported over his face as he altered the expression of his countenance, and his large dark eyes flashed with intelligence and animation. He was dressed in mimic imitation of a man-of-war’s man—loose trousers, tightened at the hips, to preclude the necessity of suspenders—and a white duck frock, with long sleeves and blue collar—while a knife, attached to a lanyard, was suspended round his neck: a light and narrow-brimmed straw hat on his head completed his attire. At times he looked aft at the officers and marines; at others he turned his eyes forward to the hammocks, behind which the ship’s company were

assembled. The sight was new to him, but he was already accustomed to reflect much, and to ask few questions. Go to the officers he did not, for the presence of the captain restrained him. Go to the ship’s company he could not, for the barricade of hammocks prevented him. There he stood, in wonderment, but not in fear.

There was something beautiful and affecting in the situation of the boy; calm, when all around him was anxious tumult; thoughtless, when the brains of others were oppressed with the accumulation of ideas; contented, where all was discontent; peaceful, where each party that he stood between was thirsting for each other’s blood:— there he stood, the only happy, the only innocent one, amongst hundreds swayed by jarring interests and contending passions.

And yet he was in keeping, although in such strong contrast, with the rest of the picture; for where is the instance of the human mind being so thoroughly depraved as not to have one good feeling left? Nothing exists so base and vile as not to have one redeeming quality. There is no poison without some antidote—no precipice, however barren, without some trace of verdure, no desert, however vast, without some spring to refresh the parched traveller, some oasis, some green spot, which, from its situation, in comparison with surrounding objects, appears almost heavenly; and thus did the boy look almost angelic, standing as he did between the angry exasperated parties on the main-deck of the disorganised ship.

After some little time he walked forward, and leaned against one of the twenty-four pounders that was pointed

out of the embrasure, the muzzle of which was on a level with, and intercepted by, his little head.

Adams, the quarter-master, observing the dangerous situation of the child, stepped forward. This was against the stipulations laid down by the mutineers, and Peters cried out to him—“Heave-to, Adams, or we fire!” Adams waved his hand in expostulation, and continued to advance. “Keep back,” again cried Peters, “or, by God, we fire!”

“Not upon one old man, Peters, and he unarmed,” replied Adams; “I’m not worth so much powder and shot.” The man at the gun blew his match. “For God’s sake, for your own sake, as you value your happiness and peace of mind, do not fire, Peters!” cried Adams, with energy, “or you’ll never forgive yourself.”

“Hold fast the match,” said Peters; “we need not fear our man,” and as he said this, Adams had come up to the muzzle of the gun, and seized the boy, whom he snatched up in his arms.

“I only came forward, Peters, to save your own boy, whose head would have been blown to atoms if you had chanced to have fired the gun,” said Adams, turning short round, and walking aft with the boy in his arms.

“God in heaven bless you, Adams!” cried Peters, with a faltering voice, and casting a look of fond affection at the child. The heart of the mutineer was at that moment softened by parental feelings, and he blew the priming off the touch-hole of the gun, lest an accidental spark should risk the life of his child, who was now aft with the officers and their party.

Reader, this little boy will be the hero of our tale.

Chapter Three.

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Roused discipline alone proclaims their cause,
And injured navies urge their broken laws.
Pursue we in his track the mutineer.
Byron.

Man, like all other animals of a gregarious nature, is more inclined to follow than to lead. There are few who are endued with that impetus of soul which prompts them to stand foremost as leaders in the storming of the breach, whether it be of a fortress of stone or the more dangerous one of public opinion, when failure in the one case may precipitate them on the sword, and in the other consign them to the scaffold.

In this mutiny there were but few of the rare class referred to above: in the ship whose movements we have been describing not one, perhaps, except Peters. There were many boisterous, many threatening, but no one, except him, who was equal to the command, or to whom the command could have been confided. He was, on board of his own ship, the very life and soul of the mutiny. At the moment described at the end of the last chapter, all the better feelings of his still virtuous heart were in action; and, by a captain possessing resolution and a knowledge of human nature, the mutiny might have been suppressed; but Captain A—, who perceived the anxiety of Peters, thought the child a prize of no small value, and, as Adams brought him aft, snatched the boy from his arms, and desired two of the party of marines to turn their loaded muskets at his

young heart—thus intimating to the mutineers that he would shoot the child at the first sign of hostility on their part.

The two marines who had received this order looked at each other in silence, and did not obey. It was repeated by the captain, who considered that he had hit upon a masterpiece of diplomacy. The officers expostulated; the officer commanding the party of marines turned away in disgust; but in vain: the brutal order was reiterated with threats. The whole party of marines now murmured, and consulted together in a low tone.

Willy Peters was the idol and plaything of the whole crew. He had always been accustomed to remain on board with his father, and there was not a man in the ship who would not have risked his life to have saved that of the child. The effect of this impolitic and cruel order was decisive. The marines, with the sergeant at their head, and little Willy placed in security in the centre, their bayonets directed on the defensive, towards the captain and officers, retreated to the mutineers, whom they joined with three cheers, as the child was lifted over the barricade of hammocks, and received into his father’s arms.

“We must now submit to their terms, sir,” said the first lieutenant.

“Any terms, any terms,” answered the terrified captain: “tell them so, for God’s sake, or they will fire. Adams, go forward and tell them we submit.”

This order was, however, unnecessary; for the mutineers, aware of the impossibility of any further resistance, had

thrown down the barricade of hammocks, and, with Peters at their head, were coming aft.

“You consent, gentlemen, to consider yourselves under an arrest?” inquired Peters of the first lieutenant and officers, without paying any attention to the captain.

“We do, we do,” cried Captain A—. “I hope you will not stain your hands with blood. Mr Peters, I meant the child no harm.”

“If you had murdered him, Captain A—, you could not have injured him so much as you have injured his father,” retorted Peters; “but fear not for your life, sir: that is safe; and you will meet all the respect and attention to your wants that circumstances will permit. We war not with individuals.”

It was a proud moment for Peters to see this man cringing before him, and receiving with thanks the promise of his life from one whom he had so cruelly treated. There was a glorious revenge in it, the full force of which could only be felt by the granting, not the receiving party: for it could only be appreciated by one who possessed those fine and honourable feelings, of which Captain A— was wholly destitute.

If the reader will consult the various records of the times which we are now describing, he will find that every respect was personally paid to the officers, although they were deprived of their arms. Some of the most obnoxious were sent on shore, and the intemperate conduct of others produced effects for which they had only to thank themselves; but, on the whole, the remark made by Peters

was strictly correct: “They warred not with individuals,”—they demanded justice from an ungrateful country.

It is true that the demands in this mutiny were not so reasonable as in the preceding; but where is the *man* who can confine himself to the exact balance of justice when his own feelings are unwittingly thrown into the scale?

As I before stated, it is not my intention to follow up the details of this national disgrace, but merely to confine myself to that part which is connected with the present history. Peters, as delegate from his ship, met the others, who were daily assembled, by Parker’s directions, on board of the *Queen Charlotte*, and took a leading and decided part in the arrangements of the disaffected fleet.

But Parker, the ringleader, although a man of talent, was not equal to the task he had undertaken. He lost sight of several important features necessary to insure success in all civil commotions: such as rapidity and decision of action, constant employment being found, and continual excitement being kept up amongst his followers, to afford no time for reflection. Those who serve under an established government know exactly their present weight in the scale of worldly rank, and the extent of their future expectations; they have accustomed themselves to bound their ambition accordingly: and feeling conscious that passive obedience is the surest road to advancement, are led quietly, here or there, to be slaughtered at the will and caprice of their superiors. But the leader of the disaffected against an established government has a difficult task. He has nothing to offer to his followers but promises. There is nothing on hand—all is expectation. If allowed time for reflection, they

soon perceive that they are acting an humble part in a dangerous game; and that even though it be attended with success, in all probability they will receive no share of the advantages, although certain of incurring a large proportion of the risk. The leader of a connected force of the above description rises to a dangerous height when borne up by the excitement of the time; but let it once be permitted to subside, and, like the aeronaut in his balloon, from which the gas escapes while it is soaring in the clouds, he is precipitated from his lofty station, and gravitates to his own destruction.

He must be a wonderful man who can collect all the resources of a popular commotion, and bring it to a successful issue. The reason is obvious—everything depends upon the leader alone. His followers are but as the stones composing the arch of the bridge by which the gulf is to be crossed between them and their nominal superiors; he is the keystone, upon which the whole depends—if completely fitted, rendering the arch durable and capable of bearing any pressure; but if too small in dimensions, or imperfect in conformation, rendering the whole labour futile, and occasioning all the fabric previously raised to be precipitated by its own weight, and dispersed in ruin and confusion.

This latter was the fate of the mutiny at the Nore. The insurrection was quelled, and the ringleaders were doomed to undergo the utmost penalty of martial law. Among the rest, Peters was sentenced to death.

In the foremost part of the main-deck of a line-of-battle ship, in a square room, strongly bulk-headed, and receiving

light from one of the ports, as firmly secured with an iron grating—with no other furniture than a long wooden form—his legs in shackles, that ran upon a heavy iron bar lying on the deck—sat the unfortunate prisoner, in company with three other individuals—his wife, his child, and old Adams, the quartermaster. Peters was seated on the deck, supporting himself by leaning against the bulkhead. His wife was lying beside him, with her face hidden in his lap. Adams occupied the form, and the child stood between his knees. All were silent, and the eyes of the three were directed towards one of the sad company, who appeared more wretched and disconsolate than the rest.

“My dear, dear Ellen!” said Peters, mournfully, as a fresh burst of grief convulsed her attenuated frame.

“Why, then, refuse my solicitations, Edward? If not for yourself, listen to me for the sake of your wife and child. Irritated as your father still may be, his dormant affection will be awakened, when he is acquainted with the dreadful situation of his only son; nay, his family pride will never permit that you should perish by so ignominious a death; and your assumed name will enable him, without blushing, to exert his interest, and obtain your reprieve.”

“Do not put me to the pain of again refusing you, my dearest Ellen. I desire to die, and my fate must be a warning to others. When I reflect what dreadful consequences might have ensued to the country from our rebellious proceedings, I am thankful, truly thankful, to God, that we did not succeed. I know what you would urge—my wrongs, my undeserved stripes. I, too, would urge them; and when my conscience has pressed me hard, have urged them in