FREDERICK MARRYAT

PETER SIMPLE

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Captain Marryat

"Peter Simple"

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Chapter One.

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The great advantage of being the fool of the family—My destiny is decided, and I am consigned to a stockbroker as part of his Majesty’s sea-stock—Unfortunately for me Mr Handycock is a bear, and I get very little dinner.

If I cannot narrate a life of adventurous and daring exploits, fortunately I have no heavy crimes to confess: and, if I do not rise in the estimation of the reader for acts of gallantry and devotion in my country’s cause, at least I may claim the merit of zealous and persevering continuance in my vocation. We are all of us variously gifted from Above, and he who is content to walk, instead of to run, on his allotted path through life, although he may not so rapidly attain the goal, has the advantage of not being out of breath upon his arrival.

As well as I can recollect and analyse my early propensities, I think that, had I been permitted to select my own profession, I should in all probability have bound myself apprentice to a tailor; for I always envied the comfortable seat which they appeared to enjoy upon the shopboard, and

their elevated position, which enabled them to look down upon the constant succession of the idle or the busy, who passed in review before them in the main street of the country town, near to which I passed the first fourteen years of my existence.

But my father, who was a clergyman of the Church of England, and the youngest brother of a noble family, had a lucrative living, and a “soul above buttons,” if his son had not. It has been from time immemorial the heathenish custom to sacrifice the greatest fool of the family to the prosperity and naval superiority of the country, and, at the age of fourteen, I was selected as the victim. If the custom be judicious, I had no reason to complain. There was not one dissentient voice, when it was proposed before all the varieties of my aunts and cousins, invited to partake of our new-year’s festival. I was selected by general acclamation. Flattered by such an unanimous acknowledgment of my qualification, I felt a slight degree of military ardour, and a sort of vision of future grandeur passed before me, in the distant vista of which I perceived a coach with four horses, and a service of plate. But as my story is not a very short one, I must not dwell too long on its commencement. I shall therefore inform the reader, that my father, who lived in the north of England, did not think it right to fit me out at the country town, near to which we resided; but about a fortnight after the decision which I have referred to, he forwarded me to London, on the outside of the coach, with my best suit of bottle-green and six shirts. To prevent mistakes, I was booked in the way-bill, “To be delivered to Mr Thomas Handycock, Number 14, Saint Clement’s Lane—

carriage paid.” My parting with the family was very affecting; my mother cried bitterly, for, like all mothers, she liked the greatest fool which she had presented to my father, better than all the rest; my sisters cried because my mother cried; Tom roared for a short time more loudly than all the rest, having been chastised by my father for breaking his fourth window in that week.

At last I tore myself away. I had blubbered till my eyes were so red and swollen, that the pupils were scarcely to be distinguished, and tears and dirt had veined my cheeks like the marble of the chimney-piece. My handkerchief was soaked through with wiping my eyes and blowing my nose, before the scene was over. My brother Tom, with a kindness which did honour to his heart, exchanged his for mine, saying, with fraternal regard, “Here, Peter, take mine, it’s as dry as a bone.” But my father would not wait for a second handkerchief to perform its duty. He led me away through the hall, when, having shaken hands with all the men, and kissed all the maids, who stood in a row with their aprons to their eyes, I quitted the paternal roof.

The coachman accompanied me to the stage. Having seen me securely wedged between two fat old women, and having put my parcel inside, he took his leave, and in a few minutes I was on my road to London.

I was too much depressed to take notice of any thing during my journey. When we arrived in London, they drove to the Blue Boar (in a street, the name of which I have forgotten). I had never seen or heard of such an animal, and certainly it did appear very formidable; its mouth was open and teeth very large.

The coachman threw his whip to the ostler, and the reins upon the horses' back; he then dismounted, and calling to me, "Now, young gentleman, I'se waiting," he put a ladder up for me to get down by; then turning to a porter, he said to him, "Bill, you must take this here young gem'man and that ere parcel to this here direction.—Please to remember the coachman, sir." I replied that I certainly would, if he wished it, and walked off with the porter; the coachman observing as I went away, "Well, he is a fool—that's sartain." I arrived quite safe at St. Clement's Lane, when the porter received a shilling for his trouble from the maid who let me in, and I was shown up into a parlour, where I found myself in company with Mrs Handycock.

Mrs Handycock was a little meagre woman, who did not speak very good English, and who appeared to me to employ the major part of her time in bawling out from the top of the stairs to the servants below. I never saw her either read a book or occupy herself with needlework, during the whole time I was in the house. She had a large grey parrot and I really cannot tell which screamed the worst of the two—but she was very civil and kind to me. Before I had been there ten minutes, she told me that she "hadored sailors—they were the defendiours and preserviours of their kings and countries," and that Mr Handycock would be home by four o'clock, and then we should go to dinner.

As I was very anxious to see Mr Handycock, and very anxious to have my dinner, I was not sorry to hear the clock on the stairs strike four; when Mrs Handycock jumped up,

and put her head over the banisters. “Jemima, Jemima, it’s four o’clock!”

“I hear it, marm,” replied the cook; and she gave the frying-pan a twist, which made the hissing and the smell come flying up into the parlour, and made me more hungry than ever.

Rap, tap, tap! “There’s your master, Jemima,” screamed the lady. “I hear him, marm,” replied the cook. “Run down, my dear, and let Mr Handycock in,” said his wife. “He’ll be so surprised at seeing you open the door.”

I ran down as Mrs Handycock desired me, and opened the street-door. “Who the devil are you?” in a gruff voice, cried Mr Handycock; a man about six feet high, dressed in blue cotton-net pantaloons and Hessian boots, with a black coat and waistcoat. I was a little rebuffed, I must own, but I replied that I was Mr Simple. “And pray, Mr Simple, what would your grandfather say if he saw you now?”

“Law, Mr Handycock,” said his wife, from the top of the stairs, “how can you be so cross? I told him to open the door to surprise you.”

“And you have surprised me,” replied he, “with your cursed folly.”

While Mr Handycock was rubbing his boots on the mat, I went upstairs, rather mortified, I must own, as my father had told me that Mr Handycock was his stock-broker, and would do all he could to make me comfortable. When I returned to the parlour, Mrs Handycock whispered to me, “Never mind, my dear, it’s only because there’s something wrong on ’Change. Mr Handycock is a *bear* just now.” I

thought so too, but made no answer, for Mr Handycock came upstairs.

“Are you ready for your dinner, my dear?” said the lady, almost trembling.

“If the dinner is ready for me. I believe we usually dine at four,” answered her husband gruffly.

“Jemima, Jemima, dish up! do you hear, Jemima?”

“Yes, marm,” replied the cook, “directly I’ve thickened the butter;” and Mrs Handycock resumed her seat, with:

“Well, Mr Simple, and how is your grandfather, Lord Privilege?”

“He is quite well, ma’am,” answered I, for the fifteenth time at least. But dinner put an end to the silence which followed this remark. Mr Handycock walked downstairs, leaving his wife and me to follow at our leisure.

“Pray, ma’am,” inquired I, as soon as he was out of hearing, “what is the matter with Mr Handycock, that he is so cross to you?”

“Vy, my dear, it is one of the misfortunes of matermony, that ven the husband’s put out, the vife is sure to have her share of it.”

“Are you people coming down to dinner?” roared Mr Handycock from below. “Yes, my dear,” replied the lady; “I thought that you were washing your hands.” We descended into the dining-room, where we found that Mr Handycock had already devoured two of the whitings, leaving only one on the dish for his wife and me. “Vould you like a little bit of viting, my dear?” said the lady to me. “It’s not worth halving,” observed the gentleman, in a surly tone, taking up

the fish with his own knife and fork, and putting it on his plate.

“Well, I’m so glad you like them, my dear,” replied the lady meekly; then turning to me, “there’s some nice roast *weal* coming, my dear.”

The veal made its appearance, and fortunately for us Mr Handycock could not devour it all. He took the lion’s share, nevertheless, cutting off all the brown, and then shoving the dish over to his wife to help herself and me.

After dinner, Mr Handycock went down to the cellar for a bottle of wine. “O deary me!” exclaimed his wife, “he must have lost a mint of money—we had better go upstairs and leave him alone; he’ll be better after a bottle of port, perhaps.” I was very glad to go away, and being very tired, I went to bed without any tea, for Mrs Handycock dared not venture to make it before her husband came upstairs.

Chapter Two.

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Fitting out on the shortest notice—Fortunately for me this day Mr Handycock is not a bear, and I fare very well—I set off for Portsmouth—Behind the coach I meet a man before the mast—He is disguised with liquor, but is not the only disguise I fall in with in my journey.

The next morning Mr Handycock appeared to be in somewhat better humour. One of the linendrapers who fitted out cadets, etcetera, “on the shortest notice,” was

sent for, and orders given for my equipment, which Mr Handycock insisted should be ready on the day afterwards, or the articles would be left on his hands; adding, that my place was already taken in the Portsmouth coach.

The man made his promise, took my measure, and departed; and soon afterwards Mr Handycock also quitted the house.

At four o'clock Mr Handycock rapped at the door, and was let in—but not by me. He ascended the stairs with three bounds, and coming into the parlour, cried, "Well, Nancy, my love, how are you?" Then stooping over her, "Give me a kiss, old girl. I'm as hungry as a hunter. Mr Simple, how do you do? I hope you have passed the morning agreeably. I must wash my hands and change my boots, my love; I am not fit to sit down to table with you in this pickle. Well, Polly, how are you?"

"I'm glad you're hungry, my dear, I've such a nice dinner for you," replied the wife, all smiles. "Jemima, be quick, and dish up—Mr Handycock is so hungry."

"Yes, marm," replied the cook; and Mrs Handycock followed her husband into his bedroom on the same floor, to assist him at his toilet.

"By Jove, Nancy, the bulls have been nicely taken in," said Mr Handycock, as we sat down to dinner.

"O I am so glad!" replied his wife, giggling; and so I believe she was, but why I did not understand.

We both had our share to-day, and I never saw a man more polite than Mr Handycock. He joked with his wife, asked me to drink wine with him two or three times, talked

about my grandfather; and, in short, we had a very pleasant evening.

The next morning all my clothes came home, but Mr Handycock, who still continued in good humour, said that he would not allow me to travel by night, that I should sleep there and set off the next morning; which I did at six o'clock, and before eight I had arrived at the Elephant and Castle, where we stopped for a quarter of an hour. I observed a crowd assembled at the corner; and asking a gentleman who sat by me in a plaid cloak, whether there was not something very uncommon to attract so many people, he replied, "Not very, for it is only a drunken sailor."

I rose from my seat, which was on the hinder part of the coach, that I might see him, for it was a new sight to me, and excited my curiosity; when, to my astonishment, he staggered from the crowd, and swore that he'd go to Portsmouth. He climbed up by the wheel of the coach and sat down by me. I believe that I stared at him very much, for he said to me, "What are you gaping at, you young sculping? Do you want to catch flies? or did you never see a chap half seas over before?"

I replied, that "I had never been at sea in my life, but that I was going."

"Well then, you're like a young bear, all your sorrows to come—that's all, my hearty," replied he. "When you get on board, you'll find monkey's allowance—more kicks than half-pence. I say, you pewter-carrier, bring us another pint of ale."

The waiter of the inn, who was attending the coach, brought out the ale, half of which the sailor drank, and the

other half threw into the waiter’s face, telling him, “that was his allowance; and now,” said he, “what’s to pay?” The waiter, who looked very angry, but appeared too much afraid of the sailor to say anything, answered fourpence; and the sailor pulled out a handful of bank-notes, mixed up with gold, silver, and coppers, and was picking out the money to pay for his beer, when the coachman, who was impatient, drove off.

“There’s cut and run,” cried the sailor, thrusting all the money into his breeches pocket. “That’s what you’ll learn to do, my joker, before you have been two cruises to sea.”

In the meantime the gentleman in the plaid cloak, who was seated by me, smoked his cigar without saying a word. I commenced a conversation with him relative to my profession, and asked him whether it was not very difficult to learn. “Larn,” cried the sailor, interrupting us, no, it may be difficult for such chaps as me before the mast to larn, but you, I presume, is a reefer, and they an’t got much to larn, “cause why, they pipe-clays their weekly accounts, and walks up and down with their hands in their pockets. You must larn to chaw baccy, drink grog, and call the cat a beggar, and then you knows all a midshipman’s expected to know now-a-days. Arn’t I right, sir?” said the sailor, appealing to the gentleman in a plaid cloak. “I axes you, because I see you’re a sailor by the cut of your jib. Beg pardon, sir,” continued he, touching his hat, “hope no offence.”

“I am afraid that you have nearly hit the mark, my good fellow,” replied the gentleman.

Whenever the coach stopped, the sailor called for more ale, and always threw the remainder which he could not drink into the face of the man who brought it out for him, just as the coach was starting off, and then tossed the pewter pot on the ground for him to pick up. He became more tipsy every stage, and the last from Portsmouth, when he pulled out his money he could find no silver, so he handed down a note, and desired the waiter to change it. The waiter crumpled it up and put it into his pocket, and then returned the sailor the change for a one-pound note: but the gentleman in the plaid had observed that it was a five-pound note which the sailor had given, and insisted upon the waiter producing it, and giving the proper change. The sailor took his money, which the waiter handed to him, begging pardon for the mistake, although he coloured up very much at being detected. “I really beg your pardon,” said he again, “it was quite a mistake:” whereupon the sailor threw the pewter pot at the waiter, saying “I really beg your pardon too,”—and with such force, that it flattened upon the man’s head, who fell senseless on the road. The coachman drove off, and I never heard whether the man was killed or not.

I inquired of the gentleman how soon we should be at Portsmouth; he answered that we were passing the lines; but I saw no lines, and I was ashamed to show my ignorance. He asked me what ship I was going to join. I could not recollect her name, but I told him it was painted on the outside of my chest, which was coming down by the waggon: all that I could recollect was that it was a French name.

“Have you no letter of introduction to the captain?” said he.

“Yes, I have,” replied I; and I pulled out my pocketbook in which the letter was. “Captain Savage, H.M.S. *Diomede*,” continued I, reading to him.

To my surprise he very coolly proceeded to open the letter, which, when I perceived what he was doing, occasioned me immediately to snatch the letter from him, stating my opinion at the same time that it was a breach of honour, and that in my opinion he was no gentleman.

“Just as you please, youngster,” replied he. “Recollect, you have told me I am no gentleman.”

He wrapped his plaid around him, and said no more; and I was not a little pleased at having silenced him by my resolute behaviour.

Chapter Three.

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I am made to look very blue at the Blue Posts—Find wild spirits around, and, soon after, hot spirits within me; at length my spirits overcome me—Call to pay my respects to the Captain, and find that I had had the pleasure of meeting him before—No sooner out of one scrape than into another.

When we stopped, I enquired of the coachman which was the best inn. He answered that “it was the Blue Postesses, where the midshipmen leave their chestesses, call for tea

and toastesses, and sometimes forget to pay for their breakfastesses." He laughed when he said it, and I thought that he was joking with me; but he pointed out two, large blue posts at the door next the coach-office, and told me that all the midshipmen resorted to that hotel. The coffee-room was full of midshipmen, and, as I was anxious about my chest, I enquired of one of them if he knew when the waggon would come in.

"Do you expect your mother by it?" replied he.

"O no! but I expect my uniforms—I only wear these bottle-greens until they come."

"And pray what ship are you going to join?"

"The *Die-a-maid*—Captain Thomas Kirkwall Savage."

"The *Diomede*—I say, Robinson, a'n't that the frigate in which the midshipmen had four dozen apiece for not having pipe-clayed their weekly accounts on the Saturday?"

"To be sure it is," replied the other; "why the captain gave a youngster five dozen the other day for wearing a scarlet watch-riband."

"'Pon my soul I pity you: you'll be fagged to death; for there's only three midshipmen in the ship now—all the rest ran away. Didn't they, Robinson?"

"There's only two left now:— for poor Matthews died of fatigue. He was worked all day, and kept watch all night for six weeks, and one morning he was found dead upon his chest."

"God bless my soul!" cried I, "and yet, on shore, they say he is such a kind man to his midshipmen."

"Yes," replied Robinson, "he spreads that report everywhere. Come, sit down with us and take a glass of

grog; it will keep your spirits up.”

I am sorry to state that the midshipmen made me very tipsy that evening. I don’t recollect being put to bed, but I found myself there the next morning with a dreadful head-ache, and a very confused recollection of what had passed. I was very much shocked at my having so soon forgotten the injunctions of my parents, and was making vows never to be so foolish again, when in came the midshipman who had been so kind to me the night before. “Come, Mr Bottlegreen,” he bawled out, alluding, I suppose, to the colour of my clothes, “rouse and bitt. There’s the captain’s coxswain waiting for you below. By the powers, you’re in a pretty scrape for what you did last night!”

“Did last night!” replied I, astonished. “Why, does the captain know that I was tipsy?”

“I think you took devilish good care to let him know it when you were at the theatre.”

“At the theatre! was I at the theatre?”

“To be sure you were. You would go, do all we could to prevent you, though you were as drunk as David’s sow. Your captain was there with the admiral’s daughters. You called him a tyrant, and snapped your fingers at him. Why, don’t you recollect? You told him that you did not care a fig for him.”

“O dear! O dear! what shall I do? what shall I do?” cried I.

“Upon my honour, I’m sorry—very sorry indeed,” replied the midshipman;—and he quitted the room, looking as grave as if the misfortune had happened to himself. I got up with a heavy head, and heavier heart, and as soon as I was dressed, I asked the way to the George Inn. I took my letter

of introduction with me, although I was afraid it would be of little service. When I arrived, I asked, with a trembling voice, whether Captain Thomas Kirkwall Savage, of H.M.S. *Diomede*, was staying there. The waiter replied, that he was at breakfast with Captain Courtney, but that he would take up my name. I give it him, and in a minute the waiter returned and desired that I would walk up. O how my heart beat—I never was so frightened—I thought I should have dropped on the stairs. Twice I attempted to walk into the room, and each time my legs failed me; at last I wiped the perspiration from my forehead, and with a desperate effort I went into the room.

“Mr Simple, I am glad to see you,” said a voice. I had held my head down, for I was afraid to look at him, but the voice was so kind that I mustered up courage; and, when I did look up, there sat with his uniform and epaulets, and his sword by his side, the passenger in the plaid cloak, who wanted to open my letter, and whom I had told to his face, that he was no *gentleman*.

I thought I should have died, as the other midshipman did upon his chest. I was just sinking down upon my knees to beg for mercy, when the captain, perceiving my confusion, burst out into a laugh, and said, “So you know me again, Mr Simple? Well, don’t be alarmed; you did your duty in not permitting me to open the letter. I give you credit for your conduct. Now sit down and take some breakfast.”

“Captain Courtney,” said he to the other captain, who was at the table, “this is one of my youngsters, just entering the service. We were passengers yesterday by the same

coach.” He then told him the circumstance which occurred, at which they laughed heartily.

I now recovered my spirits a little—but still there was the affair at the theatre, and I thought that perhaps he did not recognise me. I was, however, soon relieved from my anxiety by the other captain inquiring, “were you at the theatre last night, Savage?”

“No; I dined at the admiral’s; there’s no getting away from those girls, they are so pleasant.”

“I rather think you are a little—*taken* in that quarter.”

“No, on my word! I might be, if I had time to discover which I liked best; but my ship is at present my wife, and the only wife I intend to have until I am laid on the shelf.”

Well, thought I, if he was not at the theatre, it could not have been him that I insulted.

“Pray, Mr Simple, how are your father and mother?” said the captain.

“Very well, I thank you, sir, and desire me to present their compliments.”

“I am obliged to them. Now I have a little advice to offer you. In the first place, obey your superior officers without hesitation; it is for me, not you, to decide whether an order is unjust or not. In the next place, never swear or drink spirits. The first is immoral and ungentleman-like, the second is a vile habit which will grow upon you. I never touch spirit myself, and I expect that my young gentlemen will refrain from it also. Now you may go, and as soon as your uniforms arrive, you will repair on board. Good morning.”

I quitted the room with a low bow, glad to have surmounted so easily what appeared to be a chaos of difficulty; but my mind was confused with the testimony of the midshipman, so much at variance with the language and behaviour of the captain. When I arrived at the Blue Posts, I found all the midshipmen in the coffee-room, and I repeated to them all that had passed. When I had finished, they burst out laughing, and said that they had only been joking with me. “Well,” said I to the one who had called me up in the morning, “you may call it joking, but I call it lying.”

“Pray, Mr Bottlegreen, do you refer to me?”

“Yes, I do,” replied I.

“Then, sir, as a gentleman I demand satisfaction. Slugs in a saw-pit. Death before dishonour, damn me!”

“Could not the affair be arranged otherwise?” interrupted another. “Will not Mr Bottlegreen retract?”

“My name is Simple, sir, and not Bottlegreen,” replied I; “and as he did tell a falsehood, I will not retract?”

“Then the affair must go on,” said the midshipman. “Robinson, will you oblige me by acting as my second?”

“It’s an unpleasant business,” replied the other, “you are so good a shot; but as you request it, I shall not refuse. Mr Simple is not, I believe, provided with a friend.”

“Yes, he is,” replied another of the midshipmen. “He is a spunky fellow, and I’ll be his second.”

It was then arranged that we should meet the next morning with pistols. I considered that, as an officer and a gentleman, I could not well refuse, but I was very unhappy. I went up into my room and wrote a long letter to my mother, enclosing a lock of my hair, and having shed a few tears at

the idea of how sorry she would be if I were killed, I borrowed a Bible from the waiter, and read it during the remainder of the day.

Chapter Four.

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I am taught on a cold morning, before breakfast, how to stand fire, and thus prove my courage—After breakfast I also prove my gallantry—My proof meets reproof—Women at the bottom of all mischief—By one I lose my liberty, and, by another, my money.

When I began to wake the next morning, I could not think what it was that felt like a weight upon my chest, but as I roused and recalled my scattered thoughts, I remembered that in an hour or two it would be decided whether I were to exist another day. Before I was dressed, the midshipman who had volunteered to be my second came into my room, and informed me that the affair was to be decided in the garden behind the inn, and that my adversary was a very good shot.

I dressed myself and followed my second into the garden, where I found all the midshipmen and some of the waiters of the inn. They all seemed very merry, as if the life of a fellow-creature was of no consequence. The seconds talked apart for a little while, and then measured the ground, which was twelve paces; we then took our stations. I believe that I turned pale, for my second came to my side and

whispered that I must not be frightened. I replied that I was not frightened, but that I considered that it was an awful moment. The second to my adversary then came up and asked me whether I would make an apology, which I refused to do as before; they handed a pistol to each of us, and my second showed me how I was to pull the trigger. It was arranged that at the word given, we were to fire at the same time. I made sure that I should be wounded, if not killed, and I shut my eyes as I fired my pistol in the air. I felt my head swim, and thought I was hurt, but fortunately I was not. The pistols were loaded again, and we fired a second time. The seconds then interfered, and it was proposed that we should shake hands, which I was very glad to do, for I considered my life to have been saved by a miracle.

The next day my chest arrived by the waggon, and I threw off my “bottle-greens” and put on my uniform. I had no cocked-hat, or dirk, as the warehouse people employed by Mr Handycock did not supply those articles, and it was arranged that I should procure them at Portsmouth. When I inquired the price, I found that they cost more money than I had in my pocket, so I tore up the letter I had written to my mother before the duel, and wrote another asking for a remittance to purchase my dirk and cocked-hat. I then walked out in my uniform, not a little proud, I must confess.

I had arrived opposite a place called Sally Port, when a young lady very nicely dressed, looked at me very hard and said, “Well, Reefer, how are you off for soap?” I was astonished at the question, and more so at the interest which she seemed to take in my affairs. I answered, “Thank you, I am very well off; I have four cakes of Windsor, and

two bars of yellow for washing.” She laughed at my reply, and asked me whether I would walk home and take a bit of dinner with her. I was astonished at this polite offer, and I said that I should be most happy. I thought I might venture to offer my arm, which she accepted, and we proceeded up High Street on our way to her home.

Just as we passed the admiral’s house, I perceived my captain walking with two of the admiral’s daughters. I was not a little proud to let him see that I had female acquaintances as well as he had, and, as I passed him with the young lady under my protection, I took off my hat, and made him a low bow. To my surprise, not only did he not return the salute, but he looked at me with a very stern countenance. I concluded that he was a very proud man, and did not wish the admiral’s daughters to suppose that he knew midshipmen by sight; but I had not exactly made up my mind on the subject, when the captain, having seen the ladies into the admiral’s house, sent one of the messengers after me to desire that I would immediately come to him at the George Inn, which was nearly opposite.

I apologised to the young lady, and promised to return immediately if she would wait for me; but she replied, if that was my captain, it was her idea that I should have a confounded wigging and be sent on board. So, wishing me good-bye, she left me and continued her way home. I could as little comprehend all this as why the captain looked so black when I passed him; but it was soon explained when I went up to him in the parlour at the George Inn. “I am sorry, Mr Simple,” said the captain, when I entered, “that a lad like you should show such early symptoms of depravity; still

more so, that he should not have the grace which even the most hardened are not wholly destitute of—I mean to practise immorality in secret, and not degrade themselves and insult their captain by unblushingly avowing (I may say glorying in) their iniquity, by exposing it in broad day, and in the most frequented street of the town."

"Sir!" replied I, with astonishment, "O dear! what have I done?"

The captain fixed his keen eyes upon me, so that they appeared to pierce me through, and nail me to the wall. "Do you pretend to say, sir, that you were not aware of the character of the person with whom you were walking just now?"

"No, sir," replied I, "except that she was very kind and good-natured;" and then I told him how she had addressed me, and what subsequently took place.

"And is it possible, Mr Simple, that you are so great a fool?" I replied that I certainly was considered the greatest fool of our family. "I should think you were," replied he, dryly. He then explained to me who the person was with whom I was in company, and how any association with her would inevitably lead to my ruin and disgrace.

I cried very much, for I was shocked at the narrow escape which I had had, and mortified at having fallen in his good opinion. He asked me how I had employed my time since I had been at Portsmouth, and I made an acknowledgment of having been made tipsy, related all that the midshipmen had told me, and how I had that morning fought a duel.

When I had finished, he said, "Mr Simple, I can no longer trust you on shore until you are more experienced in the

world. I shall desire my coxswain not to lose sight of you until you are safe on board of the frigate."

Altogether I did not feel sorry when it was over. I saw that the captain believed what I had stated, and that he was disposed to be kind to me, although he thought me very silly. The coxswain, in obedience to his orders, accompanied me to the Blue Post. I packed up my clothes, paid my bill, and the porter wheeled my chest down to the Sally Port, where the boat was waiting.

"Come, heave a-head, my lads, be smart. The captain says we are to take the young gentleman on board directly. His liberty's stopped for getting drunk and running after the Dolly Mops!"

"I should thank you to be more respectful in your remarks, Mr Coxswain," said I with displeasure.

"Mister Coxswain! thanky, sir, for giving me a handle to my name," replied he. "Come, be smart with your oars, my lads!"

"La, Bill Freeman," said a young woman on the beach, "what a nice young gentleman you have there. He looks like a sucking Nelson. I say, my pretty young officer, could you lend me a shilling?"

I was so pleased at the woman calling me young Nelson, that I immediately complied with her request. "I have not a shilling in my pocket," said I, "but here is half-a-crown, and you can change it, and bring me back the eighteen-pence."

"Well you are a nice young man," replied she, taking the half-crown; "I'll be back directly, my dear."

The men in the boat laughed, and the coxswain desired them to shove off.

“No,” observed I, “you must wait for my eighteen-pence.”

“We shall wait a devilish long while, then, I suspect. I know that girl, and she has a very bad memory.”

“She cannot be so dishonest or ungrateful,” replied I. “Coxswain, I order you to stay—I am an officer.”

“I know you are, sir, about six hours old; well then, I must go up and tell the captain that you have another girl in tow, and that you won’t go on board.”

“O no, Mr Coxswain, pray don’t; shove off as soon as you please, and never mind the eighteen-pence.”

The boat then shoved off, and pulled towards the ship, which lay at Spithead.

Chapter Five.

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I am introduced to the quarter-deck, and first lieutenant, who pronounces me very clever—Trotted below to Mrs Trotter—Connubial bliss in a cock-pit—Mrs Trotter takes me in, as a messmate.

On our arrival on board, the coxswain gave a note from the captain to the first lieutenant, who happened to be on deck. He read the note, looked at me earnestly, and then I overheard him say to another lieutenant, “The service is going to the devil. Here’s another of the fools of a family made a present of to the country—another cub for me to

lick into shape. Well, I never saw the one yet I did not make something of. Where's Mr Simple?"

"I am Mr Simple, sir," replied I, very much frightened at what I had overheard.

"Now, Mr Simple," said the first lieutenant, "observe and pay particular attention to what I say. The captain tells me in this note that you have been shamming stupid. Now, sir, I am not to be taken in that way. I have looked attentively at your face and I see at once that you are *very clever*, and if you do not prove so in a very short time, why—you had better jump overboard, that's all. Perfectly understand me. I know that you are a very clever fellow, and having told you so, don't you pretend to impose upon me, for it won't do."

I was very much terrified at this speech, but at the same time I was pleased to hear that he thought me clever, and I determined to do all in my power to keep up such an unexpected reputation.

"Quarter-master," said the first lieutenant, "tell Mr Trotter to come on deck."

The quarter-master brought up Mr Trotter, who apologised for being so dirty, as he was breaking casks out of the hold. He was a short, thickset man, about thirty years of age, with a nose which had a red club to it, very dirty teeth, and large black whiskers.

"Mr Trotter," said the first lieutenant, "here is a young gentleman who has joined the ship. Introduce him into the berth, and see his hammock slung. You must look after him a little."

"I really have very little time to look after any of them, sir," replied Mr Trotter, "but I will do what I can. Follow me,

youngster.” Accordingly, I descended the ladder after him; then I went down another, and then to my surprise I was desired by him to go down a third, which, when I had done, he informed me that I was in the cock-pit.

“Now, youngster,” said Mr Trotter, seating himself upon a large chest, “you may do as you please. The midshipmen’s mess is on the deck above this, and if you like to join, why you can; but this I will tell you as a friend, that you will be thrashed all day long, and fare very badly; the weakest always goes to the wall there, but perhaps you do not mind that. Now that we are in harbour, I mess here, because Mrs Trotter is on board. She is a very charming woman, I can assure you, and will be here directly; she has just gone up into the galley to look after a net of potatoes in the copper. If you like it better, I will ask her permission for you to mess with us.” I had scarcely time to reply, when I perceived a pair of legs, cased in black cotton stockings, on the ladder above us, and it proved that they belonged to Mrs Trotter, who came down the ladder with a net full of smoking potatoes.

“Upon my word, Mrs Trotter, you must be conscious of having a very pretty ankle, or you would not venture to display it, as you have to Mr Simple, a young gentleman whom I beg to introduce to you, and who, with your permission, will join our mess.”

“My dear Trotter, how cruel of you not to give me warning; I thought that nobody was below. I declare I’m so ashamed,” continued the lady simpering, and covering her face with the hand which was unemployed.