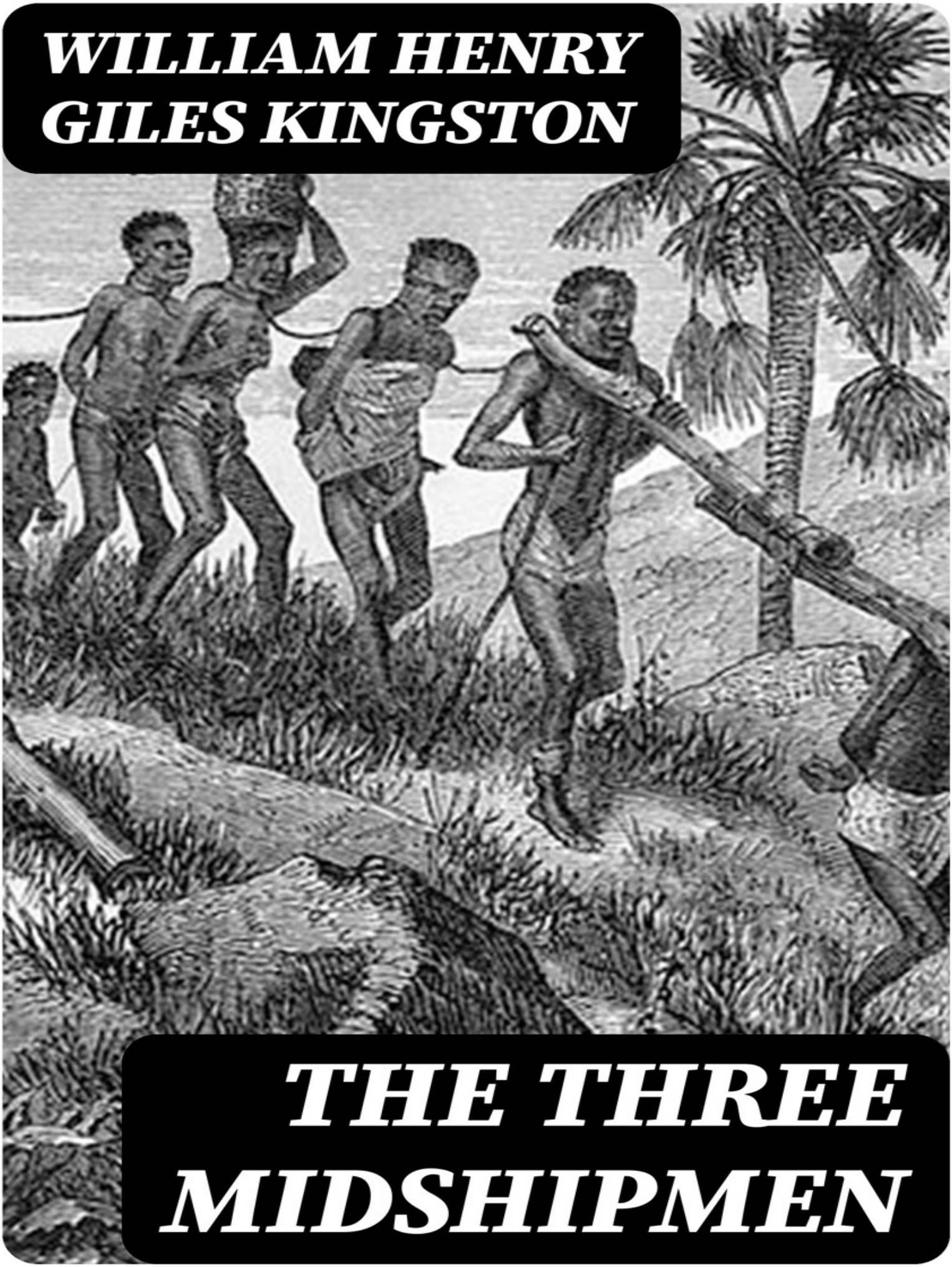
WILLIAM HENRY GILES KINGSTON



THE THREE MIDSHIPMEN

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EAN 8596547346982

DigiCat, 2022
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Chapter One.

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Early Days.

Ours was a capital school, though it was not a public one. It was not far from London, so that a coach could carry us down there in little more than an hour from the *White Horse Cellar*, Piccadilly. On the top of the posts, at each side of the gates, were two eagles; fine large birds I thought them. They looked out on a green, fringed with tall elms, beyond which was our cricket-field. A very magnificent red-brick old house rose behind the eagles, full of windows belonging to our sleeping-rooms. The playground was at the back of the house, with a grand old tulip tree in the centre, a tectum for rainy weather on one side, and the large school room on the other. Beyond was a good-sized garden, full of apple and pear trees, but, as we very seldom went into it, I do not remember its appearance. Perhaps, were I to see the place again, I might find its dimensions somewhat altered. The master was a first-rate schoolmaster. What his attainments were, I cannot say; but he understood managing boys admirably. He kept us all in very good order, had us fairly taught, fed us with wholesome, if not luxurious, food, and, though he used his cane freely, treated us justly. We held him in awe, and yet we liked him.

It was after the summer holidays, when I had just got back, I heard that three new boys had come. In the afternoon they all appeared in the playground. They were

strangers to each other as well as to us, but their similarity of fate drew them together. One was a slightly made, dark, and somewhat delicate-looking boy; another was a sturdy little fellow, with a round, ruddy countenance, and a jovial, good-natured expression in it, yet he did not look as if he would stand any nonsense; the third was rather smaller than the other two, a pleasant-looking fellow, and though his eyes were red with crying, he seemed to be cutting some joke which made his companions laugh. He had come all the way from Ireland, we heard, and his elder brother had that morning left him and gone back home, and that made him unhappy just then. He at once got the name of Paddy in the school. He did not mind it. His real name was Terence Adair, so sometimes he was called Paddy Adair.

“I say, you fellow, what’s your name?” asked a biggish boy of the stoutest of the three new-comers.

“Jack Rogers,” was the answer, given in a quiet tone.

“I don’t believe it,” replied the big boy, who was known as Bully Pigeon; “it’s such a rum name.”

“I’ll make you believe it, and remember it too,” exclaimed the new-comer, eyeing the other from head to foot, and walking firmly up to him, with his lips closed, while he moved his head slowly from side to side. “I tell you my name is Jack Rogers—Now!”

The bully did not say a word. He looked as if he would have liked to have hit, but Paddy Adair had followed his new friend, and was evidently about to join in the fray if it was once begun; so the big boy thought better of it. He would gain no credit for attacking a little fellow the first day of his coming. There were many witnesses of the scene, and Jack

was unanimously pronounced to be a plucky little chap. Pigeon, defeated in one direction, turned his attention to the first-named boy, who had scarcely moved since he entered the playground, but kept looking round with his large black eyes on the scene before him, which was evidently strange to his sight.

“What are you called, I should like to know?” he asked in a rude tone.

“Alick Murray,” was the answer, in a quiet, gentlemanly voice.

“Then you come from Scotland, I suppose?” said the bully.

“Yes, I do,” replied the former.

“Oh! I wonder your mamma would let you go away from her,” observed the big boy, with a sneer.

“My mamma is just dead,” answered Murray, in a mild tone, a tear springing to his eye.

“Shame! shame!” shouted the voices of several boys who had come up; among them that of Jack Rogers was the loudest.

“I didn’t mean to say anything to hurt him,” said the bully, sneaking away. “I’ll pay you off for this some day,” he muttered as he passed Jack.

Jack looked after him and laughed.

“He’ll have two to fight if he tries it, mind that,” said Adair to his new friend.

Jack thanked him, but said that he should soon be able to tackle him, if he could not just now. He would try at all events.

“That’s it,” cried Terence enthusiastically. “That’s just what I like. If you are knocked down you can but get up again and try once more.”

“So my papa says,” observed Jack. “He’s a first-rate father, let me tell you. He never would let any of us give in except to himself. He used to throw us into a pond, and tell us to swim, and unless we had actually been drowning, nothing would have made him help us; so we all very soon learned, and now there isn’t a chap of my size I wouldn’t swim against. We live down in Northamptonshire. My papa has a place there. We are all very jolly. There are a number of us, sisters and brothers. You must come down and see them some holidays. You’ll like them, I know. There’s no nonsense about them.”

Terence said he should like it very much, if he did not go back to Ireland. He had three brothers and a sister, but they were all older than himself. His papa was the Honourable Mr Adair, and he had an uncle, Lord Derrynane. He did not know whether they were rich or not. They lived in a big house, and had a number of servants, and people were constantly coming and going; so he supposed they were. The truth was, as I heard afterwards, they were living a great deal too fast, and Terence had nothing left as his share of his father’s property, except, as he said, his debts. That, however, was no fault of his.

“I say,” observed Jack, “don’t let us leave that poor fellow alone any longer. He seems very low-spirited about his mother. It’s natural, you know; though I don’t like to see a fellow blubbering just because he has hurt himself, or lost a peg-top, or anything of that sort.”

So they went up to Alick Murray, and began talking to him, and Terence said something funny and made him laugh.

“I wonder what games they have here?” asked Jack.

“Coach-and-horses,” said a biggish fellow, who had just entered the playground with some long strips of leather over his arm and a whip in his hand. “Now, if you three fellows will just be harnessed, you’ll make a very good unicorn.”

They all looked at each other, and as the big boy spoke in a good-natured tone, they agreed to do as he wished. Jack and Alick were harnessed together; Terence insisted on going as unicorn.

“I say, though,” cried Jack, looking back; “what are you called? I always like to know the name of the driver.”

“Ben Trotter when I’m not called Master Benjamin Trotter,” was the answer.

“Not a bad name for a coachman,” observed Jack, beginning to prance and kick about. He got a cut with the whip in return for his remark. Terence reared and neighed, and kicked about furiously all the time, like a high-mettled steed who wanted to be off; and at last, Trotter having got the ribbons adjusted to his satisfaction, away they all went round the playground at a great rate, looking with great disdain on those boys who had only got string for harness. Thus were the three new-comers first yoked in fellowship. They were very much together ever afterwards, though they also had their own especial friends. Murray and Rogers were the most constant to each other. Murray was a studious, gentle boy. He had more talent than Jack; that is to say, he

did his lessons a great deal better, and never got into any scrapes. Jack never picked a quarrel, but he now and then got into one, and was apt in his lessons to give a false quantity, and sometimes a translation of his Caesar which put him down to the bottom of the class. Murray was always ready and able to help him, but Jack was not a fellow who would consent to trust to the help of another. When he really tried, he could always do his work, and very creditably too. Adair, unlike his friends, was nearly always getting into trouble. He would not think enough about consequences. Once he and others had been letting off fireworks of their own manufacture in a remote corner of the playground. Notice was given that an usher was coming. They threw away their combustibles, and fled. Terence, however, had a piece of lighted touch-paper, which, in his hurry, he shoved into his pocket. It was already full of a similar preparation. He was caught and hauled away into the schoolroom to receive condign punishment. He tried to look very innocent, and requested to know why he was dragged along so unceremoniously. Paddy, under no circumstances, ever lost his politeness. Unhappily for him just as he reached the door the proofs of his guilt became apparent. Streams of smoke and sparks burst out of his pockets, and the master had to pull out the burning paper to prevent him from being seriously injured. As to his lessons he very frequently was at the top of his class, but he never could manage to keep there many days together. For some neglect or other, he soon again lost his place. Still he was a general favourite. Even the masters could not help liking him. The three new boys were put into one room. They slept there for several

halves. On one occasion Terence had kept away a good deal from Jack and Murray, and associated more than was his custom with several of the less nice boys. Among them was Pigeon, the bullying fellow. I happened to be awake one night, when, by the pale moonlight which streamed in at the windows, I saw Paddy Adair sit up in his bed and look about him. Pigeon and another biggish fellow did the same. They signed to each other, and slipping on their clothes, crept with their shoes in their hands out of the room. I could not go to sleep, wondering what had become of them. Jack Rogers slept near me. He likewise had seen what had occurred. They were absent about half an hour. They returned as noiselessly as they had gone out, and crept into bed again, of course thinking that no one had observed them. No sooner was the door closed than there was a strong smell of apples in the room, and presently “crunch! crunch! crunch!” was heard.

“Those fellows have been stealing old Rowley’s apples, now,” thought Jack; “and that donkey Paddy Adair has, I’d bet, been heading the party.”

He felt as if he were a spy by not letting them know that he was awake, so he sat up and said, “Hillo! you fellows, what have you been about?”

“Is that you awake, Jack?” answered Adair. “Never mind, we’ve had great fun. Have an apple, will you?”

“No, thank you,” said Jack, “I’d rather not;” laying considerable emphasis on the last words.

“He doesn’t deserve one as he hadn’t the pluck to go and get them,” said a voice from under the bedclothes.

“Who says that?” exclaimed Jack, sitting up in bed.

“Why, I say you would have been afraid to go and do what we have done,” answered Bully Pigeon, summoning up more courage than was his wont.

“Afraid!” exclaimed Jack, springing out of bed and slipping on his trousers. “Afraid of what? Afraid of stealing? Afraid of telling a lie I am; but I’m not afraid of *you, you thief*, I can tell you.”

Even Bully Pigeon could not stand this. Unless he would be jeered at and called sneak ever afterwards by all the little boys in the school, he felt that he must retaliate. He jumped up and sprang at Jack, aiming a blow, which, if the latter had not slipped aside, would have knocked him over. Jack, notwithstanding this, sprang back, and put himself on his defence, not only warding off the next blow Pigeon struck, but planting another between his eyes, which brought fire into them with a vengeance.

This enraged the bully, who came thundering down on Jack with all his might, and would have wellnigh crushed him, but Pigeon found a new assailant in the field whom he did not expect—one of his own party. It was Paddy Adair.

“I can’t stand that, and I won’t,” he exclaimed, aiming a blow at Pigeon’s head which sent him backwards; while Alick Murray, who had likewise jumped up, appeared on the other side of him.

“We are thieves, I tell you; we’ve been stealing old Rowley’s apples, and Jack Rogers is right,” cried Terence.

“A very true remark, boys,” said a deep voice which all recognised full well. The door opened, and old Rowley himself, habited in his dressing-gown, with a candle in one hand and a birch in the other, appeared at the entrance,

followed by good kind Mrs Jones, the housekeeper. Every one scuttled away to their beds as fast as they could go, except Alick Murray and Terence. Murray was the first Rowley laid hands on, and, putting down his candle on the mantelpiece, he was about to make use of his birch. Murray disdained to utter a word which might inculpate others, and I knew he would have received a flogging without complaint, but Terence cried out, “No, no, it wasn’t him—I was one of them—flog me if you like.”

“Well, get into bed,” answered Rowley, in a voice which did not sound as if he was very angry. “You two have the spoils upon you, however;” saying this, he went to the beds of Bully Pigeon and the other big fellow, and gave them as sound a flogging as they ever had in their lives, while Mrs Jones retired to a little distance, though I believe she always came in the hopes of softening the vigour of the master’s arm. He went round to the other rooms, and treated the rest of the culprits in the same way, and we had reason to suspect that he had watched the whole party as they returned from their marauding expedition. All the culprits were sent to Coventry the next day for a week, except Terence, who had however led the expedition, though he did not plan it. “I have great respect for the person who is not afraid to call a thief a thief, or a lie by its right name,” said Rowley not long afterwards, looking significantly at Terence.

Time sped on, we were getting up in the school, new boys were coming and old ones were going away, when the first night after our return from the Christmas holidays, we all lay awake talking of our adventures.

“This is my last half,” said Jack; “I’ve made up my mind to be a sailor, and my father says I may; and an admiral, a friend of ours, has promised to get me a ship; and so it’s all settled, and I’m going.”

“Are you, old fellow? how capital!” exclaimed Terence. “I’ve been asked if I would go to sea, and I said yes; for there’s nothing else I want to do that I know of, but I little thought you would be going too. Well, that is good, and clenches the matter.”

“I am very glad to hear it,” cried Murray; “it is what I have been longing to do for years past, almost since I could read. The only profession I felt that I should ever like was the navy, but I never saw a chance till these holidays of being able to go into it. I believe it is settled; I shall know shortly, I hope.”

“What, are we all three going? how capital! What fun we will have,” cried Jack. “Of course they’ll let you. Oh, hang it, you must go with us.” Murray seldom talked much of what he wished to do, or expressed his feelings, except perhaps to a trusted friend like Jack, but of the three companions he had probably the strongest will, and when he had set his mind on an object, no one could exert himself more resolutely to accomplish it. He wrote and wrote to his friends, expressing his wish in as strong terms as he could, giving many excellent reasons for having formed it. Before many weeks had passed, Murray received a letter. The contents would have made Jack and Terence throw up their caps and shout, had they under similar circumstances received it. He felt a choking sensation, and the tears sprang to his eyes. All his long-cherished hopes were about

to be accomplished. He had the promise from the First Lord of the Admiralty of an appointment speedily to a ship. The half came to an end, the school broke up, and the boys separated with all animosities and quarrels sunk in oblivion; and in the belief that they should meet each other again soon, if not at school, somewhere or other. Jack went home, and was then sent, by the advice of his naval friend, to an academy at Portsmouth, where young gentlemen were prepared for the navy. Jack wanted to become a real sailor, so he set to work manfully to stow away all the navigation he could pick up. He soon also made himself known and respected among his companions, much in the same way that he had done at his old school. At last he heard that he was appointed to a ship, but that he was to go home before joining to take leave. He was first to go to Selby the tailor, to get measured for his outfit.

“You’ll like to have your uniform at once, sir,” observed Mr Selby; “most young gentlemen do.” Jack thought it would be very nice, as his best clothes were already shabby; so in an incredibly short space of time he found himself exactly fitted in his naval habiliments with a dirk by his side, and a gold-lace cap. He did not like to wear them in the street, “lest he should appear conspicuous,” he observed to a schoolfellow, so he did not put them on till he was ready to start in the morning by the coach up to London. He had got leave to go down to Eagle House to visit his former master and old schoolfellows, and how grand he looked as he walked up and down the playground, handling his dirk. Even Pigeon felt a great respect for him, and looked on him with somewhat an eye of envy, and thought he should like to go

into the navy. Had he gone, he would have had to learn many a lesson, or would very soon have been kicked out of it again. Jack dined at the master’s table at one end of the long dining-room, and good Mrs Jones looked at him very proudly, for she had always thought him one of her best boys; and many an eye gazed wistfully at his anchor buttons and dirk and smiling jovial countenance, as he laughed and chatted with wonderful ease with old Rowley, as if he was not a bit afraid of him; and some idle fellows envied him his emancipation from Virgil and Horace, and other classical authors, for whom they had so little affection themselves. Then he had to jump up and hurry off to catch the coach, in order to reach the mail, which was to carry him down that night to Northamptonshire. Jack could obtain no certain information about Murray and Adair, but old Rowley told him he understood they had already been sent to sea. Jack spent three very jolly days at home. He had a big trunk filled with all sorts of things which he was to stow away in his chest. Then the moment came for parting—the family were not much addicted to crying, not that they did not love each other very much. Jack’s little sister Lucy cried the most. He promised to write to her, and she promised to write to him and tell him about everybody and everything, and the horses and dogs, and something very like a tear came into his eyes, and a difficulty of speaking to which he was not accustomed, as he gave her his last kiss. Just then, Admiral Triton, Jack’s naval friend, drove up to the door, and by a mighty effort all traces of his feelings were banished—not that the Admiral would have thought the worse of him a bit on account of them. The Admiral was of the old school. He

had one leg, the other being supplied by what looked remarkably like a mop-stick. His appearance was somewhat rough, especially when he went out in rainy weather, and his countenance was not a little battered, but his heart was as tender and almost as simple as Jack's or even Lucy's for that matter. He had insisted on taking Jack to Portsmouth and seeing him on board. "It will be an advantage to the youngster perhaps, and, besides, it will freshen me up a bit myself," he observed to Jack's father; "so say no more about it, neighbour Rogers."

On their arrival at Portsmouth they went to the *George*, and the Admiral then took Jack to try on the rest of his kit.

"And I say, Mr Selby," observed the Admiral, "just shake the reefs out of the youngster's clothes at once, will you; why you would stop his growth if you were to swaddle him up in that way."

"Certainly, Admiral; but young gentlemen nowadays fancy well-fitting trousers," observed the tailor.

"And tight-pinching shoes, which will give them corns, and prevent them stepping out like men," observed the Admiral; "but though they are silly, wiser people should not humour them."

Leaving Jack with the tailor, who was really a very trustworthy man, Admiral Triton stumped down to the well-known Point, to have a look about him, as he said. While he was standing there, with his hands in his old pea-coat pocket, gazing out on the harbour, and thinking of bygone days and many an event of his youth connected with that place, a man-of-war's boat ran in among the wherries, and a

youngster sprang out of her, a small portmanteau being afterwards handed to him.

“Hillo, my man! if you’re inclined to gain a shilling, just carry this up to the *George* for me, will you?” exclaimed the midshipman, addressing the rough-looking, one-legged seaman he saw before him. The Admiral was so tickled with the notion, that without saying a word he touched his hat, and taking the portmanteau, stumped off with it, followed by the owner. Two waiters were standing at the door of the *George*. When they saw the Admiral they hurried forward.

“Pray, Admiral, let me help you in with that thing,” they exclaimed eagerly. At the same moment up came Jack. He burst into a jovial fit of laughter. There before him stood Terence Adair, in midshipman’s uniform, the very picture of dismay.

“Oh, sir, I beg your pardon, I did not know you were an Admiral!” he exclaimed. Just then he caught the eye of Jack, who had gone up to the Admiral. Paddy’s countenance brightened a little. “How lucky!” he added. “Do apologise for me, Jack.”

“Well, well, but I say, youngster, you are not going to do me out of my shilling; just hand me that, at all events,” said the Admiral, laughing. “Another time save your money, and carry your shirt-collars yourself.”

Terence, fumbling in his pocket, produced the coin, which the Admiral bestowed on an old blind man who was passing at the moment. Jack and Terence shook hands heartily. A look from the first assured the other that he need not have the slightest fear of the consequences of his mistake.

“What ship do you belong to, youngster?” asked the Admiral.

“The *Racer*, sir,” said Terence; “she’s a fine frigate—there’s not another like her in the service.” The Admiral looked approvingly when he heard the remark.

“Why, she’s my ship,” exclaimed Jack, “though I haven’t joined yet.”

“Yours, Jack! how capital!” cried Terence in a tone of delight; “well, that is fortunate.” The Admiral seemed much amused at the meeting of the two friends. Terence had come on shore to see his relative Lord Derrynane, whom Admiral Triton knew; and they all dined together, and the next day the Admiral accompanied the two lads on board their ship, which had just gone out to Spithead. She was a thirty-six gun frigate, and worthy of all the encomiums Terence had lavishly bestowed on her at dinner. The Admiral stumped all over her, and examined all the new inventions, and went into the midshipmen’s berth, which was a very natty one; and he sat down and talked of old times during the war, and told a good story or two, and made himself perfectly at home, and introduced Jack “as a fellow who would speak for himself by and by;” and when he went away he was voted a regular trump, and no small share of his lustre fell on Jack. The Admiral and Jack went on deck. The former was in no hurry to leave the ship. He took a great interest in all that was going forward. They walked the deck for some time. The Admiral stopped, and said with more seriousness than was his wont: “Jack, I have given you several pieces of advice which you have taken well from an old sailor who has lost his leg in the service of his country,

and has been pretty well riddled and knocked about besides. I must give you another, the most important of all—never forget that you are a Christian, and never be ashamed of confessing it. Your Bible tells you what that means. You've got one in your chest. Read it often, and learn from it. Nail your colours to the mast, and fight under them. You'll thus keep your spiritual enemies at bay, as I hope you will those of your country." Jack grasped the Admiral's hand to show that he understood him, but for the life of him he could not have found words to express what he wanted to say. They had stopped, and were looking over the ship's side. Jack espied a boat pulling up under the frigate's quarter, with a midshipman's chest and a midshipman in her.

"What, more youngsters!" growled out an old mate; "we've our complement, and more than enough already." Jack's heart gave a jump of pleasure. He thought that he recognised Murray. It was a curious coincidence, if such was the case, that the three schoolfellows should meet. The boat came alongside, the chest was hoisted up in spite of the old mate's growls, the midshipman followed, and in another minute Jack Terence and Alick were shaking hands, and laughing heartily at their happy encounter. Murray said that he had not come to join the *Racer* permanently, but that he had been ordered a passage to the Mediterranean, where the sloop of war to which he had been appointed was stationed. The Admiral told Murray that he knew his father, and that he was glad a son of his had chosen the navy as a profession. He then heartily shook hands with the three lads; and when he went on shore all the midshipmen of the ship manned the side ropes to show their respect to the fine

old sailor, and gave him three cheers as he pulled away. Jack confessed that, somehow or other, he felt more inclined to pipe his eye on that occasion than on any of his other leave-takings. Two days after this the *Racer*, bound for the Mediterranean, was running out at the Needles, whose jagged peaks and high white cliffs rose in picturesque beauty on the left hand. The wind was fair, the sky blue, and the water smooth, and the three midshipmen looked forward with delight to the numerous adventures they expected to encounter.

Chapter Two.

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In the Mediterranean.

The gallant frigate, which bore the three midshipmen and their fortunes, was soon plunging into a heavy sea, caused by a strong breeze from the westward, which she encountered as she stood across the Bay of Biscay. “There we lay all the day, in the Bay of Biscay, oh!” sang Paddy Adair, as he, with other young gentlemen, sat in the berth after dinner; but, as he sang, there was a tremulousness in his voice ominous of a troubled soul within, while the “Oh!” came out with a peculiar emphasis which brought down upon him the laughter of the other youngsters, who, having been rather longer at sea, had become accustomed to such joltings and tumblings about. Jack meantime, who had just come below from his watch on deck, was attacking, with a ferocity which made it appear as if he was contending with

some bitter enemy, instead of a plentiful dinner, the boiled beef and biscuit the boy had lately placed on the table. When spoken to, he scarcely looked up, but continued cramming mouthful after mouthful down his throat, while his eyes rolled round and round; and more than once he gazed at the door, contemplating evidently how he could most quickly make his escape on deck. Alick Murray meantime leaned back at the end of the berth, with a book in his hand, under the impression that he was reading; but his head ached; his dinner had been untasted, and, though his eyes may have seen the letters, they conveyed no impression to his brain. The rest of the members of the mess were variously employed. Some were writing up their logs; others doing their day's work; a few reading, and some were discussing subjects, if not very erudite, at all events, apparently highly amusing to themselves, from the peals of laughter they occasionally elicited. Two youngsters were having a quiet little fight in the corner, pummelling each other's heads to their hearts' content, till brought to order by a couple of books aimed scientifically across the berth by old Hemming, the senior mate of the mess, who, from constant practice, was very perfect in that mode of projecting missiles. There were several other passed mates in the berth, and two assistant-surgeons—one of them old enough to be the father of any of the youngsters—and a second master and a master's assistant, and the captain and purser's clerks, and three or four other midshipmen of various ages. All of them did not belong to the frigate, but some were supernumeraries going out to other ships on the station. The fathers of some present were of high rank, and

they had been accustomed to all the luxuries wealth can give, while others were the sons of poor men, officers in the army and navy, who had little beyond their pay on which to depend. Altogether they formed a very heterogeneous mass, and a strict system of discipline was required to keep them in order. Captain Lascelles, who commanded the *Racer*, was an officer and a gentleman in the true sense of the word, and he wished that all the officers under his command should deserve the same character. Those belonging to the gun-room were mostly men of this description, but one or two scarcely came up to it. Of these one was the lieutenant of marines. He formed an exception to the general character won by that noble corp—for a braver and more gallant set of men are nowhere to be found. Lieutenant Spry was not a favourite either with his superiors or with those below him. The midshipmen especially disliked him, and he seemed to have a decided antipathy to them.

To return to the midshipmen’s berth: Jack Rogers continued to bolt his beef, Alick to fancy that he was reading, and Adair to try and sing, when, in spite of his courage, nature, or rather the *tumblification* of the ship, triumphed;—springing over the table, he rushed up the hatchway towards the nearest port on the upper deck. Now, as it happened, Lieutenant Spry was with uneasy steps endeavouring to take his constitutional walk along the deck at that moment, and Paddy, not seeing him, ran with his head directly against the lower button of the marine officer’s waistcoat, whereon the seasick midshipman found his ears pinched, and received a shower of no very refined

epithets. Poor Terence, who, essentially the gentleman, would not have retorted if he could, was able only to ejaculate, “Beg pardon, sir!” when the usual result of seasickness followed, to the no small disfigurement of the marine’s white trousers. The enraged officer, on this, thundered down invectives on poor Paddy’s head, and finished off in a most un-officer-like way by kicking him down the hatchway from whence he had just emerged. Adair returned crestfallen and miserable, brooding over the injury and insults he had received. There could have been no doubt that a formal complaint made to the captain would have brought down a severe reprimand on the head of the marine officer, but the idea of making a complaint never crossed the imagination of the midshipman. Paddy, however, told his story to his companions, and even Murray agreed that Mr Spry had merited punishment. They eagerly discussed the subject—all the midshipmen had been insulted in the person of Adair, and it was not long before a bright idea was elicited from among them. On board the ship, belonging to the men, was a large monkey, whom they called Quirk, a very tame and sagacious animal, who had a peculiar aptitude for learning any trick which any person had perseverance enough to teach him. “He’d know more nor any of the ship’s boys if it weren’t for his tail,” the men used to remark after the performance of one of his clever tricks.

“Capital!” exclaimed Jack, forgetting all about his seasickness and clapping his hands with delight when the idea which had been brought forth was propounded; “he’ll

do in it first-rate style—ha, ha, ha!” and a merry peal of laughter ran through the berth.

The gale blew over, and the sea once more was bright and blue, as the frigate made her way towards the Rock of Gibraltar. For several days the three midshipmen were wonderfully quiet below; sometimes they were forward, and sometimes they sat together at the farther end of their own berth. They had needles and thread and scissors under weigh, and bits of red cloth and leather, and indeed all sorts of outfitters’ materials, the employment on which seemed to afford them infinite satisfaction. Mr Spry, as in fancied dignity he paced the quarter-deck, of course did not remark the constant absence of so insignificant a person as a midshipman from it; and the recollection that he had behaved not altogether in a becoming way to Adair did not probably cross his mind. Now the lieutenant had a peculiarly pompous air, and the habit, whenever he wished to blow his nose, of drawing his white cambric pocket-handkerchief from his breast pocket with what he thought peculiar dignity, and of flourishing it in his hand after each operation in a fine theatrical style. He had read in some advertising circular that the use of a fine cambric handkerchief always marks the gentleman; so he considered that if he purchased a set, no one would afterwards venture to doubt his claim to that character. All day long, Jack, or Alick, or Paddy, sometimes singly and sometimes all together, were forward in the company of no less important a character than Quirk, the monkey. It is extraordinary how perseveringly they devoted themselves to him. Had they employed the same time in teaching some of their fellow-creatures, the ship’s

boys, they might have imparted a considerable amount of useful knowledge, notwithstanding what the men said on the subject. At last they considered that the time had arrived for bringing their labours to a triumphant result.

One fine calm morning the marines had been called out to drill. For some reason Lieutenant Spry did not at once make his appearance, but a representative came forward instead in the person of Master Quirk, who sprang aft to the spot which should have been occupied by the lieutenant, dressed in full fig, with red coat and belt and hat, and a sword by his side, while his breast pocket was well stuffed out with a huge piece of white cotton. “Attention!” cried out some one on deck. The men unconsciously obeyed, and instantly Quirk drew out his handkerchief, and, spluttering with a loud noise, flourished it vehemently in the air. On this, even the self-possession of the marines gave way; and instead of being angry, they burst into uncontrollable fits of laughter, which were joined in by all the spectators, who were crowding aft to see the fun.

At that moment Mr Spry rushed on deck, using his handkerchief exactly as Quirk had been doing. When the whole scene burst on him, his fury knew no bounds. He rushed to his station at the head of his men, which the monkey seemed in no way disposed to vacate, nor did he till his quick eye caught sight of the toe of the officer approaching him, when, with a loud chuckling “Quacko! quacko! quacko!” he leaped nimbly up the ringing.

It was some time before order was restored; and even while his drill was going on, a merry peal of laughter reached the ears of the fuming lieutenant from different

parts of the deck, in which he felt certain he could recognise the voices of Adair and his two friends. The moment the drill was over, instead of acting like a wise man, and passing the matter over as an occurrence in no way intended to annoy him, he went aft and made a formal complaint to Captain Lascelles. As every man who chooses to encourage a toady can have one, so even had Lieutenant Spry, in the person of one of his men, who had watched the proceedings of the midshipmen, and now came forward as a witness against them. All three were summoned to the cabin, and they could not, of course, deny the charge. The captain had considerable difficulty in keeping his countenance, as Paddy, acting as spokesman of the party, pleaded their cause. He did not mend it when he confessed that the trick had been played in consequence of the way the lieutenant had treated him.

“It is mean, and unchristian, and altogether wrong, to harbour revenge, young gentlemen,” said the captain. “I cannot now take cognisance of Mr Spry’s conduct on the occasion to which you allude; and I conclude that he will be satisfied if you apologise to him. As the conduct of which you have been guilty was public, so also must be your punishment. Go up, each of you, to one of the mast-heads, and remain there till I call you down. Adair, do you go to the mizen-mast; Rogers, take the mainmast; and Murray, the foremast. I have settled that matter, I hope, to your satisfaction, Mr Spry,” observed the captain, with a freezing manner, which somewhat damped the dignity of the lieutenant.

Up the rigging went the three midshipmen, each of them obtaining possession of a handful of biscuit and a piece of beef to stay their hunger, as they had a prospect of losing their dinners unless the captain relented sooner than could be expected. There they all sat on their lofty perches, occasionally making telegraphic signals to each other, and not particularly unhappy with their punishment.

The captain and gun-room officers were taking their for noon quarter-deck walk, and nearly everybody on board was on deck, when a loud chattering was heard, and who should be seen mounting the mizen rigging but Quirk, still habited in his red coat, with his hat fixed firmly on his head, intent, most clearly, on mischief. No sooner did he get alongside Adair, than, pulling out his handkerchief, he flourished it vehemently in his face; and then, as if satisfied with the performance of his lesson, he slid down the mizen topmast stay, and in an instant after was up again close to Jack, before whom he performed the same ceremony. Paddy and Jack almost fell from their perches with laughter, especially when Quirk sprang forward along another stay, and paid a similar visit to Murray. Everybody on deck was looking on, and all abaft were amused, with the exception of Lieutenant Spry, who was in a towering rage, vowing that he would demand a court-martial, and get the midshipmen, or the monkey, or himself—nobody knew exactly which—dismissed the ship. The lieutenant shouted out to somebody to catch the monkey, but as he did not name any one in particular, no one went, and he had the pleasure of observing his own peculiarity exhibited backwards and forwards, from mast-head to mast-head, several times in succession. A joke must

have an end; and the captain, seeing that the best way of bringing this to a conclusion (it being somewhat subversive of discipline) was to call the midshipmen down, they were allowed to return once more on deck, while Quirk's new red coat and accoutrements were seized and hove overboard, to appease the rage of the marine officer. However, Quirk, having been carefully instructed, lost no opportunity of exhibiting his talents; and whenever the marines were drawn up, or the seamen were at divisions, if he happened to be loose, he invariably appeared in front of them flourishing a piece of canvas, or a bit of paper, or anything he could lay paws on to represent a pocket-handkerchief.

At length that classic sea, whose shores have been the scene of the most interesting events of the world's history—that sea which leads to Italy, to Greece, to the Holy Land, to Egypt, with its wondrous Nile and grand old mysterious ruins—the Mediterranean, was sighted; and the frigate dropped her anchor below the high rock of Gibraltar, also celebrated, somewhat in later times, for the way in which it was captured by Sir George Rooke, and has been kept ever since by the obstinate English. The midshipmen had just time to run through the galleries perforated in the rock, to climb to its highest peak, and to get a look at the frolicsome monkeys which dwell in undisturbed liberty on its south-eastern side, before the ship again sailed. They heard that the *Firefly*, the sloop of war to which Murray was appointed, had gone to Greece, so they had the prospect of remaining some time longer together. At Malta the *Racer* remained only a few days, when she was ordered off to the Ionian Islands.

The first place at which she brought up was in the harbour of Corfu. It is a lovely spot. The picturesque hills of the island are seen on one side, and the lofty mountains of Albania on the other, of the strait which divides it from the mainland. Here Murray was separated from his two old schoolfellows. The *Firefly* came in, and he had to join her. The three midshipmen had made good use of their time, and had picked up a fair amount of seamanship. They had now some practice in boating, an amusement which the captain always encouraged; for, as he observed, almost as many lives were lost from ignorance of how to manage a boat properly, as in any other way. This sort of work Jack and Adair especially liked. The frigate had put to sea to visit some of the neighbouring islands, and had more than once returned into port; when one forenoon Captain Lascelles summoned Hemming into the cabin.

“I have a despatch to send to Janina, Mr Hemming,” said he. “You will take the cutter and two of the midshipmen with you—Adair and Rogers. Send them back as soon as you land. You will take horses and travel across the country, and the frigate will call for you in the course of a few days.”

“Ay, ay, sir!” answered Hemming, who never spoke a work more than was necessary in the presence of his superiors.

Jack and Paddy were delighted when they found that they were to go on the expedition; for, though old Hemming kept somewhat a taut hand over them, they had a just regard for his good qualities. They secretly also resolved to indemnify themselves on their return passage by having as much fun as they could. The cutter was a fine boat; and as they had a