

***ARTHUR
QUILLER-COUCH***

***HOCKEN
AND
HUNKEN***

Arthur Quiller-Couch

Hocken and Hunken

A Tale of Troy

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BOOK I.

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CHAPTER I.

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CAPTAIN CAI HAULS ASHORE.

"Well, *that's* over!"

Captain Caius Hocken, from the stern-sheets of the boat bearing him shoreward, slewed himself half-about for a look back at his vessel, the *Hannah Hoo* barquentine. This was a ticklish operation, because he wore a tall silk hat and had allowed his hair to grow during the passage home—St. Michael's to Liverpool with a cargo of oranges, and from Liverpool around to Troy in charge of a tug.

"I'm wonderin' what 'twill feel like when it comes to my turn," mused his mate Mr Tregaskis, likewise pensively contemplating the *Hannah Hoo*. "Not to be sure, sir, as I'd compare the two cases; me bein' a married man, and you—as they say—with the ship for wife all these years, and children too."

"I never liked the life, notwithstanding'," confessed the Captain.

"And I'll be fifty come Michaelmas. Isn' that enough?"

"Nobody likes it, sir; not at our age. But all the same I reckon there be compensations." Mr Tregaskis, shading his eyes (for the day was sunny), let his gaze travel up the spars and rigging of the Barquentine—up to the truck of her maintopmast, where a gull had perched itself and stood with

tail pointing like a vane. "If the truth were known, maybe your landsman on an average don't do as he chooses any more than we mariners."

"Tut, man!" The Captain, who held the tiller, had ceased to look aft. His eyes were on the quay and the small town climbing the hillside above it in tier upon tier of huddled grey houses. "Why, damme! Your landsman chooses to live ashore, to begin with. What's more, he can walk where he has a mind to, no matter where the wind sits."

Mr Tregaskis shook his head. Having no hat, he was able to do this, and it gave him some dialectical advantage over his skipper.

"In practice, sir, you'd find it depend on who's left to mind the shop."

"Home's home, all the same," said Captain Cai positively, thrusting over the tiller to round in for the landing-stairs. "I was born and reared in Troy, d'ye see? and as the sayin' goes—Steady on!"

A small schooner, the *Pure Gem* of Padstow, had warped out from the quay overnight after discharging her ballast with the usual disregard of the Harbour Commissioners' by-laws; and a number of ponderable stones, now barely covered by the tide, encumbered the foot of the landing. On one of these the boat caught her heel, with a jerk that flung the two oarsmen sprawling and toppled Captain Hocken's tall hat over his nose. Mr Tregaskis thrust out a hand to catch it, but in too great a haste. The impact of his fingertips on the edge of the crown sent the hat spinning forward over the thwart whereon sprawled Ben Price, the stroke oar, and into the lap of Nathaniel Berry, bowman.

Nathaniel Berry, recovering his balance, rescued the headgear from the grip of his knees, gave it a polite brush the wrong way of the nap, and passed it aft to Ben Price. Ben—a bald-headed but able seaman—eyed it a moment, rubbed it the right way dubiously with his elbow, and handed it on to the mate; who in turn smoothed it with the palm of his hand, which—being an alert obliging man—he had dexterously wetted overside before the Captain could stop him.

"That's no method to improve a hat," said Captain Hocken shortly, snatching it and wiping it with his handkerchief. He peered into it and pushed out a dent with his thumb. "The way this harbour's allowed to shoal is nothing short of a national disgrace!"

He improved on this condemnation as, having pushed clear and brought his boat safely alongside, he climbed the steps and met the Quaymaster, who advanced to greet him with an ingratiating smile.

"—A scandal to the civilised world! *There's* a way to stack ballast, now! Look at it, sproiled about the quay-edge like a skittle-alley in a cyclone! But that has been your fashion, Peter Bussa, ever since I knowed 'ee, and 'Nigh enough' your motto."

"You've no idea, Cap'n Cai, the hard I work to keep this blessed quay tidy."

"Work? Ay—like a pig's tail, I believe: goin' all day, and still in a twist come night."

"Chide away—chide away, now! But you're welcome home for all that, Cap'n Cai,—welcome as a man's heart to his body."

Captain Cai relaxed his frown. After all, 'twas good to return and find the little town running on just as he left it, even down to Quaymaster Bussa and his dandering ways. Yes, there stood the ancient crane with its broken-cogged winch—his own initials, carved with his first clasp-knife, would be somewhere on the beam; and the heap of sand beside it differed nothing from the heap on which he and his fellows had pelted one another forty years ago. Certainly the two bollards—the one broken, the other leaning aslant—were the same over which he and they had played leap-frog. Yes, and yonder, in the arcade supporting the front of the "King of Prussia," was Long Mitchell leaning against his usual pillar; and there, on the bench before the Working Men's Institute, sat the trio of septuagenarians—Un' Barnicoat, Roper Vine, Old Cap'n Tom—and sunned themselves; inseparables, who seldom exchanged a remark, and never but in terms and tones of inveterate contempt. Facing them in his doorway lounged the town barber, under his striped pole and sign-board—"Simeon Toy, Hairdresser," with the s's still twiddling the wrong way; and beyond, outside the corner-shop, Mr Rogers, ship-broker and ship-chandler—half paralytic but cunning yet,—sat hunched in his invalid chair, blinking; for all the world like a wicked old spider on the watch for flies.

"Ahoy, there!" Captain Cai hailed, and made across at once for the invalid chair: for Mr Rogers was his man of business. "Lost no time in reportin' myself, you see."

Mr Rogers managed to lift his hand a little way to meet Captain Cai's grasp. "Eh? Eh? I've been moored here since breakfast on the look-out for 'ee." He spoke indistinctly by

reason of his paralysis. "They brought word early that the *Hannah Hoo* was in, and I gave orders straight away for a biled leg o' mutton—*with* capers—*an'* spring cabbage. Twelve-thirty we sit down to it, it that suits?"

"Thank 'ee, I should just say it *did* suit! . . . You got my last letter, posted from the Azores?"

"To be sure I did. I've taken the two houses for 'ee, what's more, an' the leases be drawn ready to sign. . . . But where's your friend? He'll be welcome too—that is, if you don't hold three too many for a leg o' mutton?"

"'Bias Hunken? . . . You didn't reckon I was bringing him along with me, did you?"

"I reckoned nothin' at all, not knowin' the man."

"Well, he's at West Indy Docks, London,—or was, a week ago. I saw it on 'The Shipping Gazette' two days before we left the Mersey: the *I'll Away*, from New Orleans; barquentine, and for shape in tonnage might be own sister to the *Hannah Hoo*; but soft wood and Salcombe built. I was half fearing 'Bias might get down to Troy ahead of me."

"He hasn't reported himself to *me*, anyway. . . . But we'll talk about him and other things later on."

Mr Rogers dismissed the subject as the Quaymaster came sidling up to join them. Mild gossip was a passion with the Quaymaster, and eavesdropping his infirmity.

"Well, Cap'n Cai, and so you've hauled ashore—and for good, if I hear true?"

"For good it is, please God," answered Captain Cai, lifting his hat at the word. He was a simple man and a pious.

"And a householder you've become already, by all accounts. I don't set much store by Town Quay talk as a rule

—"

"That's right," interrupted Mr Rogers. "There's no man ought to know its worth better than you, that sets most of it goin'."

"They *do* say as you've started by leasin' the two cottages in Harbour Terrace."

"Do they?" Captain Cai glanced at the ship-chandler for confirmation.

"Well, then, I hope it is true."

"'Tis nothing of the sort," snapped Mr Rogers. Seeing how Captain Cai's face fell, he added, "I may be wrong, o' course, but I reckon there was *two* tenants, and they wanted a cottage apiece."

"Ah, to be sure!" agreed the honest captain, visibly relieved.

But the Quaymaster persisted. "Yes, yes; there was talk of a friend o' yours, an' that you two were for settin' up house alongside one another. Hunken was the name, if I remember?"

Again Captain Cai glanced at the ship-chandler. He was plainly puzzled, as the ship-chandler was plainly nettled. But he answered simply—

"That's it—'Bias Hunken."

"Have I met the man, by any chance?"

"No," said Captain Cai firmly, "you haven't, or you wouldn't ask the question. He's the best man ever wore shoe-leather, and you can trust him to the end o' the earth."

"I can't say as I know a Hunken answerin' that description," Mr Bussa confessed dubiously.

"You've heard the description, anyway," suggested Mr Rogers, losing patience. "And now, Peter Bussa, what d'ye say to running off and annoying somebody else?"

The Quaymaster fawned, and was backing away. But at this point up came

Barber Toy, who for some minutes had been fretting to attract Captain

Cai's notice, and could wait no longer.

"Hulloa, there! Is it Cap'n Cai?—an' still carryin' his gaff-tops'l, I see" (this in pleasant allusion to the tall hat). "Well, home you be, it seems, an' welcome as flowers in May!"

"Thank 'ee, Toy." Captain Cai shook hands.

"We was talkin' business," said the ship-chandler pointedly.

"Then you might ha' waited for a better occasion," Mr Toy retorted.

"Twasn' mannerly of ye, to say the least."

"Better be unmannerly than troublesome, I've heard."

"Better be both than unfeelin'. What! Leave Cap'n Cai, here, pass my door, an' never a home-comin' word?"

"I was meanin' to pay you a visit straight away; indeed I was," said Captain Cai contritely. "Troy streets be narrow and full o' friends; and when a man's accustomed to sea-room—" He broke off and drew a long breath. "But O, friends, if you knew the good it is!"

"Ay, Cap'n: East or West, home is best."

"And too far East is West, as every sailor man knows. . . . There, now, take me along and think' that out while you're giving me a clip; for the longer you stand scratching your head the longer my hair's growin'." He turned to Mr Rogers.

"So long, soce! I'll be punctual at twelve-thirty—what's left of me."

CHAPTER II.

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THE BARBER'S CHAIR.

"This *is* home!" Captain Cai settled himself down in the barber's chair with a sigh of luxurious content. "I've heard married men call it better," said Mr Toy, fetching forth a clean wrapper.

"Very likely." The Captain sighed again contentedly. "I take no truck in marriage, for my part. A friend's company enough for me."

"What's his name, Cap'n? The whole town's dyin' to know."

"He's called Hunken—Tobias Hunken."

The barber paused, snapping his scissors and nodding. "Bussa was right then, or Bussa and Philp between 'em."

"Hey?"

"'Tis wonderful how news gets abroad in Troy. . . . 'Hunken,' now? And where might he be one of? I don't seem to fit the name in my mem'ry at all."

"You wouldn't. He comes from t'other side of the Duchy—a Padstow-born man, and he've never set eyes on Troy in his life."

"Yet he takes a house an' settles here? That's queer, as you might say."

"I see nothing queer about it. He's my friend—that's why. And what's more, the Lord never put bowels into a better man."

"He'll be a pleasure to shave, then," opined Mr Toy.

"No, he won't; he wears his hair all over his face. Talkin' of that reminds me—when you've done croppin' me I want a clean shave."

"Chin-beard an' all, Cap'n?"

"Take it off—take it off! 'Twas recommended to me against sore throat; but I never liked the thing nor the look of it."

"Then there's one point, it seems, on which you an' your friend don't agree, sir?"

The barber meant this facetiously, but Captain Cai considered it in all seriousness.

"You're mistaken," he answered. "Between friends there's a give-an'-take, and until you understand that you don't understand friendship. 'Bias Hunken likes me to do as I choose, and I like 'Bias to do as *he* chooses: by consequence o' which the more we goes our own ways the more we goes one another's. That clear, I hope."

"Moderately," the barber assented.

"I'll put it t'other way—about an' make it still clearer. Most married folks, as I notice, start t'other way about. For argyment's sake we'll call 'em Jack an' Joan. Jack starts by thinkin' Joan pretty near perfection; but he wants her quite perfect and all to his mind—*his* mind, d'ye see? Now if you follow that up, as you followed it between 'Bias and me—"

"I don't want my missus to wear a beard, if that's what you mean."

"'Twasn't a good illustration, I admit. But the p'int is, I like 'Bias because he's 'Bias, an' 'Bias likes me because I'm Cai Hocken. That bein' so, don't it follow we're goin' to be better friends than ever, now we've hauled ashore to do as likes us?"

The barber shook his head. "You're determined to have off your chin-beard?"

"*To* be sure. I'm ashore now, aren't I?—and free to wear what face I choose."

"You won't find it so, Cap'n."

"T'ch't! You landsmen be so fed with liberty you don't know your privileges. If you don't like your habits, what hinders you from changin' 'em? But *do* you? Here I come back: here's th' old Town Quay same as ever it was; and here likewise you all be, runnin' on as I left 'ee, like a clockwork—a bit slower with age maybe—that's all. Whereby I conclude your ways content ye."

"You're wrong, Cap'n Cai—you're wrong. We bide by our habits—an', more by token, here comes Mr Philp. 'Morning, Mr Philp." The barber, without turning, nodded towards the newcomer as he entered—a short man, aged about sixty, with a square-cut grey beard, sanguine complexion, and blue eyes that twinkled with a deceptive appearance of humour. "Here's Cap'n Cai Hocken, home from sea."

"Eh? I am very glad to see you, Cap'n Hocken," said Mr Philp politely.

"There's a post-card waitin' for you, up at the Office."

Captain Cai sat bolt upright of a sudden, narrowly missing a wound from the scissors. "That will be from 'Bias! To think I hadn' sense enough to go straight to the Post Office and inquire!"

"'Tis from your friend, sure enough," announced Mr Philp. "He paid off his crew last Toosday, an' took his discharge an' the train down to Plymouth. He've bought a wardrobe there—real wornut—an' 'tis comin' round by sea. There's a plate-chest, too, he thinks you may fancy— price thirty-five shillin secondhand: an' he hopes to reach Troy the day after next, which by the post-mark is to-morra."

"Mr Philp," explained the barber, "calls in at the Office every mornin' to read all the post-cards. 'Tis one of his habits."

"Recent bereavement?" asked Mr Philp, before Captain Cai could well digest this.

"Eh?"

"Recent bereavement?" Mr Philp was examining the tall hat, which he had picked up to make room for his own person on the customers' bench.

"That's another of his aptitoods," the barber interpolated. "He attends all the funerals in the parish."

"In the midst o' life we are in death," observed Mr Philp. "That's a cert, Cap'n Hocken, an' your hat put me in mind of it."

"Oh, 'tis my hat you're meanin'? What's wrong with it?"

"Did I say there was anything wrong? No, I didn't—God forbid! An' no doubt," concluded Mr Philp cheerfully, "the fashions'll work round to it again."

"I'll change it for another."

"You won't find that too easy, will you?" The barber paused in his snipping, and turned about for a thoughtful look at the hat.

"I mean I'll buy another, of a different shape. First the beard, then the headgear—as I was tellin' Toy, a man ashore can reggilate his ways as he chooses, an here's to prove it."

"They *do* say a clean shave is worth two virtuous resolutions," answered the barber, shaking his head Again. "And you're makin' a brave start, I don't deny. But wait till you pick up with a few real habits."

"What sort o' habits?"

"The sort that come to man first-along in the shape o' duties—like church-goin'. Look here, Cap'n, I'll lay a wager with 'ee. . . . Soon as you begin to walk about this town a bit, you'll notice a terrible lot o' things that want improvin'—"

"I don't need to walk off the Town Quay for *that*."

"Ah, an' I daresay it came into your head that if you had the orderin' of Bussa you wouldn' be long about it? The town'll think it, anyway. We're a small popilation in Troy, all tied up in neighbourly feelin's an' hangin' together till—as the sayin' is—you can't touch a cobweb without hurtin' a rafter. What the town's cryin' out for is a new broom—a man with ideas, eh, Mr Philp?—above all, a man who's independent. So first of all they'll flatter ye up into standin' for the Parish Council, and put ye head o' the poll—"

"Tut, man!" interrupted Captain Cai, flushing a little. "What do I know about such things? Not o' course that I shan't take an interest—as a ratepayer—"

"To be sure. I heard a man say, only last Saturday, sittin' in that very chair, as there was never a ship's captain hauled ashore but in three weeks he'd be ready to teach the Chancellor of th' Exchequer his business an' inclined to wonder how soon he'd be offered the job."

"A ship's captain needn't be altogether a born fool."

"No: an' next you'll be bent on larnin' to speak in public; and takin' occasions to practise, secondin' votes o' thanks an' such like. After that you'll be marryin' a wife—"

"I don't want to marry a wife, I tell 'ee!"

"Who said you did? Well, then, you'll get married—they dotes on a public man as a rule; and for tanglin' a man up in habits there's no snare like wedlock, not in the whole world. I've known scores o' men get married o' purpose to break clear o' their habits an' take a fresh start; but ne'er a man that didn't tie himself up thereby in twenty new habits for e'er a one he'd let drop."

"Go on with your folly, if it amuses you."

"Then, again, you've taken a house."

"So Rogers tells me. I don't even know the rent, at this moment."

"Twenty-five pound p'r annum," put in Mr Philp. Captain Cai—released just then from his wrapper—turned and stared at him.

"I had it from the Postmistress," Mr Philp's tone was matter-of-fact, his gaze unabashed. "Bein' paralytic, Rogers did your business with the widow by letter; he keeps a type-writin' machine an' pays Tabb's girl three shillin' a-week to work it. The paper's thin, as I've had a mind to warn 'er more than once."

"'Twould be a Christian act," suggested Mr Toy. "If there's truth in half what folks say, some of old Johnny Rogers' correspondence 'd make pretty readin' for the devil."

"But look here," interposed Captain Cai, "what's this about doin' business with a widow? *Whose* widow?"

"Why, your landlady, to be sure—the Widow Bosenna, up to Rilla Farm."

"No—stop a minute—take that blessed latherin'-brush out o' my mouth!

You don't tell me old Bosenna's dead, up there?"

"It didn' altogether surprise most of us when it happened," said the barber philosophically. "A man risin' sixty-five, with *his* habits! . . . But it all came about by the County Council's widenin' the road up at Four Turnin's. . . . You see, o' late years th' old man 'd ride home on Saturdays so full he *had* to drop off somewhere 'pon the road; an' his mare gettin' to find this out, as dumb animals do, had picked up a comfortable way of canterin' hard by Four Turnin's and stoppin' short, slap in the middle of her stride, close by th' hedge, so 's her master 'd roll over it into the plantation there, where the ditch is full of oak-leaves. There he'd lie, peaceful as a suckin' child; and there, every Sabbath mornin' in the small hours, one o' the farm hands 'd be sent to gather 'em in wi' the new-laid eggs. So it went on till one day the County Council, busy as usual, takes a notion to widen th' road just there; an' not only pulls down th' hedge, but piles up a great heap o' stones, ready to build a new one. Whereby either the mare hadn' noticed the improvement or it escaped her memory. Anyway—the night bein' dark—she shoots old Bosenna neck-an'-crop 'pon the

stones. It caused a lot o' feelin' at the time, an' the coroner's jury spoke their minds pretty free about it. They brought it in that he'd met his death by the visitation o' God brought about by a mistake o' the mare's an' helped on by the over-zealous behaviour of the County Surveyor. Leastways that's how they put it at first; but on the Coroner's advice they struck out the County Surveyor an' altered him to a certain party or parties unknown."

"I mind Mrs Bosenna well," said Captain Cai, rising as the barber unwrapped him; "a smallish well-featured body, with eyes like bullace plums."

"Ay, an' young enough to ha' been old Bosenna's daughter—a penniless maid from Holsworthy in Devon, as I've heard; an' now she's left there, up to Rilla, happy as a mouse in cheese. Come to think, Cap'n Cai, you might do worse than cock your hat in that quarter."

But Captain Cai did not hear for the moment. He was peering into the looking-glass and thinking less of Mrs Bosenna than of his shaven-altered appearance.

"'Twould be a nice change for her, too," pursued Mr Toy in a rallying tone; "an adaptable man like you, Cap'n."

"Eh? What's that you were sayin' about my hat?" asked Captain Cai; and just then, letting his gaze wander to the depths of the glass, he was aware of Mr Philp shamelessly trying on that same hat before another mirror at the back of the shop.

"Hullo, there!"

Mr Philp faced about solidly, composedly.

"I was thinkin'," said he, "as I'd bid you three-an'-six for this, if you've done with it. I've long been wantin' something

o' the sort, for interments."

"Done with you!" said Captain Cai, reaching for it and clapping it on his head. "Only you must send round for it tomorrow, when I've found myself something more up-to-date." Again he contemplated his shaven image in the mirror. "Lord! A man do look younger without a chin-beard!"

"Ay, Cap'n." Barber Toy, knuckles on hips, regarded and approved his handiwork. "The world's afore 'ee. Go in and win!"

As he stepped out upon the Quay, Captain Cai lifted his gaze towards the tower of the Parish Church, visible above an alley-way that led between a gable-end of the Town Hall and the bulging plank of the "King of Prussia." Aloft there the clock began to chime out the eight notes it had chimed, at noon and at midnight, through his boyhood, and had been chiming faithfully ever since.

Yes, it was good to be home! Captain Cai would have been astonished to learn that his thirty-five years at sea had left any corner for sentiment. Yet a sudden mist gathered between him and the face of the old clock. Nor had it cleared when, almost punctually on the last stroke, a throng of children came pouring from school through the narrow alley-ways. They ran by him with no more than a glance, not interrupting their shouts. In a moment the Quay was theirs; they were at leap-frog over the bollards; they were storming the sand-heap, pelting a king of the castle, who pelted back with handfuls. Captain Cai felt an absurd sense of being left out in the cold. Not a child had recognised him.

All very well . . . but to think that these thirty-odd years had made not a scrap of difference—that the Quay lay as it had lain, neglected, untidy as ever! Thirty-odd years ago it had been bad enough. But what conscience was there in standing still and making no effort to move with the times? As Barber Toy said, it was scandalous.

CHAPTER III.

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TABB'S CHILD.

"Three hundred pounds a-year . . ." mused Captain Cai between two puffs of tobacco smoke. He repeated the words, rolling them in his mouth, as though they tasted well. "You're pretty sure 'twill come to that?"

"Sure," answered Mr Rogers. The pair had dined, and were now promoting digestion with pipes and grog in Mr Rogers' bow-window overlooking the harbour. "You might put your money to an annuity, o' course, an' live like a lord: but I'm reckonin' it in safe ord'nary investments, averagin' (let's say) four per cent. An' that's leavin' out your thirty-odd shares in the *Hannah Hoo*, when she's for sale. Ship-auctions be chancey things in these days, an' private purchasers hard to find."

"I never knew 'em when they weren't," said Captain Cai.

"When d'ye pay off, by the way?"

"Not till Saturday. There's no hurry. When a man drops hook on his last cruise I allow 'tis his duty to tidy up an' leave all ship-shape; in justice to hisself, you understand. There's Tregaskis an' the crew, too,—old shipmates every one—"

The chandler nodded.

"Ay, you're to be envied, Cap'n. There's others—masters of oil-tanks, f'r instance—as makes their pile faster; some of em' in ways that needn't be mentioned atween you an' me. But slow an' honest has been your motto; an' here you be—What's your age? Fifty? Say fifty at the outside.—Here you be at fifty with a tidy little income and a clean conscience to sit with in your pew o' Sundays; nothing to do o' week-days but look after a few steady-goin' investments an' draw your little dividends."

"That'd be more business than I've a mind for, Rogers," answered Captain Cai; "at any rate, while you live. I've a-left my affairs to you these twelve year, an' mean to continue, please God—you knowin' my ways."

The chandler blinked. "That's very han'some o' ye, Cap'n," he said after a long pause. "But—"

"There's no 'but' about it," interrupted Captain Cai shortly, looking away and resting his gaze on the *Hannah Hoo* out in the harbour, where she lay on the edge of the deep-water channel among a small crowd of wind-bounders. Her crew had already made some progress in unbending sails, and her stripped spars shone as gold against the westering sunlight. "No 'but' about it, Rogers—unless o' course you're unwillin'."

"What's willin' or unwillin' to a man broken in health as I be?

That's the p'int, Cap'n—here, set opposite to 'ee, staring 'ee in the

face—a hulk, shall we say?—rudder gone, ridin' to a thread o' life—"

"You'll ride to it a many years yet, please God again."

"I take 'e to witness this is not my askin'."

Captain Cai stared. "'Tis my askin', Rogers. I put it as a favour."

"What about your friend? I was thinkin' as maybe *he'd* take over the job."

"'Bias?" Captain Cai shook his head. "He've no gift in money matters; let be that I don't believe in mixin' friendship in business."

Mr Rogers pondered this for some while in silence. Then he struck a hand-bell beside him, and his summons was answered by a small short-skirted handmaiden who had waited table.

"Pipe's out, my dear," he announced. "An' while you're about it you may mix us another glassful apiece."

"Not for me, thank 'ee," said Captain Cai.

"An' not for him, neither," said the girl. She was but a child, yet she spoke positively, and yet again without disrespect in her manner. "'Tis poison for 'ee," she added, knocking out the ash from her master's churchwarden pipe and refilling it from the tobacco-jar. "You know what the doctor said?"

"Ugh!—a pair o' tyrants, you an' the doctor! Just a thimbleful now—if the Cap'n here will join me."

"You heard him? He don't want another glass."

Her solemn eyes rested on Captain Cai, and he repeated that he would take no more grog.

She struck a match and held it to the pipe while the chandler drew a few puffs. Then she was gone as noiselessly as she had entered.

"That's a question now," observed Captain Cai after a pause.

"What's a question?"

"Servants. I've talked it over with 'Bias, and he allows we should advertise for a single housekeeper; a staid honest woman to look after the pair of us—with maybe a trifle of extra help. That gel, for instance, as waited table—"

"Tabb's child?"

"Is that her name?"

"She was christened Fancy—Fancy Tabb—her parents being a brace o' fools. Ay, she's a nonesuch, is Tabb's child."

"With a manageable woman to give her orders—What's amiss with ye, Rogers?"

Captain Cai put the question in some alarm, for the heaving of the ship-chandler's waistcoat and a strangling noise in his throat together suggested a sudden gastric disturbance.

But it appeared they were but symptoms of mirth. Mr Rogers lifted his practicable hand, and with a red bandanna handkerchief wiped the rheum from his eyes.

"Ho, dear!—you'll excuse me, Cap'n; but 'with a manageable woman,' you said? I'd pity her startin' to manage the like of Fancy Tabb."

"Why, what's wrong wi' the child?"

"Nothin'—let be I can't keep a grown woman in the house unless she's a half-wit. I have to get 'em from Tregarrick, out o' the Home for the Feeble-Minded. But it don't work so badly. They're cheap, you understand; an' Fancy teaches 'em to cook. If they don't show no promise after a fortni't's trial, she sends 'em back. I hope," added the chandler, perceiving Captain Cai to frown, "you're not feelin' no afterthoughts about that leg o' mutton. Maybe I ought to have warned 'ee that 'twas cooked by a person of weak intellect."

"Don't mention it," said Captain Cai politely. "What the eye don't see the heart don't grieve, as they say; an' the jint was boiled to a turn. . . . I was only wonderin' how you picked up such a maid!"

The chandler struck again upon the small hand-bell. "I got her from a bad debt."

"Seems an odd way—" began Captain Cai, after pondering for a moment, but broke off, for the hand-maiden stood already on the threshold.

"Fancy Tabb," commanded the chandler, "step fore, here, into the light."

The child obeyed.

"You see this gentleman?"

"Yes, master." Her eyes, as she turned them upon Captain Cai, were frank enough, or frank as eyes could be that guarded a soul behind glooms of reserve. They were straight, at any rate, and unflinching, and very serious.

"You know his business?"

"I think so, master. . . . Has he come to sign the lease? I'll fetch it from your desk, if you'll give me the keys."

"Bide a bit, missy," said Captain Cai. "That'd be buying a pig in a poke, when I ha'n't even seen the house yet—not," he added, with a glance at Mr Rogers, "that I make any doubt of its suiting. But business is business."

The child turned to her master, as much as to ask, "What, then, is your need of me?"

"Cap'n Hocken wants a servant," said Mr Rogers, answering the look.

She appeared to ponder this. "Before seein' the house?" she asked, after a moment or two.

"She had us there, Rogers!" chuckled Captain Cai; but the child was perfectly serious.

"You would like me to show you the house? Master has the key."

"That's an idea, now!" He was still amused.

"When?"

"This moment—that's to say, if your master'll spare you?" He glanced at Mr Rogers, who nodded.

"Couldn't do better," he agreed. "You've a good two hours afore dusk, an' she's a proper dictionary on taps an' drainage."

"Please you to come along, sir." The child waited respectfully while

Captain Cai arose, picked up his hat, and bade his host "So long!"

He followed her downstairs.

Their way to the street lay through the shop, and by the rearward door of it she paused to reach down her hat and

small jacket. The shop was long, dark, intricate; its main window overshadowed by the bulk of the Town Hall, across the narrow alley-way; its end window, which gave on the Quay, blocked high with cheeses, biscuit-tins, boxes of soap, and dried Newfoundland cod. Into this gloom the child flung her voice, and Captain Cai was aware of the upper half of a man's body dimly silhouetted there against the panes.

"Daddy, I'm going out."

"Yes, dear," answered the man's voice dully. "For an hour, very likely.

This gentleman wants to see his new house, and I'm to show it to him."

"Yes, dear."

"You'll be careful, won't you now? Mrs M—fus'll be coming round, certain, for half-a-pound of bacon; And that P—fus girl for candles, if not for sugar. You've to serve neither, mind, until you see their money."

"Yes, dear. What excuse shall I make?" The man's voice was weary but patient. The tone of it set a chord humming faintly somewhere in Captain Cai's memory: but his mind worked slowly and (as he would have put it) wanted sea-room, to come about.

They had taken but a few steps, however, when in the narrow street, known as Dolphin Row, he pulled up with all sail shaking.

"That there party as we passed in the shop—"

"He's my father," said the child quickly.

"And you're Tabb's child. . . . You don't tell me that was Lijah Tabb, as used to be master o' the *Uncle an' Aunt?*"