

***FREDERICK
MARRYAT***



***THE THREE
CUTTERS***

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

[Chapter One.](#)

[Chapter Two.](#)

[Chapter Three.](#)

[Chapter Four.](#)

[Chapter Five.](#)

[Chapter Six.](#)

[Chapter Seven.](#)

Chapter One.

[Table of Contents](#)

Cutter the First.

Reader, have you ever been at Plymouth? If you have, your eye must have dwelt with ecstasy upon the beautiful property of the Earl of Mount Edgcumbe: if you have not been at Plymouth, the sooner that you go there the better. At Mount Edgcumbe you will behold the finest timber in existence, towering up to the summits of the hills, and feathering down to the shingle on the beach. And from this lovely spot you will witness one of the most splendid panoramas in the world. You will see—I hardly know what you will not see—you will see Ram Head, and Cawsand Bay; and then you will see the Breakwater, and Drake's Island, and the Devil's Bridge below you; and the town of Plymouth and its fortifications, and the Hoe; and then you will come to the Devil's Point, round which the tide runs devilish strong; and then you will see the New Victualling Office,—about which Sir James Gordon used to stump all day, and take a pinch of snuff from every man who carried a box, which all were delighted to give, and he was delighted to receive, proving how much pleasure may be communicated merely by a pinch of snuff; and then you will see Mount Wise and Mutton Cove; the town of Devonport; with its magnificent dockyard and arsenals, North Corner, and the way which leads to Saltash. And you will see ships building and ships in ordinary; and ships repairing and ships fitting; and hulks and

convict ships, and the guard-ship; ships ready to sail and ships under sail; besides lighters, men-of-war's boats, dockyard-boats, bum-boats, and shore-boats. In short, there is a great deal to see at Plymouth besides the sea itself: but what I particularly wish now is, that you will stand at the battery of Mount Edgcumbe and look into Barn Pool below you, and there you will see, lying at single anchor, a cutter; and you may also see, by her pendant and ensign, that she is a yacht.

Of all the amusements entered into by the nobility and gentry of our island there is not one so manly, so exciting, so patriotic, or so national, as yacht-sailing. It is peculiar to England, not only for our insular position and our fine harbours, but because it requires a certain degree of energy and a certain amount of income rarely to be found elsewhere. It has been wisely fostered by our sovereigns, who have felt that the security of the kingdom is increased by every man being more or less a sailor, or connected with the nautical profession. It is an amusement of the greatest importance to the country, as it has much improved our ship-building and our ship-fitting, while it affords employment to our seamen and shipwrights. But if I were to say all that I could say in praise of yachts, I should never advance with my narrative. I shall therefore drink a bumper to the health of Admiral Lord Yarborough and the Yacht Club, and proceed.

You observe that this yacht is cutter-rigged, and that she sits gracefully on the smooth water. She is just heaving up her anchor; her foresail is loose, all ready to cast her—in a few minutes she will be under way. You see that there are

ladies sitting at the taffrail; and there are five haunches of venison hanging over the stern. Of all amusements, give me yachting. But we must go on board. The deck, you observe, is of narrow deal planks as white as snow; the guns are of polished brass; the bitts and binnacles of mahogany: she is painted with taste; and all the mouldings are gilded. There is nothing wanting; and yet how clear and unencumbered are her decks! Let us go below. There is the ladies' cabin: can anything be more tasteful or elegant? Is it not luxurious? And, although so small, does not its very confined space astonish you, when you view so many comforts so beautifully arranged? This is the dining-room, and where the gentlemen repair. What can be more complete or *recherché*? And just peep into their state-rooms and bed-places. Here is the steward's room and the beaufet: the steward is squeezing lemons for the punch, and there is the champagne in ice; and by the side of the pail the long-corks are ranged up, all ready. Now, let us go forwards: here are, the men's berths, not confined as in a man-of-war. No! Luxury starts from abaft, and is not wholly lost, even at the fore-peak. This is the kitchen; is it not admirably arranged? What a *multum in parvo*! And how delightful are the fumes of the turtle-soup! At sea we do meet with rough weather at times; but, for roughing it out, give me a *yacht*. Now that I have shown you round the vessel, I must introduce the parties on board.

You observe that florid, handsome man, in white trousers and blue jacket, who has a telescope in one hand, and is sipping a glass of brandy and water which he has just taken off the skylight. That is the owner of the vessel, and a

member of the Yacht Club. It is Lord B—: he looks like a sailor, and he does not much belie his looks; yet I have seen him in his robes of state at the opening of the House of Lords. The one near to him is Mr Stewart, a lieutenant in the navy. He holds on by the rigging with one hand, because, having been actively employed all his life, he does not know what to do with hands which have nothing in them. He is a *protégé* of Lord B—, and is now on board as sailing-master of the yacht.

That handsome, well-built man, who is standing by the binnacle, is a Mr Hautaine. He served six years as midshipman in the navy, and did not like it. He then served six years in a cavalry regiment, and did not like it. He then married, and in a much shorter probation found that he did not like that. But he is very fond of yachts and other men's wives, if he does not like his own; and wherever he goes, he is welcome.

That young man with an embroidered silk waistcoat and white gloves, bending to talk to one of the ladies, is a Mr Vaughan. He is to be seen at Almack's, at Crockford's, and everywhere else. Everybody knows him, and he knows everybody. He is a little in debt, and yachting is convenient.

The one who sits by the lady is a relation of Lord B—; you see at once what he is. He apes the sailor; he has not shaved, because sailors have no time to shave every day; he has not changed his linen, because sailors cannot change every day. He has a cigar in his mouth, which makes him half sick and annoys his company. He talks of the pleasure of a rough sea, which will drive all the ladies below—and then they will not perceive that he is more sick than

themselves. He has the misfortune to be born to a large estate, and to be a *fool*. His name is Ossulton.

The last of the gentlemen on board whom I have to introduce is Mr Seagrove. He is slightly made, with marked features full of intelligence. He has been brought up to the bar; and has every qualification but application. He has never had a brief, nor has he a chance of one. He is the fiddler of the company, and he has locked up his chambers and come, by invitation of his lordship, to play on board of his yacht.

I have yet to describe the ladies—perhaps I should have commenced with them—I must excuse myself upon the principle of reserving the best to the last. All puppet-showmen do so: and what is this but the first scene in my puppet-show?

We will describe them according to seniority. That tall, thin, cross-looking lady of forty-five is a spinster, and sister to Lord B—. She has been persuaded, very much against her will, to come on board; but her notions of propriety would not permit her niece to embark under the protection of only her father. She is frightened at everything: if a rope is thrown down on the deck, up she starts, and cries, “Oh!” if on the deck, she thinks the water is rushing in below; if down below, and there is a noise, she is convinced there is danger; and if it be perfectly still, she is sure there is something wrong. She fidgets herself and everybody, and is quite a nuisance with her pride and ill-humour; but she has strict notions of propriety, and sacrifices herself as a martyr. She is the Hon. Miss Ossulton.