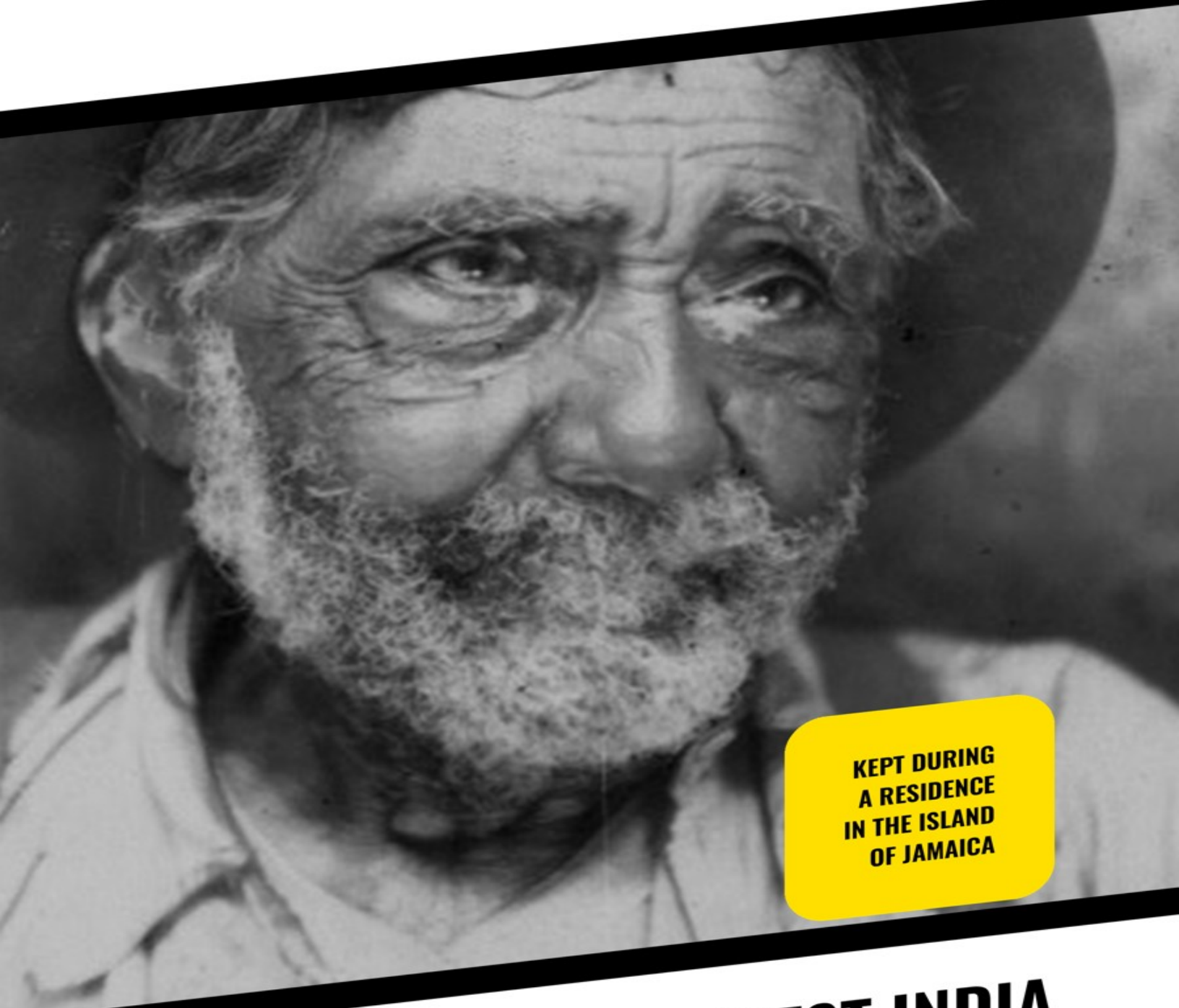




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M. G. LEWIS



KEPT DURING
A RESIDENCE
IN THE ISLAND
OF JAMAICA

**JOURNAL OF A WEST INDIA
PROPRIETOR**

M. G. Lewis

Journal of a West India Proprietor

Kept During a Residence in the Island of Jamaica

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The following Journals of two residences in Jamaica, in 1815-16, and in 1817, are now printed from the MS. of Mr. Lewis; who died at sea, on the voyage homewards from the West Indies, in the year 1818.

JOURNAL OF A WEST INDIA PROPRIETOR

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Expect our sailing in a few hours. But although the vessel left the Docks on Saturday, she did not reach this place till three o'clock on Thursday, the 9th. The captain now tells me, that we may expect to sail certainly in the afternoon of to-morrow, the 10th. I expect the ship's cabin to gain greatly by my two days' residence at the "—————," which nothing can exceed for noise, dirt, and dulness. Eloisa would never have established "black melancholy" at the Paraclete as its favourite residence, if she had happened to pass three days at an inn at Gravesend: nowhere else did I

ever see the sky look so dingy, and the river “*Nunc alio patriam quaero sub sole jacentem.*”—Virgil.

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(WEDNESDAY)

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I left London, and reached Gravesend at nine in the morning, having been taught to exso dirty; to be sure, the place has all the advantages of an English November to assist it in those particulars. Just now, too, a carriage passed my windows, conveying on board a cargo of passengers, who seemed sincerely afflicted at the thoughts of leaving their dear native land! The pigs squeaked, the ducks quacked, and the fowls screamed; and all so dolefully, as clearly to prove, that *theirs* was no dissembled sorrow? And after them (more affecting than all) came a wheelbarrow, with a solitary porker tied in a basket, with his head hanging over on one side, and his legs sticking out on the other, who neither grunted nor moved, nor gave any signs of life, but seemed to be of quite the same opinion with Hannah More’s heroine, “Grief is for *little* wrongs; despair for mine!”

As Miss O'Neil is to play "Elwina" for the first time to-morrow, it is a thousand pities that she had not the previous advantage of seeing the speechless despondency of this poor pig; it might have furnished her with some valuable hints, and enabled her to convey more perfectly to the audience the "expressive silence" of irremediable distress.

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At four o'clock in the afternoon, I embarked on board the "Sir Godfrey Webster," Captain Boyes. On approaching the vessel, we heard the loudest of all possible shrieks proceeding from a boat lying near her: and who should prove to be the complainant, but my former acquaintance, the despairing pig, He had recovered his voice to protest against entering the ship: I had already declared against climbing up the accommodation ladder; the pig had precisely the very same objection. So a *soi-disant* chair, being a broken bucket, was let down for us, and the pig and myself entered the vessel by the same conveyance; only pig had the precedence, and was hoisted up first. The ship proceeded three miles, and then the darkness obliged us to come to an anchor. There are only two other cabin passengers, a Mr. J—— and a Mr. S——; the latter is a planter in the "May-Day Mountains," Jamaica: he wonders, considering how much benefit Great Britain derives from the West Indies, that government is not careful to build more churches in them, and is of opinion, that "hedication the negroes is the only way to make them appy; indeed, in his umble hopinion, hedication his hall in hall!"

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We sailed at six o'clock, passed through "Nob's Hole," the "Girdler's Hole," and "the Pan" (all very dangerous sands, and particularly the last, where at times we had only one foot water below us), by half past four, and at five came to an anchor in the Queen's Channel. Never having seen any thing of the kind before, I was wonderfully pleased with the manoeuvring of several large ships, which passed through the sands at the same time with us: their motions seemed to be effected with as much ease and dexterity as if they had been crane-necked carriages; and the effect as they pursued each other's track and windings was perfectly beautiful.

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The wind was contrary, and we had to beat up the whole way; we did not reach the Downs till past four o'clock, and, as there were above sixty vessels arrived before us, we had some difficulty in finding a safe berth. At length we anchored in the Lower Roads, about four miles off Deal. We can see very clearly the double lights in the vessel moored off the Goodwin sands: it is constantly inhabited by two families, who reside there alternately every fortnight, except when the weather delays the exchange. The "Sir Godfrey Webster" is a vessel of 600 tons, and was formerly in the East India service. I have a very clean cabin, a place for my books, and every thing is much more comfortable than I

expected; the wind, however, is completely west, the worst that we could have, and we must not even expect a change till the full moon. The captain pointed out a man to me to-day, who had been with him in a violent storm off the Bermudas. For six hours together, the flashes of lightning were so unintermitting, that the eye could not sustain them: at one time, the ship seemed to be completely in a blaze; and the man in question (who was then standing at the wheel, near the captain) suddenly cried out, "I don't know what has happened to me, but I can neither see nor stand;" and he fell down upon the deck. He was taken up and carried below; and it appeared that the lightning had affected his eyes and legs, in a degree to make him both blind and lame, though the captain, who was standing by his side, had received no injury: in three or four days, the man was quite well again. In this storm, no less than thirteen vessels were dismasted, or otherwise shattered by the lightning.

Sea Terms.—*Windward*, from whence the wind blows; *leeward*, to which it blows; *starboard*, the *right* of the stern; *larboard*, the *left*; *starboard helm*, when you go to the left; but when to the right, instead of larboard helm, *helm a-port*; *luff you may*, go nearer to the wind; *theis (thus)* you are near enough; *luff no near*, you are too near the wind; the *tiller*, the handle of the rudder; the *capstan*, the weigher of the anchor; the *buntlines*, the ropes which move the body of the sail, the *bunt* being the body; the *bowlines*, those which spread out the sails, and make them swell.

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At six this morning, came on a tremendous gale of wind; the captain says, that he never experienced a heavier. However, we rode it out with great success, although, at one time, it was bawled out that we were driving; and, at another, a brig which lay near us broke from her moorings, and came bearing down close upon us. The danger, indeed, from the difference of size, was all upon the side of the brig; but, luckily, the vessels cleared each other. This evening she has thought it as well to remove further from so dangerous a neighbourhood. There is a little cabin boy on board, and Mr. J—— has brought with him a black terrier; and these two at first sight swore to each other an eternal friendship, in the true German style. It is the boy's first voyage, and he is excessively sea-sick; so he has been obliged to creep into his hammock, and his friend, the little black terrier, has crept into the hammock with him. A boat came from the shore this evening, and reported that several vessels have been dismasted, lost their anchors, and injured in various ways. A brig, which was obliged to make for Ramsgate, missed the pier, and was dashed to pieces completely; the crew, however, were saved, all except the pilot; who, although he was brought on shore alive, what between bruises, drowning, and fright, had suffered so much, that he died two hours afterwards. The weather has now again become calm; but it is still full west.

NOVEMBER 14. (TUESDAY.)

THE HOURS.

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Ne'er were the zephyrs known disclosing
More sweets, than when in Tempe's shades
They waved the lilies, where, reposing,
Sat four and twenty lovely maids.

Those lovely maids were called "the Hours,"
The charge of Virtue's flock they kept;
And each in turn employ'd her powers
To guard it, while her sisters slept.

False Love, how simple souls thou cheatest!
In myrtle bower, that traitor near
Long watch'd an Hour, the softest, sweetest!
The evening Hour, to shepherds dear. *

In tones so bland he praised her beauty,
Such melting airs his pipe could play,
The thoughtless Hour forgot her duty,
And fled in Love's embrace away.

Meanwhile the fold was left unguarded—
The wolf broke in—the lambs were slain:
And now from Virtue's train discarded,
With tears her sisters speak their pain.

Time flies, and still they weep; for never
The fugitive can time restore:
An Hour once fled, has fled for ever,
And all the rest shall smile no more!

* L'heure du berger.

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The wind altered sufficiently to allow us to escape from the Downs; and at dusk we were off Beachy Head. This morning, the steward left the trap-door of the store-hole open; of course, I immediately contrived to step into it, and was on the point of being precipitated to the bottom, among innumerable boxes of grocery, bags of biscuit, and porter barrels;—where a broken limb was the *least* that I could expect. Luckily, I fell across the corner of the trap, and managed to support myself, till I could effect my escape with a bruised knee, and the loss of a few inches of skin from my left arm.

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Off the St. Alban's Head. Sick to death! My temples throbbing, my head burning, my limbs freezing, my mouth all fever, my stomach all nausea, my mind all disgust.

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Off the Lizard, the last point of England.

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At one this morning, a violent gust of wind came on; and, at the rate of ten miles an hour, carried us through the Chops of the Channel, formed by the Scilly Rocks and the Isle of Ushant. But I thought, that the advance was dearly purchased by the terrible night which the storm made us pass. The wind roaring, the waves dashing against the stern, till at last they beat in the quarter gallery; the ship, too, rolling from side to side, as if every moment she were going to roll over and over! Mr. J——— was heaved off one of the sofas, and rolled along, till he was stopped by the table. He then took his seat upon the floor, as the more secure position; and, half an hour afterwards, another heave chucked him back again upon the sofa. The captain snuffed out one of the candles, and both being tied to the table, could not relight it with the other: so the steward came to do it; when a sudden heel of the ship made him extinguish the second candle, tumbled him upon the sofa on which I was lying, and made the candle which he had brought with him fly out of the candlestick, through a cabin window at his elbow; and thus we were all left in the dark. Then the intolerable noise! the cracking of bulkheads! the sawing of ropes! the screeching of the tiller! the trampling of the sailors! the clattering of the crockery! Every thing above deck and below deck, all in motion at once! Chairs, writing-desks, books, boxes, bundles, fire-irons and fenders, flying to one end of the room; and the next moment (as if they

had made a mistake) flying back again to the other with the same hurry and confusion! “Confusion worse confounded!” Of all the inconveniences attached to a vessel, the incessant noise appears to me the most insupportable! As to our live stock, they seem to have made up their minds on the subject, and say with one of Ariosto’s knights (when he was cloven from the head to the chine), “*or corvien morire*” Our fowls and ducks are screaming and quacking their last by dozens; and by Tuesday morning, it is supposed that we shall not have an animal alive in the ship, except the black terrier—and my friend the squeaking pig, whose vocal powers are still audible, maugre the storm and the sailors, and who (I verily believe) only continues to survive out of spite, because he can join in the general chorus, and help to increase the number of abominable sounds.

We are now tossing about in the Bay of Biscay: I shall remember it as long as I live. The “beef-eater’s front” could never have “beamed more terrible” upon Don Ferolo Whiskerandos, “in Biscay’s Bay, when he took him prisoner,” than Biscay’s Bay itself will appear to *me* the next time that I approach it.

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Our live stock has received an increase; our fowls and ducks are dead to be sure, but a lark flew on board this morning, blown (as is supposed) from the coast of France. In five minutes it appeared to be quite at home, eat very readily whatever was given it, and hopped about the deck

without fear of the sailors, or the more formidable black terrier, with all the ease and assurance imaginable.

I dare say, it *was* blown from the coast of France!

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The weather continues intolerable. Boisterous waves running mountains high, with no wind, or a foul one. Dead calms by day, which prevent our making any progress; and violent storms by night, which prevent our getting any sleep.

Every thing is in a state of perpetual motion. "*Nulla quies intus* (nor *outus* indeed for the matter of that), *nullâque silentia parte*" We drink our tea exactly as Tantalus did in the infernal regions; we keep bobbing at the basin for half an hour together without being able to get a drop; and certainly nobody on ship-board can doubt the truth of the proverb, "Many things fall out between the cup and the lip."

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PANDORA'S BOX. (Iliad A.)

Prometheus once (in Tooke the tale you'll see)

In one vast box enclosed all human evils;

But curious Woman needs the inside would see,

And out came twenty thousand million devils.

The story's spoil'd, and Tooke should well be chid;

The fact, sir, happen'd thus, and I've no doubt of it:

’Twas not that Woman raised the coffer’s lid,
But when the lid *was* raised, Woman popp’d out of it.

“But Hope remain’d”—true, sir, she did; but still
All saw of what Miss Hope gave intimation;
Her right hand grasp’d an undertaker’s bill,
Her left conceal’d a deed of separation.

N. B. I was most horribly sea-sick when I took this view of the subject. Besides, grapes on shipboard, in general, are remarkably sour.

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“Manibus date lilia plenis;
Purpureos spargam flores!”

The squeaking pig was killed this morning.

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Letters were sent to England by a small vessel bound for Plymouth, and laden with oranges from St. Michael’s, one of the Azores.

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A complete and most violent storm, from twelve at night till seven the next morning. The fore-top-sail, though only

put up for the first time yesterday, was rent from top to bottom; and several of the other sails are torn to pieces. The perpetual tempestuous weather which we have experienced has so shaken the planks of the vessel, that the sea enters at all quarters. About one o'clock in the morning I was saluted by a stream of water, which poured down exactly upon my face, and obliged me to shift my lodgings. The carpenter had been made aware that there was a leak in my cabin, and ordered to caulk the seams; but, I suppose, he thought that during only a two months' voyage, the rain might very possibly never find out the hole, and that it would be quite time enough to apply the remedy when I should have felt the inconvenience. The best is, that the carpenter happening to be at work in the next cabin when the water came down upon me, I desired him to call my servant, in order that I might get up, on account of the leak; on which he told me "that the leak could not be helped;" grumbled a good deal at calling up the servant; and seemed to think me not a little unreasonable for not lying quietly, and suffering myself to be pumped upon by this shower-bath of his own providing.

But if the water gets *into* the ship, on the other hand, last night the poor old steward was very near getting out of it. In the thick of the storm he was carrying some grog to the mate, when a gun, which drove against him, threw him off his balance, and he was just passing through one of the port-holes, when, luckily, he caught hold of a rope, and saved himself. A screech-owl flew on board this morning: I am sure we have no need of birds of ill omen; I could supply the place of a whole aviary of them myself.

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Reading Don Quixote this morning, I was greatly pleased with an instance of the hero's politeness, which had never struck me before. The Princess Micomicona having fallen into a most egregious blunder, he never so much as hints a suspicion of her not having acted precisely as she has stated, but only begs to know her reasons for taking a step so extraordinary. "But pray, madam," says he, "why *did* your ladyship land at Ossuna, seeing that it is not a seaport town?"

I was also much charmed with an instance of conjugal affection, in the same work. Sancho being just returned home, after a long absence, the first thing which his wife, Teresa, asks about, is the welfare of the ass. "I have brought him back," answers Sancho, "and in much better health and condition than I am in myself." "The Lord be praised," said Teresa, "for this his great mercy to me!"

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The wind continues contrary, and the weather is as disagreeable and perverse as it can well be; indeed, I understand that in these latitudes nothing can be expected but heavy gales or dead calms, which makes them particularly pleasant for sailing, especially as the calms are by far the most disagreeable of the two: the wind steadies the ship; but when she creeps as slowly as she does at present (scarcely going a mile in four hours), she feels the

whole effect of the sea breaking against her, and rolls backwards and forwards with every billow as it rises and falls. In the mean while, every thing seems to be in a state of the most active motion, except the ship; while we are carrying a spoonful of soup to our mouths, the remainder takes the “glorious golden opportunity” to empty itself into our laps, and the glasses and salt-cellars carry on a perpetual domestic warfare during the whole time of dinner, like the Guelphs and the Ghibellines. Nothing is so common as to see a roast goose suddenly jump out of its dish in the middle of dinner, and make a frisk from one end of the table to the other; and we are quite in the habit of laying wagers which of the two boiled fowls will arrive at the bottom first.

N.B. To-day the fowl without the liver wing was the favourite, but the knowing ones were taken in; the uncarved one carried it hollow.

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“Do those I love e’er think on me?”
How oft that painful doubt will start,
To blight the roseate smile of glee,
And cloud the brow, and sink the heart!

No more can I, estranged from home,
Their pleasures share, nor soothe their moans
To them I’m dead as were the foam
Now breaking o’er my whitening bones.

And doubtless now with newer friends,

The tide of life content they stem;
Nor on the sailor think, who bends
Full many an anxious thought on them.

Should that reflection cause me pain?
No ease for mine their grief could bring;
Enough if, when we meet again,
Their answering hearts to greet me spring.

Enough, if no dull joyless eye
Give signs of kindness quite forgot;
Nor heartless question, cold reply,
Speak—"all is past; I love you not."

Too much has heav'n ordain'd of woe,
Too much of groans on earth abounds,
For me to wish one tear to flow
Which brings no balm for sorrow's wounds.

Love's moisten'd lid and Friendship's sigh,
I could not see, I could not hear!
To think "they weep!" more fills mine eye,
And smarts the more each tender tear.

Then, if there be one heart so kind,
It mourns each hour the loss of me;
Shrinks, when it hears some gust of wind,
And sighs—"Perhaps a storm at sea!"

Oh! if there be an heart *indeed*,

Which beats for me, so sad, so true,
Swift to its aid, Oblivion, speed,
And bathe it with thy poppy's dew;

My form in vapours to conceal,
From Pleasure's wreath rich odours shake;
Nor let that heart one moment feel
Such pangs as force my own to ache.

Demon of Memory, cherish'd grief!
Oh, could I break thy wand in twain!
Oh, could I close thy magic leaf,
Till those I love are mine again!

DECEMBER 1. (FRIDAY.)

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The captain to-day pointed out to me a sailor-boy, who, about three years ago, was shaken from the mast-head, and fell through the scuttle into the hold; the distance was above eighty feet, yet the boy was taken up with only a few bruises.

DECEMBER 3. (SUNDAY.)

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The wind during the last two days has been more favourable; and at nine this morning we were in the latitude of Madeira.

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Sea Terms.—*Ratlines*, the rope ladders by which the sailors climb the shrouds; the *companion*, the cabin-head; *reefs*, the divisions by which the sails are contracted; *stunsails*, additional sails, spread for the purpose of catching all the wind possible; the fore-mast, main-mast, mizen-mast; *fore*, the head; *aft*, the stern; *being pooped* (the very sound of which tells one, that it must be something very terrible), having the stern beat in by the sea; *to belay a rope*, to fasten it.

DECEMBER 6.

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I had no idea of the expense of building and preserving a ship: that in which I am at present cost £30,000 at its outset. Last year the repairs amounted to £14,000; and in a voyage to the East Indies they were more than £20,000. In its return last year from Jamaica it was on the very brink of shipwreck. A storm had driven it into Bantry Bay, and there was no other refuge from the winds than Bear Haven, whose entrance was narrow and difficult; however, a gentleman from Castletown came on board, and very obligingly offered to pilot the ship. He was one of the first people in the place, had been the owner of a vessel himself, was most thoroughly acquainted with every inch of the haven, &c. &c., and so on they went. There was but one sunken rock, and that about ten feet in diameter; the captain knew it, and warned his gentleman-pilot to keep a little more to the

eastward. "My dear friend," answered the Irishman, "now do just make yourself *asy*; I know well enough what we are about; we are as clear of the rock as if we were in the Red Sea, by Jasus;"—upon which the vessel struck upon the rock, and there she stuck. The captain fell to swearing and tearing his hair. "God damn you, sir! didn't I tell you to keep to eastward? Dam'me, she's on the rock!" "Oh! well, my dear, she's now *on* the rock, and, in a few minutes, you know, why she'll be *off* the rock: to be sure, I'd have taken my oath that the rock was two hundred and fifty feet on the other side of her, but——"—"Two hundred and fifty feet! why, the channel is not two hundred and fifty feet wide itself! and as to getting her off, bumping against this rock, it can only be with a great hole in her side."—"Poh! now, bother, my dear! why sure——"—"Leave the ship, sir; dam'me, sir, get out of my ship this moment!" Instead of which, with the most smiling and obliging air in the world, the Irishman turned to console the female passengers. "Make yourselves *asy*, ladies, pray make yourselves perfectly *asy*; but, upon my soul, I believe your captain's mad; no danger in life! only make yourselves *asy*, I say; for the ship lies on the rock as safe and as quiet, by Jasus, as if she were lying on a mud bank!" Luckily the weather was so perfectly calm, that the ship having once touched the rock with her keel bumped no more. It was low water; she wanted but five inches to float her, and when the tide rose she drifted off, and with but little harm done. The gentleman-pilot then thought proper to return on shore, took a very polite leave of the lady-passengers, and departed with all the urbanity possible; only +thinking the

captain the strangest person that he had ever met with; and wondering that any man of common sense could be put out of temper by such a trifle.

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Yesterday we had the satisfaction of falling in with the trade wind, and now we are proceeding both rapidly and steadily. The change of climate is very perceptible; and the deep and beautiful blue which colours the sea is a certain intimation of our approach to the tropic. A few flying fish have made their appearance; and the spears are getting in order for the reception of their constant attendant, the dolphin. These spears have ropes affixed to them, and at one end of the pole are five barbs, at the other a heavy ball of lead: then, when the fish is speared, the striker lets the staff fall, on which down goes the lead into the sea, and up goes the dolphin into the air, who is in the utmost astonishment to find itself all of a sudden turned into a flying fish; so determines to cultivate the art of flying for the future, and promises itself a great many pleasant airings. The dolphin and the flying fish are beautifully coloured, and both are very good food, particularly the latter, which move in shoals like the herring, and are about the size of that fish. They are supposed to feed on spawn and sea animalculæ, and will not take the bait; but on the shores of Barbadoes, which they frequent in great multitudes, they are caught in wide nets, spread upon the surface of the sea; then, upon beating the waters around, the fish rise in clouds, and fly till, their fins getting dry, they fall down into the nets which