

there was not a more miserable-looking object amongst us. I could scarcely allow myself to believe that he was the same being whom we saw swaggering on the streets of Greenock a few days before. We were then appointed to different watches. William and I were luckily appointed to the same one: and our watch being on duty at the time, we were ordered to scrub the hen coops, and feed the fowls while the men washed the deck. The boys were always made the drudges in every thing dirty and disagreeable.

One part of their duty I could never get reconciled to, which was to watch the hogs, and when they dunged to throw it over board. This sunk the life of a ship boy in my eyes to a very low ebb; but the duty of the ship was little in comparison to the way in which we were teased and ill used by the sailors. I have often been roused out of my sleep after a fatiguing watch, and just when I had fallen into a profound sleep, to go and fetch a drink of water for some of the crew. A fellow, of the name of Donald M'Millan, was one of our chief tormentors

He used to invent new mortifications for us; and he was of such a savage brutal disposition that he would beat and abuse the boys for the most trifling fault, and often without cause. I am sure, if the conduct of the men had been reported to the captain, he would not have allowed the boys to be used in the manner they were. So much were we in awe of them however that we were afraid to say anything concerning our usage; for we knew that they could find numberless methods of tormenting without openly beating us.

I began, however, to get used to the sea; and, plucking up spirit, I strove to get through as well as I could. It was, however, with a great effort that I could prevent my spirits from sinking under the many hardships and contumely I had to endure. Nothing but the hope of leaving the vessel, when she returned home, kept me alive; but the thought I might never return threw a gloom even over that hope. Poor William lost all heart: he became melancholy and moping, and he used to cry for hours when we were on watch at night together. In this state he was ill calcu-

lated for the duty he had to perform, and was brow-beat by almost every one in the ship. This sunk his naturally buoyant spirits: he at length became so accustomed to ill usage, that he seemed afraid I would also turn against him. I however had known him in happier days, and knew also his abilities: his feelings, however, were morbidly acute, and little calculated to struggle through the ill usage which a ship apprentice had to endure.



CHAPTER IV.

TRADE WINDS—FAIRY VISIONS—DELIGHTFUL
NIGHTS—SEAMEN'S DIVERSIONS—STORY TELL-
ING—SUPERSTITIONS—NAVAL APPARITION.

As we proceeded on our voyage the weather became delightful; and, getting into the trade winds, we got on so pleasantly, often for days together, without changing a sail, that, had we not been tormented by the seamen, we would have been comparatively comfortable.

The only time that I enjoyed myself was, when my turn came to look out aloft—seated on the crosstrees, away from the din of the deck, with the clear blue sky above me, and the sea extending far as the eye could reach around me. It was there I almost realized some of the fairy scenes I had pictured in my imagination. I felt myself in an enchanted world of my own. I would sit watching the clouds as they passed along before me, comparing

their shape to some romantic image in my mind, and peopling them with corresponding inhabitants, enchanted castles, knights and ladies bright, tournaments and battles—all passed in shadowy review before my enraptured imagination; while mighty genii, riding in their cloudy chariots, presided o'er the scene. At other times, my fancy would picture angels winging their way from heaven to earth; and, at times, when the sun would dart his rays from among some fleecy-textured clouds, co-mingling every bright and heavenly colour, it would lighten up my very soul with rapture, and seemed to open a passage between it and heaven:—but words must fail to convey a description of what can only be felt by those whose imaginations are as much heated as mine was then. So lost would I be in those reveries that I did not feel the time passing; and, when the man would come up to relieve me, I would often volunteer to stop his two hours also. When I came down on deck, I felt, as it were, cast from heaven to earth, and used to long for my turn to look out again. These

were the only pleasures I enjoyed unmolested and unenvied; for few of my comrades required any pressing to allow me to remain in their place.

Sun-rise and sun-set at sea, in good weather, are beyond description grand and sublime. They present scenes which would raise emotions in the coldest heart. The nights were delightful; the moon shone there in "cloudless majesty." The air was so cool and pleasant, that it was preferred by the seamen to the day; instead of going below, they would gather in knots on the deck, and play at various games, or tell stories—many of them were good at this; one of them a Swede, had as large a collection as any person I ever knew: they were those of his country—mostly terrific—ghosts and men possessed of supernatural powers, were the heroes of his stories.* The flying Dutch-

* One of the stories he narrated was of a seaman, with whom his father had sailed. He was a wonderful fellow, he could arrest a ship in full sail. When he wanted liquor, he had nothing to do but bore a hole in the mast, and out flowed rum, brandy, or any liquor he wished for. He once had committed some crime, for which he was sentenced to be flogged; the crew were assembled, and the culprit stripped and tied up, the boatswain raised his brawny arm to give the lash; but, by

man, and many other naval apparitions were talked off, and descanted on with much gravity. Sailors, in general, are very superstitious, and these stories were listened to with the greatest attention.

One night the weather was hazy, when I was appointed to look out a-head along with an old sailor, who was remarkable

some invisible power, his arm was arrested in the air, and he stood with it stretched out, unable to bring it down. The master-at-arms raised his cane to strike the boatswain for his seeming neglect of duty, and his arm was arrested in like manner. The captain, enraged to see both boatswain and master-at-arms in this strange position, drew his sword, and raised it, to let it fall on some of their heads, when he shared the same fate. Thus, all three stood with their arms upraised in air; nor would our hero release them from their awkward position, until he was pardoned and taken down!! Some time after, he had committed another crime; but they were afraid his power was too potent on board for them to proceed against him there, and he was conveyed ashore, and tried. In addition to the alleged crime, they brought forward a charge of dealing with the devil: the proof was reckoned conclusive, and he was sentenced to suffer death. He gave himself no uneasiness about it. The day arrived on which he was to be executed; and the guard entered his prison for the purpose of conveying him to the place of execution. When they entered, he was busily drawing a ship upon the wall with chalk; he requested them to wait a moment until he would finish it; they did so: when he had done, he bid those about him adieu; and, lifting his foot, as if it were to step into his mimic ship, he disappeared from their eyes in a moment, and was never after heard of more!!

for being an attentive listener, when any stories were telling. The moon was up; but a dense curtain of clouds hid her almost completely from our view. The wind came in gusts, and swept the clouds along in irregular masses. Sometimes a doubtful light would be thrown around us; again a dark cloud would intervene, and we could scarcely see the end of the gib-boom. The wind whistled through the rigging of the vessel occasionally with a low murmuring sound, then it would rise gradually to such a fury, that we could scarcely hear each other talk. We were anxiously looking out, when he asked me if I did not see something like a sail a-head. I replied that I did not. He pointed to the place where he imagined he saw it. I looked again. A partial gleam of light, occasioned by a cloud of a lighter texture passing over the moon, being thrown on the place, I really thought I saw something like a sail. He did not wait for any more investigation, but gave the alarm. The mate came forward to see it; but the light was so uncertain, that he could not decide on what it was.

The whole watch gathered about the bows of the vessel, every one having something to say on the subject. One pretended he saw a sail plainly—she was a square-rigged vessel, with all her sails set; another said she was schooner rigged. Ominous whispers now began to go round, intimating that her appearance was any thing but natural. The mate, hearing some hints that were dropped, said “there was a cursed deal too much of that ghost story-telling of late; and he would lay his head to a marlin-spike, that this would turn out to be no sail after all.” At this moment (luckily for his prediction) the moon broke through in all her splendour; and, as far as the eye could reach, not a speck on the surface of the dark-blue waters could be traced. The laugh was now turned against those who had pretended to see the sail; but they only shook their heads doubtfully, and wished that nothing bad might follow. I venture to say that every one on board joined in that wish.

CHAPTER V.

HAILS A VESSEL BOUND TO GREENOCK—LETTER-
WRITING—FRENCH PRIVATEER—CALLED TO
QUARTERS—A BROADSIDE—SHE SHEERS OFF—
NEAR THE LAND—"CAPE FLYAWAY"—COME TO
ANCHOR—PRESS-BOAT—APPEARANCE OF THE
ISLAND, &c.—UNLOADING.

A FEW days after that, we fell in with a vessel which we hailed, and found she was bound to Greenock from Jamaica. She brought to; and all those who wished to send letters to their friends were ordered to make haste, and write them. I got out my writing materials; but I was at a loss what to say. Had I been inclined to speak the truth, I would have been at no loss; but I could not bear the idea of owning how grossly I had been deceived in my ideas of a sailor's life. However, I believe I gave them room to think that I did not like it very well. I had lost so much time in resolving what

to write, that the letters were called for before I had time to give any particulars. When I was sealing my letter, I ardently wished I could have insinuated myself inside of it.

Nothing more particular occurred during our voyage, until a few days before we made the land. One morning early, a sail appeared to windward. The captain, looking at her through his telescope, gave it as his opinion that she was a French privateer. All hands were called to quarters: and, as she bore down upon us, the captain's opinion was confirmed, for she fired a gun, and hoisted French colours. We were well manned, and carried as many guns as she appeared to do. Every thing was prepared for action; only the guns were not run out, and the ports were down. The captain had ordered all the men, with the exception of the petty officers, to lie down on the deck, concealed behind the bulwarks, until he gave the word of command. She was bearing fast down upon us, when I was ordered to the magazine to hand up ammunition. I was frightened enough

when on deck; but when below, I became much more so. It was not long before a broadside was fired. I was sure it was from the enemy. I was stunned, and fell flat on my face. "God be merciful to me!" said I; for I was sure we were going to the bottom. In a minute after, I was surprised with the men cheering on deck. I mounted the ladder; and, venturing my head up the hatchway, saw the strange ship a good way to leeward of us, making all the sail she could. On inquiring I found that she had borne down close on us, thinking we were an unarmed merchant ship, and ordered us to strike. The reply we gave was what had alarmed me so much; for our men, starting to their feet on the word of command from the captain, ran out the guns, and gave her a broadside. She was so completely taken in by the reception she met with, that she sheered off without firing a shot. The captain's orders were, not to deviate from his course, or else we might have captured her; as it was, she escaped.

We now drew near the land, and the

lead was frequently used to ascertain what sort of a bottom we had.* Pieces of sugar-cane, melons, and fruit of various kinds, were floating about; birds, in great numbers, hovered about the ship; and every thing intimated that the land was nigh. It was my turn to look out aloft, and I made sure of the bottle of rum which is usually given to the man who espies land first. I was not long up, when I thought I saw land off the lee bow. I watched it attentively. It became better defined every minute. I was positive it was land, and I sung out "land, ho" with a joyous voice. The intelligence ran through the crew; and I saw them skipping about on deck, seemingly delighted with the news. The mate came up beside me to see where the land lay. I pointed it out to him; but it soon altered its appearance, and began slowly to move up from the verge of the horizon, and in less than ten minutes not a vestige of the appearance remained. To me it looked like

* There is a cavity in the bottom of the lead, which is filled with tallow, to which sand or gravel, composing the bed of the sea, adheres.

enchantment; but I learned from the mate, that such sights were not uncommon, and were termed by the seamen "Cape Flyaway."

In the course of the day, we made the real land, but were too late to get into the harbour that night. However, next morning early we got in, and came to anchor nearly opposite Fort Charlotte, Town of Nassau, after a passage of six weeks. As we entered the harbour, we found a sloop-of-war lying there; and some of our men, afraid of being pressed, took a boat, and made towards the shore: but the officers of the man-of-war observing them, they sent a boat in pursuit. Our fellows pulled hard, and would have made the shore before them, had they not fired a musket shot or two, and obliged them to lie to. They were then all taken on board the sloop-of-war. In the course of the day, however, they were all sent back, with the exception of Donald McMillan, who had given some insolence to the officers; and they sent word that they had kept him to teach him better manners. The boys did not mourn much at his

detention, nor I believe did any of the crew; for his disposition was such, that every one hated him.

We were not long at anchor before we were surrounded by canoes from the shore, with black fellows in them, selling fruit of various kinds, not common in Britain. Here we got rid of some of our money, in exchange for bananas, guavas, and pine apples: and I almost forgot all my sufferings in the novelty of the scene around me. The white sandy beach, the light ornamented wooden buildings, walks bordered by palm and cocoa-nut trees, with the singular dresses of the planters, and their negroes, were objects which made me think myself in a new world. In the course of the day we got off fresh beef and plenty of vegetables, which was a treat, having had nothing but salt provision from the time of leaving Greenock; and, to complete our happiness, we got an extra allowance of rum sent from the owners of the cargo.

Next day we began to deliver the cargo. There was no quay, but wharfs here and there to the different stores. When

the tide was in, we got our boats unloaded by means of a crane; but when the tide was out, we were obliged to roll the hogsheds from the boats into the sea, and wading up to the middle to roll them out before us to the shore. This was most fatiguing and disagreeable work; and we were not sorry when it was finished. On Sundays (which is the negro's market-day in the West Indies) the half of the crew alternately got leave to go ashore. William and I happened to be of the first party, and we were delighted with every thing around us; but we could not discover that the inhabitants were disposed to give their money away for nothing, any more than at home. Nor could we find anything to justify the notion, that a rapid fortune could be acquired there, without similar exertion to that we had been accustomed to see in other places. Mechanics and clerks had very moderate salaries; and, certainly, most necessary things cost much higher than at home. We took a thorough view of the town; and, after purchasing some shells and other curiosities, we came on

board well pleased with the holiday we had had on shore. Soon after this, we began to take in our cargo, which principally consisted of rum, cotton and coffee.

CHAPTER VI.

STORM—FINISH TAKING IN CARGO—SAILOR'S
CHEVO—FIGHT—SET SAIL HOMEWARD—GALE
—WILLIAM DROWNED—ARRIVE IN GREENOCK
—RETURN HOME—BECOME DISCONTENTED—IN-
LISTMENT—PARTING WITH MY PARENTS.

As yet it had been delightful weather, only excessively warm in the middle of the day; but the mornings and evenings were very pleasant. The third morning, after we began to take in our cargo, came in sultry and close. The air was oppressive; the clouds hung low and heavy; and, ere long, the rain burst out in torrents. This had not continued ten minutes, until we were up to our knees in water on the deck. It poured down so fast that it could not escape by the scuppers. The earth seemed threatened with another deluge. The whole face of the heavens was dark as night. The crew

were all employed striking the top-gallant masts, lowering the yards, and making every thing snug. "This is shocking rain!" said I to an old sailor, who stood near me. "Yes," said he; "but we will have worse than rain bye and bye." He had scarcely said so, when the heavens seemed to open, and a flash of lightning burst forth, so strong and vivid that it took the sight from my eyes. A clap of thunder followed so loud and long, that it must have appalled the stoutest heart. Flash after flash succeeded each other, and the roll of the thunder was incessant. I thought the last day was come. Heaven and earth seemed jumbled together in one mass of fire; and the continued noise of the thunder struck my imagination as the result of the fabric falling to ruin.

Towards the afternoon the wind blew with great fury. The vessels in the harbour began to drag their anchors, and before night many of them were on shore; but we were well moored, and did not stir. The storm continued the greater part of the night; and such a night I hope I will never see again. No one



would go below. We did not know the moment the lightning might strike the vessel, and perhaps send her to the bottom. It is in vain for me to attempt to convey any adequate description of that dreadful night in words. No one can form any idea of its awfulness, unless he had seen it. The men stood huddled in groups, on the deck, in silence. Indeed it was useless to speak, for they could not be heard; nor scarcely could they see each other, unless when the lightning shot its awful glare athwart their faces, and made their horror visible for an instant; and the livid cadaverous colour it shed over their countenances, gave them an expression truly appalling.

About one o'clock in the morning, the storm began to moderate: the flashes of lightning became weaker, and less frequent; the awful crashing of the thunder changed into a hoarse growl, and the intervals between allowed us again to hear its echo from the shore. By two the storm had so much subsided that the seamen, with the exception of the har-

bour watch, went below to their hammocks.

I was surprised, next morning, when I got up at sunrise, to see no vestige of the night's storm remaining. All was calm and serene, save a pleasant breeze from the shore, which brought the most delicious odours along with it. The sun rose with unusual brightness, and all nature seemed refreshed and renovated. We could not indeed have imagined that there had been a storm the preceding night, if the effects of its fury had not been visible in the roofless buildings and stranded vessels around us.

Our vessel had suffered little or no damage. We got on with our loading, and in a short time we were ready for sea. The day before we sailed, the owners sent a present of a bottle of rum to each man, to hold a sort of "chevo," as the sailors called it. The decks were cleared, and we sat down in groups with our bottles, and commenced drinking. All went on very well for a time. The song and joke went round, and harmony and good humour prevailed. But, when

the drink began to "take their heads," some of them that had differences during the voyage began to "tell their minds." The result was, that they came to high words, and from that to blows. The rest of the crew took different sides, according as they were interested; and the deck soon became a scene of confusion and bloodshed. I had drank little, and mounted into the foretop to be out of "harm's way;" and from that I saw the combat, without danger of getting any of the blows which were dealing out so plentifully. The mate came forward to try to quell the disturbance; but they knocked him over a kedge anchor that lay on the deck, and broke one of his ribs.

At length the disturbance died away, and I came down on deck. Some deep drinkers had gathered the bottles which had escaped destruction during the fight, and were emptying their contents. Others were lying insensibly drunk and vomiting. Broken bottles, with their contents promiscuously mixed on the deck with the blood of the combatants, lay scattered about in every direction. I never saw

such a miserable-looking set of wretches, as they appeared next morning. Most of them were "horrified," as they termed it. Almost all of them bore marks of the late fray—black eyes, swelled lips, cut noses, sprained thumbs, &c. &c. As the vessel was to sail that day, the captain, in order to bring them about a little, served them out their grog, and they quickly got to rights again.

We got up our anchors, and set sail with a fair wind. I could not describe the emotions I felt, when I saw the vessel's head turned homewards. I was all joyous anticipation of meeting with my parents. "I will never leave them again," thought I. "I will obey them in every thing, and we will be so happy. I have seen my folly, and I will make a good use of my experience."

Nothing particular occurred on the passage home, until we got near the British coast, when the weather became extremely cold. The look-out aloft was no longer a pleasant birth. I have often been so benumbed when the man came up to relieve me, that I could scarcely move

my limbs to come down upon deck. The weather had been rough for some time; but, one afternoon, it began to blow uncommonly hard. The wind was fair, however, and the captain seemed unwilling to take in sail; but the gale increasing, he ordered the top-gallant-sails to be handed. William and I, with another boy, went up to hand the main top-gallant-sail. The vessel was pitching dreadfully. William went to the weather, and I went to the lee earing to haul in the leach of the sail. The parl which bound the yard to the mast, gave way; and it pitched out with such violence, that William was shook from his hold, and precipitated into the sea. I got a dreadful shock. This was an awful moment. Every pitch that the vessel gave the yard was thrown out from the mast with such force, that it was a miracle I escaped. The other boy had got in on the mast; but it appeared impossible for me to follow him. Nothing could save me, unless the despairing hold that I had; and I could not have kept it long; for every shock rendered me weaker: but

some of the seamen were sent up with a loose line, and succeeded in bracing the yard to the mast, and I was relieved from my perilous situation.

Poor William! I saw him fall. "Oh, God!" he cried, as he fell. I heard no more. The next moment he was swallowed by the waves. They told me he never rose. It was impossible to do any thing to save him, in such weather, with any effect. His fate made a great impression on my mind; for he was my only companion. He was a clever boy, warm-hearted, and kind in his disposition, although he had become quite broken-hearted. Nor did he seem relieved from his melancholy, by the prospect of returning home; for he was sure his father would do nothing to get him free from the ship; and, even if he did, he could feel little pleasure in the anticipation of his usage there. "Oh! James," he would often say, "if I had a father and mother like yours, how happy would I be! but I may truly say that I am an orphan! To be sure, while my mother was living, she was every thing that was good and affectionate