

The Project Gutenberg eBook of Digby Heathcote: The Early Days of a Country Gentleman's Son and Heir, by William Henry Giles Kingston

This ebook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this ebook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you'll have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

Title: Digby Heathcote: The Early Days of a Country Gentleman's Son and Heir

Author: William Henry Giles Kingston

Illustrator: Harrison Weir

Release Date: December 1, 2010 [EBook #34535]

Language: English

Credits: Produced by Nick Hodson of London, England

*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK DIGBY HEATHCOTE: THE EARLY DAYS OF A COUNTRY GENTLEMAN'S SON AND HEIR ***

W.H.G. Kingston

"Digby Heathcote"

Chapter One.

The Hero's Early Days—Bloxholme, its Squire, His Family and Dependents.

"I'll not stand it, that I won't, Master Digby. To think that you, a young gentleman who has plenty to eat and drink of everything that's nice, and more than enough, too, should come and put your fingers through the paper into my jam pots, which I've just been and nicely tied down, and all for mischief's sake, it's not to be borne, let me tell you. You've been and eaten up a whole pot of raspberry jam, and better than half a one of greengage. I wonder you are not sick with it. If you ever do it again, I'll leave your honoured father's service sooner than submit to such behaviour, that I will—remember, Master Digby."

These exclamations were uttered by Mrs Carter, the housekeeper at Bloxholme Hall, the residence of Mr Heathcote, the representative of one of the oldest families in the county.

The culprit thus addressed, who had been caught in *flagrante delicto*, stood before her with very sticky fingers, his countenance, however, wearing anything but an expression of penitence.

"I like jam, and you don't give me enough in my puddings," was the only excuse he deigned to offer for his conduct.

"You'll go without it altogether, Master Digby, let me tell you," retorted Mrs Carter. She was the only person in the establishment who ventured to thwart the young gentleman, though he did not love the old lady the worse for that.

Digby was Mr Heathcote's eldest son and heir. He had just attained the mature age of nine years, and had hitherto in many respects been considerably spoilt. Mr Heathcote had not succeeded to his property till rather late in life, and he had not till then married. A son had long been wished-for, and when one was given, the grateful hearts of the parents felt that they could not prize him too much. Too thankful they might not have been, but they petted and indulged him more than was for his good. He had also three elder sisters. They, in their fondness, did their best to spoil him; indeed, as Mrs Carter used to observe to Alesbury, the butler, she was afraid Master Digby would soon become as much of a pickle as any she had in her store-room. He was a sturdy little fellow, with fat, rosy cheeks, and a figure which already gave promise of considerable muscular powers. Alesbury was wont to remark that it was quite a pity Master Digby had not been born a younger instead of an elder son, he seemed so well able to fight his way in the world. He had a fair complexion—already a little tanned, by the by—light brown curling hair with a tinge of gold in it, he had good-sized honest eyes, and looked as he was—from head to foot a thorough English boy. He had been spoilt hitherto, certainly, but not altogether so. He had been taught by both his parents to worship and fear God, and to hate and abhor a lie. He had only once been known to tell an untruth, and then Mr Heathcote did what very nearly broke his heart to do; he flogged him severely, and shut him up, and would not speak to him for the remainder of the day. Digby did not care much about the pain of the flogging, but he felt the disgrace keenly, and it impressed on his mind the enormity of the crime of which he had been guilty. I believe that he never after that event uttered a falsehood. His very varied tricks and numerous eccentric pranks were therefore constantly being brought to light, when less honest boys might have managed to escape detection for those they had committed; but few could find it in their hearts to punish the young heir of Bloxholme when he ingenuously confessed his fault, and expressed himself, as he really felt at the time, sorry for what he had done.

"Oh, Master Digby! Master Digby! what would your mamma say if she saw you now?" continued Mrs Carter.

"I like jam," repeated Master Digby; an assertion of the truth of which he had given strong evidence.

"Are you not ashamed of yourself?" added Mrs Carter, not taking notice of his reply.

"The jam isn't yours, Mrs Carter," exclaimed Digby, as if a bright idea had struck him.

"It is given into my charge by my mistress, Master Digby, and I am answerable for every pot of it," answered the housekeeper, in a serious tone, in which sorrow and rebuke were blended.

Digby was silent for a moment, and then seemed to see the matter in a new light.

"I'm sorry for taking the jam, Mrs Carter; I'll tell mamma what I've done, and then she won't be angry with you, I know," he replied, looking very penitent.

"There's a darling, now," exclaimed Mrs Carter, catching him up in her arms, and giving him a kiss; whereby, in consequence of his struggles to get free, for he had a great dislike to such marks of affection, her black silk dress was very considerably daubed with the jam yet adhering to the young gentleman's fingers. "Oh, Master Digby, Master Digby, what have you done!" cried the old lady, when she discovered the injury which her demonstration of affection had brought upon her dress. "Oh, it never will look nice again."

"I am so sorry, Mrs Carter, indeed I am," said the boy, eyeing the dark marks his fingers had left. "The first money I get I will buy you a new gown, that I will; I won't take your jam any more, that I won't."

After this promise, Mrs Carter knew that her jam was safe, and she willingly bore the injury done her dress for such a result. She would have given Digby another hug, but she took the precaution of washing his hands before attempting such a proceeding.

"There now, Master Digby, I dare say the dress won't be much the worse, after all," she remarked, as soon as she had dried his hands. "You're a dear, good child, that you are."

Digby knew what was coming, and watching his opportunity, he bolted out of the room. Snatching up his cap, away he ran, shouting, through the gardens and woods which surrounded the old hall, in very exuberance of spirits, without any definite idea as to where he was going or what he should do with himself. Similar to this had hitherto been most of Digby's misdemeanours and scrapes, and thus, as he had not learned to estimate the evil consequences of his naughtinesses, he was not deterred, when the temptation came in his way, of committing fresh ones.

One of Digby's sisters was but a year older than himself, and very naturally was his constant companion. Kate, that was her name, was a very quick, intelligent girl, the cleverest of the family, but her talents were like wild plants, which bear flowers very beautiful to look at, but if allowed to grow without training, apt, from their very exuberance, to do mischief. Kate could write poetry, and very funny poetry it was too. Digby admired it amazingly. At all events it was rhyme, and the lines were of the same length and not inharmonious. Nobody could read it without laughing at the quaint ideas and, curious expressions. The handwriting was curious—I wish that I could give an idea of it. The letters were very round and irregular, capitals and small letters were oddly mingled, and the lines wandered up and down the pages. The orthography, too, was not of the most orthodox description. Her little inaccuracies in that respect, however, Digby himself was not likely to discover. Kate could draw, too, and indulged largely in caricaturing the eccentricities of any of her friends and acquaintance. If her poetry was funny, the designs she produced with her pencil were still more so. They never failed to produce roars of laughter from Digby, who, if not witty or talented himself, was fully able to appreciate her wit and talent.

Both her poetical effusions and her caricatures had hitherto been devoted exclusively to Digby's amusement, and no other member of their family was aware of her powers in that direction. This arose from the little maiden's modesty and timidity. She knew that Digby would certainly appreciate to the full her productions; but she doubted too much whether others would do so to allow her to show them. Besides, the exquisite delight which the two enjoyed in looking over together, in secret, her drawings and verses would have been much decreased had other eyes been allowed to see them, and to discover faults perhaps to which they themselves were willingly blind. Not only could Kate write poetry and draw, but she could sing too; and that everybody knew, and wonderfully wild and warbling were her notes, when she did not fancy that any one was listening to her, as she ran bounding along the green lawn, like a young fawn, or made her way among the shrubberies to any of her favourite haunts. Kate was not pretty; her figure was small and thin, and her features were rather sharp, but her eyes were bright, and full of intelligence, and she had a sweet smile, which lightened up her countenance when anything pleased her, which was very frequently. Digby, however, would have been very much surprised had any one pronounced her to be any otherwise than very pretty. His usual description of her was, "Oh, she is jolly, that sister of mine—Kate! I'll bet there isn't another girl like her in the world! Up to anything—bird's-nesting, cricketing, or fishing. Why, she can saddle her own pony, and doesn't mind where she goes when I am with her. She's as plucky as any fellow, and I hope to see her leap a five-barred gate some day—that I do."

Kate admired Digby in return, though not perhaps in the same degree, but she was quite as fond of him as he was of her, probably even fonder. I think sisters generally love their brothers more than they get loved in return, and most decidedly are ready to make more sacrifices for them, to give up more to them, to endure more from them, more shame to the boys. Yes, unselfish indeed is a good sister's love, a thing to be cherished, a thing to be grateful for.

I said Kate was not pretty. As she ran along with her garden bonnet thrown back, hanging by the string to her neck, and her frock not in the most tidy condition, she might have been mistaken for one of the little gypsies from the encampment which was frequently made on the neighbouring common. When, however, Kate spoke, a person of discernment who might have mistaken her for a gypsy would at once have been undeceived. Her accent and manners were particularly ladylike; and if she met a stranger, she sobered in a moment, and became perfectly quiet and sedate. A blush would suffuse her cheeks, and her mouth would pucker up in a curious way as she attempted to check the laughter which was springing to her lips. After the stranger had disappeared, she would walk on a few

paces seemingly in a meditative mood, or still under the influence of the unwonted restraint she had put on herself, but either a squirrel would cross her path and mount a neighbouring tree, a blackbird would fly chattering through the bushes, or a butterfly would go fluttering before her, and off she would go in chase, and was soon again the buoyant-spirited hoydenish little creature she generally appeared. Kate Heathcote was certainly not a model girl, nor was Digby a model boy. Both had very considerable faults. There was good stuff in them, but it required more cultivation than it was then receiving to bring forth good fruit. There was also bad in them, as there is in everybody, which will inevitably bring forth bad fruit unless it is counteracted. In their case it produced no little amount of highly indecorous conduct—so that although people who knew them could not help liking them, their example is in no way to be imitated.

Digby and Kate were very fond of Bloxholme. They thought no other place they had ever heard of in the world to be compared to it. Indeed, it was a very attractive spot. The Hall was a fine old red-brick edifice, built in the time of Queen Elizabeth, with richly ornamented windows, and fine gables, and curious ins and outs of all sorts; and there were wide-extending wings of a later date, with the dining-room and a conservatory on one side, and bachelors' bedrooms and domestic offices on the other. The garden, filled in the summer with a profusion of flowers, came right up to the drawing-room windows on one side, and a broad gravelly drive swept round in front of the house with an avenue of tall elms, in which generation after generation of rooks had built their nests, reared their young, and returned, cawing in concert, evening after evening, for centuries past. The park stretched away for a quarter of a mile in front of the house. It was a fine meadow, mottled in early spring with yellow cowslips and other flowers which betokened a rich land. Fine clumps of trees were scattered over it, arranged to give a picturesque effect to the scene. Beyond them were seen the silvery line of a rapid clear stream, and a range of blue hills in the far distance. The view from the garden side of the Hall was still more attractive. Both to the right and left were thick banks of tall trees, some advancing, others receding, so as to prevent a too great uniformity of appearance. Between them, and sloping away till lost in the meadows beyond, was a wide expanse of soft velvety lawn. Pleasant was the sound in the early summer mornings, when the dew was on the grass, of the gardeners sharpening their scythes to keep it smooth and shorn. Here and there scattered over it were clumps of rhododendrons and other large flowering shrubs, and nearer the house were beds full of gay-coloured and sweet-scented flowers. There were also some clumps of elegant evergreens, and a few vases of marble or Maltese stone, beautifully carved, which looked well either in summer or winter. Digby thought no lawns were so green, no gravel walks so yellow as those of Bloxholme. The view, too, from the lower windows, as from the lawn itself, was very beautiful, and perfectly English. There were green slopes and corn-fields, and hazel and beech woods, and rows of tall elms, and clumps of fir-trees, and patches of wild land gleaming with the bloom of the golden-coloured gorse; and then beyond all was to be seen, dancing in the sunbeams, the wide expanse of the blue ocean, with a silvery river finding its way down on the right to the little town of Osberton, which stood on its shores. Numberless are the scenes of similar beauty which are to be found throughout England. To the left of the lawn, well-kept gravel walks twisted and twined away through shrubberies of evergreens, passing several open spaces filled with flower beds and trellised arbours, and rock-work and grottoes, and other similar conceits, made with very good taste though, till they reached two wide sheets of water, which might well be called lakes, connected by a serpentine channel crossed at each end by a rustic bridge. The ponds were surrounded by trees, the shadows of which were seen reflected in the clear waters. There were picturesque little islands dotted about here and there, not far from the shore, to which one of the largest was joined by a bridge. It had a summer-house on it, a very favourite resort of Digby and Kate. Perhaps they prized the ponds for being well stocked with fish which consented now and then to be caught, even more than for their beauty. The upper and largest pond was full of pike, and perch, and eels. In the others were carp, and roach, and dace, and the finest and fattest tench to be found in the county. There were several smaller ponds full of water lilies and other aquatic plants, which, when in bloom, as they floated borne up by their broad leaves on the calm water, looked very beautiful. These ponds had been carefully stocked with nearly all the species of fish to be found in English waters; and in the rapid stream which ran out of the lowest pond and found its way to the sea, a good basket full of mottled trout was to be caught by the expert angler. In most places it was so thickly shaded by hazel and alder, and other bushes which love moisture, that the bungler was very certain to lose his hook and line, and to catch no fish.

There was another spot, a still more favourite resort of Kate's and Digby's. It was a high mound—partly natural and partly artificial—near the upper lake. The base of the mound on one side was washed by a stream and tributary of the lake, and on the other was a grassy meadow. The mound itself was thickly covered with trees to the very top, where a summer-house, or sort of temple, was placed. From the windows a beautiful view was obtained over the lakes and woods, and gardens and fields of Bloxholme; and on one side of the village of Otterspoole and its church-spire, and trout-stream and hanging woods, and on the other of the valleys and hills and downs which intervened between the grounds and the sea. Glimpses of the blue ocean were obtained from every height, and much did it enhance the beauty of the scenery. The path which led to the top of the mound was very intricate and steep—indeed it formed a complete labyrinth, which, though it made it far more attractive to Kate and her brother, prevented it from being so much the resort of the elders of the family.

I have described these spots as Digby's favourite resorts. I suspect, however, that had it not been for Kate, he would not have often found his way there. He liked them because she did, and he went there for the sake of her society. Hearty were the laughs the two enjoyed there. There she read to him her poetical effusions—there she showed him her drawings, and there they concocted, I am sorry to say, many a scheme of mischief.

The Hall itself was a thoroughly comfortable, warm, well-furnished mansion, with handsome drawing-rooms, and dining-room and library; and bedrooms which could accommodate Mr Heathcote's largish family, and a good many guests besides. He himself seemed fit in every respect to be the owner of such a place. He was a fine looking person—a thorough English country gentleman. He did not appear talented, and he was not; but he had the character of being a thoroughly upright, honest man, anxious to do his duty in that state of life to which God had called him. He was a good landlord, and watched over all the poor around, whether or not living on his estate. He was a county magistrate, and was never missed in his place on the bench when the Court sat. He was strict, especially with poachers and smugglers. There was very little maudlin sentiment in his composition. If a person did wrong he considered that he ought to be punished, not only to teach him not to act in the same way again, but to teach others

also. Still, no kinder or more indulgent master, to all employed in his service, was to be found in the county. "If we do not inflict the legal punishment on the man, how is he, or how are others, to know what is right or what is wrong," he used to remark to his brother magistrates. From his invariable strictness he was looked upon as a severe magistrate, and many a poacher had to rue the night in which he was caught trespassing on the preserves of any of the neighbouring estates, till it was found to be a very unpaying amusement, and poaching was almost put down. Smugglers, also, either landsmen or seamen, who were captured breaking the revenue laws, were treated in the same manner. Every man in the district knew, that if caught aiding in running an illicit cargo of goods, the county gaol would be his abode for some months afterwards. So the smugglers found it very difficult to procure men to help them land their tubs of spirits or bales of silks. Smuggling was not entirely put down, but it received a severe check from Mr Heathcote's system of proceeding. The gipsies, and indeed all ill-doers, held him in great awe. At the same time he might have been seen visiting the cottages of the men who had been sent to prison, ascertaining the real wants of their families, and supplying them liberally. It was not in his way to talk much to them or to give them good advice. He would remark, perhaps, "Well, when your Bill comes out, tell him that if he does it again, he'll have to go in again. Remember that." As the county gaol was far from a pleasant abode, the warning had generally the effect intended. Mr Heathcote was a Tory, somewhat of the old school, and an unwavering supporter of the Church of England. Indeed, he was very unwavering in all his ways of proceeding. He regularly attended all poor-law boards and road-trust meetings; indeed, a large portion of his time was occupied in public matters. He was also an enthusiastic sportsman. The first of September found him, gun in hand, intent on the destruction of partridges. At every meet of the hounds in the neighbourhood he might be seen in red coat and top-boots, few in the field better mounted, while he rode about with cheery voice greeting his numerous acquaintance. He no longer attended races, however. When at college he had done so, very much to his own let and hindrance. He had betted, lost money, and incurred debts which hung over him like an incubus for years afterwards. He had barely managed to take his degree, even at a college where no great amount of knowledge was demanded for obtaining that honour. When he came into his estate he was unable to take that place in the county which his ancestors had so long held. If he had had an extravagant wife he would never have obtained it, but happily for him Mrs Heathcote was a sensible, light-minded, straightforward person. She saw what was wanted. Retrenchment was wanted, or rather, a refraining from expenditure. A plan was laid down and persevered in, and in a few years Mr Heathcote found his estate unencumbered. He was not, however, a rich man; his house was rather large for his property, and as people judge rather by the size of the mansion than by the number or quality of the acres which surround it, he was supposed to be more wealthy than he really was, and was consequently expected to live in a more expensive way than he found to be wise. His first children having been daughters, fancying that he had nothing to do with their education, he not being a reading man, he was much oftener to be found out of the house than in it. He had learned, therefore, to consider that his public duties had the greatest call on his time and attention. When Digby was born, he at first looked upon him as a baby, and he had got so into the habit of regarding him in that light, that it did not occur to him afterwards that his boy's mind, as well as his stature, was enlarging, and that even greater care was required to strengthen and cultivate the former than the latter. Happily, Mrs Heathcote did not altogether overlook this, and she did her best to instruct him and to teach him what was right. In this she did not altogether fail. But she had the education of her daughters to attend to, and Digby was left more to his own devices than was altogether good for him. She might, of course, have had a governess, but she felt herself well able to instruct her daughters, and had an idea that no person could do so better than their mother. Motives of economy had in the first place induced her to make the attempt, which she afterwards persevered in from the pleasure it afforded her. She was a thoroughly English, ladylike person, with no littleness about her. Tittle-tattle, scandal, or indeed talking of people except to praise them, she thoroughly detested. Her two eldest daughters did justice to her instructions.

Eleanor and Mary Heathcote were good-feeling, right-minded, ladylike girls. I shall not have much to say about them, except in connexion with Digby. One was seventeen, the other fifteen. They made attempts to assist in his education, but they found him very unmanageable. There was a large town some miles off, from which masters came, and Mrs Heathcote had begun to talk of obtaining a governess to attend to Kate and Digby, and the younger children as they grew older. A very superior person had all along superintended the nursery, but Digby had already broken through all the restraints she could put upon him, except when in her immediate presence, and then he was obedient enough, both from habit and affection.

Digby's next brother was Augustus—Gusty he was generally called; he was three years younger—a fat chubby little fellow. Digby was very fond of him, and did his best to spoil him as much as he himself was spoiled. He generally would do anything for him, or bear anything from him, but sometimes Digby lost his temper, and he would then turn round and give him a cuff, or carry off some of his property; but he was always sorry before long for having hurt the child, and would restore what he had deprived him of, with interest.

Mrs Heathcote's health had always been delicate, and latterly it had been more so than usual, and in consequence, Kate had been left to do very much what she liked, except when she and Digby were called in by Eleanor to do their lessons. She got over hers very quickly, and helped Digby to do his, so that he also had an abundance of time to follow his own fancies and devices. Three or four days in the week a master came over to initiate him in the mysteries of the Latin accidence, as well as writing and arithmetic—sciences which Mr Heathcote supposed the lady members of his family were less able to impart than could one of the sterner sex. Digby, it must be owned, did not take kindly to any of them, and showed but little respect or affection for his instructor. When Mr Heathcote made inquiries as to his son's progress, Mr Crammer invariably replied that Mr Digby was getting on nicely, and he was content, and did not think it necessary to trouble his head further on the matter.

I said a river was to be seen from Bloxholme. It flowed away for a distance of six or seven miles, till it reached the sea, on the shores of which, at its mouth, a little old sea-port town was situated, called Osberton. The Rector, Mr Nugent, was brother to Mrs Heathcote. He had a small income and a large family, and so he took pupils. He was a refined, pleasing-mannered man, very earnest and zealous, but rather strict and precise (not about religion, for in that no man can be too strict), but with regard to the behaviour of his pupils, in small as well as in important matters. As, however, he entered into their sports, and showed a deep interest in their welfare, he perfectly won their love and affection. Osberton was an old place altogether. An old castle, with a few old guns which had not gone off for ages,

guarded, or rather pretended to guard, the entrance to the river. In reality, it was no greater defence to the river than would be a stuffed dog in a court-yard. The little boat harbour and the quays were old, and the inhabitants were old-fashioned into the bargain. Now and then Digby had been sent to stay with his uncle, but the atmosphere of the place did not at that time suit his notions, and he always did his best to get home again.

In the neighbourhood of Bloxholme was Melford Priory, the residence of the Honourable Stephen Langley. It had been granted to Mr Langley's ancestors by Henry the Eighth, on the abolition of the monasteries in England. His family had, however, resided in the neighbourhood for centuries before that time. The estate belonged to Lord Calderton, his elder brother, who was a diplomatist, and consequently seldom came to the place. He allowed Mr Langley to live at Melford on the supposition that he devoted himself to looking after the property. Mr Langley had several children—the youngest, Julian, was about a year older than Digby. They had occasionally met—Digby thought him a very fast fellow, and admired him exceedingly. He described to Kate how he could ride the biggest horse in the stable, and break in the most intractable dog, and bring down a bird flying at a vast distance, and thrash any bumpkin twice his size. Mr Heathcote had a very great—an almost hereditary—respect for Lord Calderton's family. Many of them had been very excellent people, and the present lord bore a high character. It did not, therefore, occur to him that any of them could be otherwise than good. Perhaps had he made inquiries, and ascertained how Julian was being brought up, he would not have wished his son to become his associate. The truth is, that Mr Langley was not a good man, and poor Julian was left to grooms and other servants, who did their best to ruin him, physically and morally. He listened eagerly to their conversation, imbibed their notions, and gained a taste for beer and spirits, with which they, in their ignorance of the injury they were inflicting, supplied him.

I think that we have now got a very good idea of Bloxholme, its inhabitants, and its neighbourhood. I must again warn my readers that none of the characters I have described were model people. Mr Heathcote himself certainly was not, nor was altogether Mrs Heathcote, nor was her brother, Mr Nugent; and the troubles and difficulties Digby brought upon himself, and the pain and suffering he endured, will show that he is intended for a warning rather than an example.

I must not, however, forget my old friend John Pratt—a very worthy, honest fellow. He was a sort of under steward on the property. He looked after the cows, and pigs, and poultry, and sheep, and young colts. He assisted in the kitchen garden, but did not profess to know much about flowers. He acted also as a gamekeeper, but he was especially great in fishing matters, and everything connected with the ponds and the rookery. He always decided when the young rooks were to be shot, and when the ponds were to be drained or drawn. He superintended the taking of all wasp's nests. He had charge of the ferrets, the hawks, and dogs; and as to vermin, the stoats, and the weasels, and polecats, and even the rats, it was supposed had positively an instinctive dread of him. He was a tall, thin, wiry man, with a bald forehead, and grey hair, and a keen intelligent countenance. Digby was very fond of him, and he in return doted on the young master, and would have gone through fire and water to serve him. He had already contrived to instruct Digby in many of the secrets of his science, and as he used to say, "It was a pleasure to teach Master Digby, he took to it so kindly, and was afraid of nothing. He'd grapple with a weasel, or a snake, or a pike, and not cry out for help, when most other young 'uns would a been running screaming away from them. To see him once tackle-to with one of the big swans, and only a little stick in his hand, it was for all the world like St. George a-fighting the dragon, just as you see on a gold sovereign."

Digby, however, had, in the encounter mentioned, very nearly got his arm broken, and would in other ways have suffered probably severely had not John come to the rescue. It proved, however, the fearlessness of his disposition, which had so won John Pratt's admiration. John Pratt himself feared no mortal foes; but the poorer classes in that part of the country were excessively superstitious, and he partook to the full of the general feeling.

Whereas, happily, throughout England generally, the grosser styles of superstition have been in a great degree eradicated by the exertions of the ministers of the Gospel and by the spread of education, in some parts, and this was one of them, all the absurd notions in which our ancestors indulged in the dark ages have been handed down to the present generation. Ghosts, hobgoblins, witches and their secret powers, charms, amulets, spirits of every sort, were believed in with undoubting faith. Education had not spread into the district, and, unfortunately, the clergymen who had successively ministered in that and the neighbouring parishes had done little or nothing to eradicate the pernicious and anti-Christian notions which were prevalent among the people. They had been what were called very good sort of men. They had preached very fair average sermons on a Sunday, and if people chose to come to church to hear them they were welcome to do so. If any of their parishioners were sick and sent for them, they went to them, with their Bibles in their pockets, from which, perhaps, they read a chapter or two, and, with a few ordinary words of consolation or advice, they hurried away as fast as they could. They hunted, and shot, and dined with Mr Langley and Mr Heathcote, and all the gentlemen round; and drank their wine, and told good stories, and amused themselves and those with whom they associated to the utmost of their power. They passed for worthy jolly good fellows, and no more was demanded of them. It never seemed to occur to them that they would have to answer some day or other respecting the souls of their fellow-creatures committed to their pastoral care. They wondered why there was so much ignorance and superstition in their parishes; why people did not come to church; why dissent was rife; why dissenting chapels were built; why the country people were so immoral; why there was so much drunkenness, folly, and wickedness.

John Pratt, as I was saying, notwithstanding all his good qualities, was a firm believer in witches, ghosts, and hobgoblins, and an arrant coward with regard to the spiritual world.

As Digby ran through the grounds he found him by the side of the lake, repairing one of the fishing punts. As he sat with mallet and blunt chisel in hand, driving the oakum into her seams, he was neither whistling nor smiling, as was his wont. So absorbed was he, indeed, in his own thoughts, that he did not observe the young master's approach.

"What's the matter, John?" said Digby; "you don't seem happy to-day."

John started, and looked up, "Oh, Master Digby, is that you? I didn't see you, that I didn't," he exclaimed. "Happy, did

you say, Master Digby? No, I ain't happy by no means. I'm going to be bewitched; and that's enough to make a man anything but happy, I'm thinking."

"What does that mean, John?" asked Digby; "I don't understand."

"Why, Master Digby, you knows Dame Marlow—she as lives with her old man down in the gravel-pits at Mile-End—she's a witch, and a wicked old body, if ever there was one in this world. Well, t'other day, as I was sauntering like down the green lane, who should I see breaking through the fence at the corner of the copse but the old Dame herself. She'd a bird in her hand, and as I ran up to her I found 'twas a hen pheasant. When she seed me she tried to hide it away under her red cloak, and, in her hurry, very nearly toppled down the bank on her nose, into the road. 'Oh, Dame Marlow, Dame Marlow, what have you been about?' I cried out. 'You've been a-stealing master's pheasants, that you have; you wicked old woman, that you are.' Still I didn't like to lay hands on her, do you see, for I know'd well what she was, and what she can do. On she went, hobbling away with her crutch as fast as I could walk, almost. At last she stopped, and turning round her face—oh how wicked and vengeful it looked, how her red ferret eyes glared at me—says she to me, 'Who calls? Ay, is that you, John Pratt? Ay; and you're seeking your own harm. You want to bring down a curse on your own head; you want to malign and injure a poor old body with a decrepit husband, who can't help himself, do you? Speak, man—what is it you want?' 'I want master's pheasant which you've been trapping, dame,' says I; 'and I must have it, too,' says I, growing bold. 'Ay, I see you want to be cursed,' says she; 'you want to have the marrow dry up in your bones, and the skin wither up on your flesh, and the hair fall off your head, and your eyes grow dim, and your teeth drop out, and your legs not to bear your body, and your hands to tremble,'—'Stop, stop, dame,' says I, 'don't curse me now; I'm only doing my duty. I want the pheasant back; I'd sooner give you its value than quarrel with you.' 'It's too late,' says she, looking more wicked than ever, and not trusting me, I suppose; 'you're bewitched already, and you'll find it out before long, that you will, let me tell you.' Saying this, on she hobbled, as before. I followed, thinking that I ought and must have the pheasant; but she turned upon me such a wicked look, and again hissed out, 'You're bewitched, John Pratt; you're bewitched, man,' that I couldn't stand it, and had to run away as fast as my legs could carry me, while she set up a shout of laughter which is even now ringing in my ears."

"Very horrid, indeed, John," said Digby, who did not exactly know whether or not to believe in Dame Marlow's powers. "But do you really think she can do what she says?"

"No doubt about it, Master Digby," answered the old man, with grave earnestness; "you should just hear what all the folks in the country round do say of her. There's no end of the cows, and sheep, and pigs, she's bewitched in her time. Many's the one she's sent to their graves before their glass was run out, just because they'd offended her. Oh, she's a terrible woman, depend on that, Master Digby."

Much more nonsense of a similar character did poor John talk. I need not repeat it. Digby was almost persuaded to believe all that the old man told him.

This conversation was interrupted by a light, hearty fit of laughter. So eager had they become that they had not perceived that Kate had approached them, and had been an attentive and amused listener to much that had been said on the subject.

"All that you have been saying is arrant nonsense, John," she exclaimed, unable longer to restrain herself; "and you, Digby, are a little goose to believe him. Why, Dame Marlow has no more real power over the elements or over her fellow-creatures than you or I, or her own black cat has. We'll soon concoct a plan to make her undo her own curse, and to punish her, at all events. An idea just now came into my head when I heard you two wise people talking. Come along, Digby, to our island, and we'll work it out. If it comes to anything, as I think it will, we'll get John to help us; and we'll make Dame Marlow repent that she ever pretended to be a witch, or threatened to injure any of the poor people who are silly enough to believe in her."

From the hearty shouts of laughter which John soon heard coming across the water from the island, there could be little doubt that Kate's idea was considered by her and Digby as a very bright one, and that, under the influence of their united wits, it was undergoing a rapid development.

John Pratt was amazed. He had great admiration of Master Digby's physical courage. He felt a sensation approaching to awe as he contemplated the fearlessness with which Miss Kate proposed to encounter one who possessed such unlimited powers over even the spirits of darkness. "There's the true old blood in their veins, that there is," remarked John to himself, as he went on caulking the punt.

Chapter Two.

How Digby and Kate Carried out Their Plot—An Evil Counsellor—Youthful Tricks and Their Consequences.

As soon as Digby and Kate could make their escape from the schoolroom the next morning, they repaired to an attic, where all sorts of lumber was piled up, and refuse articles of every description were collected till some destination was assigned for them. Here they soon found what they came to look for. There was some rope, and the lining of a black gown, and some black silk, and a few bits of red cloth. The things were done up tightly in bundles, and, with delighted eagerness, they hurried off with them to the summer-house on the top of the mound. Soon after they got there, John Pratt appeared, with a bundle of hay.

"All right, John," exclaimed Digby, "that will stuff him well. And have you got the other things I asked you for?"

"Yes, Master Digby, but there's something I don't half likes about the matter. It will look too horrid, I zuzpect."

"Never fear, John; it will punish the old woman properly, and be great fun," cried Kate, eagerly. "Give me the things; we shall soon be ready; and do you go down and keep ward and watch to give us timely notice of any one's approach."

Thus exhorted, John produced from his capacious pockets a couple of deer's antlers and two deer's hoofs, with the greater part of the skin of the legs attached to them. Kate eyed them with a merry glance. Digby did not half like to touch them, it seemed. The young lady was evidently the leading spirit on the occasion.

"That will do, John," she said, with a nod. "Nothing could be better."

John turned slowly, and went down the mound. His mind was evidently not quite satisfied with the work in which he was engaged. Still, he could not bring himself to refuse any of the requests made him by Miss Kate and Master Digby.

As soon as he had gone, Kate, who had been cutting up the black stuff, produced some large needles, and twine, and thread. Digby held the materials, and tied the knots as she directed him. It is surprising how rapidly her little fingers performed the work. She first made a ball, into which she fixed the two antlers.

"There is a capital head," she remarked. "We will work in the eyes and mouth and nose directly."

Then she made an oblong cushion, to serve as a body, and fastened the head to it. She next formed a pair of long arms, and made some pieces of skin do duty for the hands and fingers, while the two hoofs were secured to the end of the legs. With the red cloth, part of an old hunting-coat she made a mouth, and a long tongue sticking out of it; and then she made white eyes, with red eyeballs, and she fastened on a long hooked nose, rapidly formed with paper and the black stuff. Some shreds of the latter did duty as hair, and a twist of it, with a bit of red cloth at the end, as a tail. In a very short time the young lady had put together a very ugly little imp, which did more credit to her ingenuity and imagination than perhaps it did to her good taste. Digby, however, was delighted, and clapped his hands, and danced the figure about round and round the room, with fits of uproarious laughter. It was scarcely, however, completed in all its details when the sound of a bell reached their ears.

"Oh, we must run in, Digby, or they will be sending to look for us," exclaimed Kate. "Here, we will put young Master Blackamoor away under the table. Nobody will be strolling this way, I hope; and, as soon as our afternoon lessons are over, we'll come back and finish him, and get John Pratt to carry him to Mile-End for us."

Telling John Pratt to meet them again at three o'clock, they hurried back to the Hall. Kate tried to look as grave as possible all dinner-time, but whenever hers and Digby's eyes met, from their ill-repressed twinkle their mother saw that there was some amusing secret between them.

There were some guests taking luncheon at the hall. Among them was Mr Bowdler, the newly-appointed vicar of the parish. He watched the countenances of his young friends, and he saw that there was some joke between them. What it was he could not tell, and did not choose to ask. After luncheon he took his departure, and strolled through the grounds on his way home.

They got over their lessons very quickly—indeed, Kate was never long about hers—and off they hurried again to the mound.

"Where are you going to, children?" asked Mrs Heathcote, as they were running out.

"To the mound, to meet John Pratt," answered Digby. "I'll take care of Kate, that she doesn't get into mischief. We are going to have a piece of fun, that's all."

This answer, from its very frankness, satisfied Mrs Heathcote, and away they went to carry out their scheme. As they approached the mound misgivings arose in their minds lest any body should have been there during their absence; but when they reached it, they found their ugly little imp in the position in which they had left him under the table, and their minds were satisfied on the subject. They now gave him the last few finishing touches, fastened on his tail, and secured a rope at his back. When they had done this Digby insisted on having another dance with him, and then John Pratt appeared with a large game basket. Into this, neck and crop, they stuffed the figure and the rope, and John carrying it, away they went laughing and chattering through the grounds in the direction of Mile-End.

"Now, John, you are to go into Dame Marlow's cottage, and remember you are to sit down and ask her to take the curse off you," said Kate. "She will say that she will not, and then you are to beg and entreat her, and to tell her that if she is so wicked that some one will be coming to carry her off one of these days, and then that she'll have good reason to be sorry for what she has done. Leave the rest to us; only, if you do see anything come down the chimney, you are to run screaming away as if you were in a dreadful fright."

"Yez, Miss Kate, I'll do as you zays. But zuppose anything real was to appear, what should I do then?" said John, evidently repenting that he had entered into the young people's scheme.

Kate thought a moment; Digby looked very grave; John's fears were infecting him.

"I do not think any harm can possibly come, John," said Kate, after some time. "You know we only want to frighten and to punish the old woman who stole the pheasants, and tried to frighten you. There cannot be any harm in that, surely."

"I doan't know, I doan't know, Miss," answered John, rubbing his head very hard, as he walked on faster than before, the children having to keep almost at a run by his side.

It was curious to see that little girl, with her bright, though just then misdirected, intelligence managing that gaunt, venerable-looking, but ignorant old man.

John's education had been sadly neglected in his youth. When they got near the gravel-pits at Mile-End the party made a circuit to approach Dame Marlow's cottage at the rear. It was a curious edifice, built down on a low ledge of the gravel-pit, one side of which formed the back wall, while the roof rested on the edge. The chimney was consequently very accessible; and Digby and Kate could without difficulty reach to the top, and look down it. John, having deposited the basket containing the imp went round to the front of the cottage, to be ready to perform his part of the drama. He had to descend to the bottom of the pit, which, with the exception of a narrow causeway, which led to the professed witch's abode, was full of water. He crossed the causeway, and then winding up a zig-zag path, stood before the door of the cottage. Digby and Kate got their figure ready to let down the chimney. Though there was a fire on the hearth, it did not send forth sufficient smoke to prevent them from looking down and hearing what was going forward within the cottage. John knocked.

"Come in, whoever you bees," exclaimed the old woman, in a harsh croaking voice. "Bad or good, old or young, little or big, rich or poor, if you've anything to zay to Dame Marlow she bees ready to hear you."

"I bees come, dame, to ask you to take the curse off me," said John, entering and sitting down. "Your zervant, Mr Marlow."

A cough and a grunt was the only answer the old man deigned to give.

"Is that the way the wind blows? I thought az how you wouldn't wish to make an enemy of me, John. There's zome things that can be done, and zome that can't. Now, when I'ze once bewitched a man it's no easy matter for me, or anyone else, to take the curse off on him: so, do you zee, John Pratt, what I've cast at thee must stick by thee, man."

The wicked old woman thought that she had got John in her power, and had no inclination to let him off easily.

Poor John begged and prayed that the dreaded curse might be taken off him; but the more earnest he seemed the more inflexible she became, and only laughed derisively at his fears. When he appealed to the old man, a grunt or a chuckle was the only answer he received.

"Then listen to me, both on you," cried John, mustering courage, and recollecting his lesson. "You bees a wicked old couple, and zome on these days there will be a coming zome one who'll make you sorry you ever cursed me, or any one else."

Scarcely had he spoken when a noise in the chimney was heard, the pot on the fire was upset, out blew a thick puff of smoke, and, amid a shower of soot, a hideous little black imp appeared, jumping about; while frightful shrieks, which seemed to be uttered by him, rent the air.

John, with loud cries, jumped up, oversetting the table, and ran into the open air. The old man, attempting to follow, tripped up and fell sprawling on the ground; while the dame herself, catching hold of John's coat tails, hobbled after him, exclaiming that she was a wicked old sinner, that she had no power to curse him or anybody else, and that she would never utter another curse as long as she lived. However, the shrieks and hisses from the chimney continued, and at last, overcome with terror, she fell down in a swoon.

Digby and Kate having ascertained that their device had taken the full effect they anticipated, hauled up their figure, and packing it away in the basket, in which operation they considerably blackened their hands and dresses, sat down till John should join them. Getting tired of doing nothing, they cautiously approached the edge of the gravel-pit, when, looking over, they saw the wretched old couple still on the ground. They were very much alarmed when they found that they did not move, thinking perhaps they had really frightened them to death.

"Oh dear, oh dear, I wish that we hadn't done it," exclaimed Kate, looking very miserable. "And I to have led you to help me. It was very naughty of me, I know. I know—I know it was."

"Oh no, Kate, it wasn't all your fault; I'm sure I thought it was very good fun," answered Digby. "Perhaps, after all, they are not dead. I'll go and have another look." Digby approached near, stooping down, and when he looked over he saw the dame lifting up her head and gazing cautiously around. She did this more from instinct or habit than because she fancied any one might be near. Digby thought that she must have seen him. He crept back to Kate, satisfied, at all events, that she was not dead; and John Pratt soon afterwards joining them, he shouldered the basket, and they set off as fast as they could for the Hall. What to do with the imp, which had played so prominent a part in the drama, was a puzzle, till John undertook to carry it home, and burn it.

When they got back to the Hall the state of their dresses and their hands, which were more than usually dirty, caused some grave suspicions in the mind of Mrs Barker, the head nurse, who had to prepare them to come in to dessert, after dinner; and she was not long in ascertaining from Digby what had really occurred. She thought it very wrong in John Pratt to have assisted in such a proceeding; but he was a favourite, and she was afraid that if she made much of the matter she should bring him into trouble; she therefore merely gave Kate and Digby a lecture, and they fancied that they had escaped without any further ill result from their frolic. It happened, however, that that very evening a neighbour of Dame Marlow's came running to the vicarage to say that the dame and her old man were both very ill, that they had something on their consciences, and that they wished to see the vicar and to disburden them.

Mr Bowdler was ever at the call of any of his poor parishioners who sent for him. Although he had but just finished his frugal dinner, and taken his books and sat down to enjoy himself after his own fashion, in communing in thought with great and good men. He rose from his seat, and said he would go immediately.

It was a fine moonlight night, and so he mounted his horse and trotted off to Mile-End. He found the old couple not nearly so ill as he expected, but still suffering very much from fear. I need not repeat in their own words what they said.

The dame confessed that she had done many wicked things, and that she had tried to impress people with a belief in her supernatural powers, though she knew that she was a weak old woman, without any power at all. At length, however, while she was endeavouring to frighten an honest man out of his senses, the spirit of evil had himself appeared down the chimney, and very nearly frightened her and her husband out of theirs. What she had sent to Mr Bowdler for was, it appeared, not so much to say how sorry she had been, but to entreat him to exorcise the evil spirit, so that he might not venture to come back again.

Mr Bowdler looked grave. He might have said that prayer, and penitence, and watchfulness, were the only preventives against the approach of the evil one. However, in the present instance, he did not like to say this. The fact was that he had become completely enlightened from what he had just heard as to the true state of the case. After taking luncheon at the Hall, he had strolled, as he had been requested to do, through the grounds. The day being very fine, and not having been before at the Mound, he hunted about till he found his way through the labyrinth, and then he climbed up to the summer-house to enjoy the view which, he had been told, could be seen from it. Just as he was leaving the building, the little imp under the table had caught his eye. He pulled out the monster, and could scarcely help indulging in a smile as he examined it. He doubted, however, whether he ought to leave it there, or carry it off; but guessing from the workmanship that young hands had formed it, and recollecting Kate and Digby's glances at luncheon, he had little difficulty in guessing that it was the produce of their ingenuity. Had he been less of a stranger, he would, I have no doubt, have taken it away, or stopped and remonstrated with them on the impropriety of making such a figure; but he was a judicious man, and he feared that he might injure his future usefulness in the family by appearing officious. He was a man who only placed confidence in good principles. He believed that preaching against one sin, or one fault, and leaving sin in general, evil dispositions unassailed, produced no permanent effect. However, he resolved to keep his eye on his young friends, and to speak to them when he could find a favourable opportunity. He now at once discovered how the figure had been employed, though he could scarcely persuade himself that Kate and Digby alone could have carried out by themselves the drama which had evidently been enacted. He did not mention his suspicions to the old couple, but he strongly urged them to repent of their evil ways, and to resolve in future to lead better lives. He assured them that neither he nor any other mortal man had the power of exorcising evil spirits; and they were silly old people to fancy so. As to what they had seen, he did not choose to pronounce an opinion; but he told them that they ought to have stopped and examined it, and that then they would probably not have been so much frightened. He was not very well satisfied, however, with the result of his visit.

"This is a pretty prank for these young people to play," said he to himself, as he rode home. "It is high time that Master Digby should be sent to school, and that Miss Kate should have a governess to look after her. If something is not done they will be getting into some worse scrape before long. I must try and speak to Mr Heathcote on the matter. He appears to think that they are still babies, and never seems to dream of the rapid development of their genius for mischief."

Not long after this, Julian Langley, who had not yet been sent to school, was invited to spend a few weeks at the Hall. From what I have said it may be supposed that he was not likely to do Digby any good. Kate, from the first, could not abide him; and even John Pratt looked at him with no little suspicion. Julian was tall for his age, with a slight figure, fair, with light hair, and an inexpressive rather than a bad countenance. I believe that his was one of those characters which may be moulded without difficulty either for good or for ill, according to the hands into which they fall. Nothing would have made Julian Langley a very great man, or a very important member of society; but he might have become, by proper care and culture, useful in his generation, and religious and happy. Alas, poor fellow, how different was his lot. He could discourse very learnedly about horses and dogs, and all sporting matters; and of course Digby thought him a very fine fellow. It was not long before he led Digby into a variety of scrapes.

The first Sunday after his arrival all the family went to church. The Bloxholme pew had very high sides and curtains, and was directly in front of the pulpit, the preacher being the only person who could look directly down into it. Outside it, also facing the pulpit, there had, from time immemorial, been seats for a number of poor and old people. One of the occupants was an old man, who wore a scratch-wig; he was very deaf, also, and as he could not hear a word the vicar said, he invariably fell asleep during the sermon, and, as was often the case, if he had any cold, snored loudly.

Stephen Snookes was certainly not a nice old man, and Digby and Kate had no affection for him. People complained of his snoring; and the vicar had more than once spoken to him about the impropriety of his conduct in going to sleep during the sermon. Stephen promised to try and amend; but the next Sunday invariably committed the same fault.

Julian and Digby had sat quiet during the beginning of the sermon; but when old Snookes began to snore, they got up on their seats and looked over down upon the head of the delinquent. As it happened, they had heard, the evening before, a very sad, but very beautifully written tale, read in which the unhappy hero, in the days of his boyhood, hooks off an old man's wig in church. Undeterred by the sad fate which ultimately befel the hero, Julian Langley was seized with a strong inclination to imitate his example. Digby also jumped at the suggestion made to him by his companion on their way home from church.

As soon as luncheon was over they hurried to Digby's room, where they supplied themselves with a fish-hook and a line. Their eagerness to accompany the Miss Heathcotes to church in the afternoon might have created just suspicions in the minds of some of the elders of the family, but it did not; and off they set in high good humour.

Sermon time came. Old Snookes fell asleep, his loud snoring gave notice of the circumstance. Julian and Digby stood up, and the hook descended, its barbs becoming entangled in the curls of the scratch-wig. The line was then drawn tight, and the end secured to the brass rod at the top of the pew. What was the horror of Mr Bowdler, when raising his voice, to see old Snookes suddenly bob his head, when, in the sight of a large part of the congregation, off flew his wig, it seemed, and up he stood, bare-headed. Putting his hands to his bald pate, he exclaimed, "I bees bewitched, I knows I bees! Oh, where is my wig? where is my wig?"

Even Mr Bowdler, who had observed the cause which had produced this effect, had some difficulty in keeping his countenance, while I am sorry to say his congregation did very little to keep theirs. He of course felt much vexed with the conduct of the boys. The wig was drawn up rapidly to the edge of the pew, and then it fell down again to the ground, from which the old man picked it up, and, in his hurry, clapped it on again hind part before.

Mr Bowdler felt that any good effects his sermon might have produced were too likely to be obliterated, and he resolved more than ever to advise Mr Heathcote to send Digby off to school.

Neither Digby nor Kate were aware that some time before this their parents had come to the resolution of obtaining a governess who might assist Mary in her studies, and take entire charge of them and Gusty. Their mother's health had lately become much worse, and she was utterly unfit for the task she had imposed on herself. Only the day before the arrival of the lady they were told of the arrangements that had been made. Neither of them had formed any favourable notions of governesses in general, and Julian had assured them that those he had heard of would beat and pinch them and make them sit in the stocks, and keep them in at their lessons all day, and deprive them of their dinners. Long, indeed, was the catalogue of the enormities governesses were supposed as a class to commit.

"I should like to see anyone trying on those tricks with me," exclaimed Digby, looking very fierce, "I would soon show them what I was made of!"

"Horrid old creature, I'll not attend to her," said Kate, pouting. "I'll pretend to be as dull and stupid as a sick pig. She'll find it very difficult to knock anything into my head, let me assure her."

"Don't you think that we could play her some tricks, just to make her sorry she came here?" suggested Julian. "I'll show you how to make an apple-pie bed, and we can put salt into her tumbler at dinner, and we can pretend the cat is in the room and make a terrible fuss all dinner-time, so that she will fancy we do not hear a word she says to us. There's no end of things I can put you up to, if you will be guided by me."

Of the truth of this assertion of Master Julian's there could be no doubt, but how far they were to be guided well was a very different question. That did not, perhaps, occur to his auditors at the time. Kate's innate delicacy revolted from the idea of preparing an apple-pie bed for their new governess, especially if, as she fancied, she was an old lady, and might arrive fatigued after a long journey; but Digby thought it would be very good fun, and undertook to assist Julian in carrying out his proposal. While the two boys were discussing the matter, Kate was absorbed in meditation.

"I know one thing I should like to do," she exclaimed. "I have often thought about it. It would give her a tremendous fright, and perhaps she would pack up her things and go off again at once."

"What is it?" exclaimed the boys in a breath, for they knew that Kate's ideas were generally very bright; "tell us all about it."

"Then listen," said Kate. "In the long gallery at the top of the house there are several pictures of old gentlemen and ladies, our ancestors I believe, in full bottomed wigs and hoops, and long coats and breeches, and swords and fans—and—that is to say, the gentlemen have some, and the ladies the other articles I mention," she added, for she saw that the boys were laughing.

"Well, go on," they exclaimed eagerly.

"Some of the portraits have been taken down and placed leaning against the walls. Now though when they were hung up they appeared as large as life, now they are on the ground the figures do not seem to so much taller than any of us. The fancy took me as I was looking at them to cut out the eyes, and to put mine in their stead; and I couldn't help laughing at the idea of how frightened any one would be to see the eyes rolling about, and to hear at the same time a groan or a sigh, as if the portrait had all of a sudden become animated. After the idea had once seized me, I could not rest satisfied till I had put it in part into execution. There would have been no fun merely to put my eyes through two holes, so after I had cut out the eyes of an old gentleman, our great-great-great-grandfather, I believe, with a steel cuirass on his breast, and a heavy sword in his hand, I got a looking-glass, and just at dusk last evening, I carried it up and placed it on a chair before a portrait of the old knight. Then I got behind the canvas, and put my eyes at the holes and rolled them about till I caught sight of them in the glass. I very nearly shrieked with horror—the eyes looked so natural and bright, I quite forgot they were my own. I couldn't endure it any longer, but had to run out of the gallery without looking up at any of the portraits, for I could not help fancying that I should see them all rolling their eyes round at me."

"How dreadful," said Digby, shuddering. "I wonder you could stand it, Kate."

"Oh, I had to go up again to bring away the looking-glass, and as the old gentlemen and ladies all looked very quiet and demure, I soon got over my fright."

"What, then, do you want us to do?" asked Julian. "Depend on it we're up to anything."

"I will tell you," replied Kate. "There are two big pictures I have fixed on, I will cut out the eyes, and the nose, and the mouth of each of them, I can easily fasten them in again with gum. You shall go up as soon as it is dusk, and put your faces at the holes. I will then invite the new governess, Miss Apsley, I hear is her name, to come up and inspect our ancestors, and then you can sigh and groan, and then she is certain to take fright; and I'll run away, and she will follow, and you must then set up loud shrieks of horrid laughter; and my idea is, that she will insist on going away, thinking the house is haunted, and never wish to come near it or us again."

"Oh, glorious, grand, magnificent!" exclaimed the boys.

The terms were not very appropriate it must be owned. Little did the elders of the family dream of the mischief the

children were committing among their ancestors in the picture gallery.

The morning came on which Miss Apsley was to arrive. John Pratt had fixed that same morning for draining one of the ponds. This was an operation at which very naturally the boys were anxious to be present. There were eels innumerable, and tench and perch in the pond, that was certain, and it was believed that there were also some giant pike, which refused to be caught by any of the baits thrown to them. They had no lessons to do that morning, so at an early hour they set off in high glee at the fun they expected. Even Gusty was allowed to accompany them, and Kate was to follow shortly. It was neither of the large ponds which was to be drained, but still it was one of considerable size. Even people of greater age might have been highly interested at the prospect of seeing the long-hidden depths of the pond exposed to view. John Pratt was in all his glory, and his attendants stood obedient to his commands. The sluices were forced up after a good deal of hammering, and out rushed the water in a dense rapid current, rushing down with a loud roar through the serpentine canal into the lowest lake, whence it found its way to the river. A net had been drawn across to catch any of the larger fish who might be drawn in by the current, but generally speaking the noise and unusual commotion made them seek what they fancied would be safety in the lower depths of the pond. The water was not allowed to run off very fast lest it should commit some mischief, so the operation was a long one. At length, however, the interest increased as shoals began to appear, and here and there an astonished tench or an eel was seen struggling away through the mud to get into the clearer liquid. The boys shouted and shrieked as they saw them.

"Oh there's another big fellow," cried Digby; "we must have him."

"What a whopper," exclaimed Julian; "I'll bet he weighs a dozen pounds at least."

"There goes another, there's another—there's another—oh! what a huge eel!" were the exclamations heard on every side.

John Pratt stood calm and collected. He knew that the moment of action had not yet arrived. Landing-nets were in readiness, and so was a flat punt with eel-forks, or prongs; indeed, he had omitted nothing that would enable him to capture any of the finny tribe on which he might set his eyes. At length the wished-for moment arrived. Nearly the whole bottom of the pond was laid bare, with the exception of a hole sufficiently deep to float the punt, and a narrow channel leading to it. The exposed parts of the mud were waving in every direction with the floundering struggling fish, while innumerable eels of all sizes were wriggling about and seeking for shelter. Just then Kate came down, almost breathless, to the pond. The boys had leaped into the punt with John Pratt, and were shoving off. Their jackets, and shoes, and hats, indeed, everything but their shirts and trousers, had been thrown aside, in imitation of John and the men who were assisting. They pushed back, yielding to her petitions to take her in. The punt was very narrow, John Pratt was tall, they were all very eager. The fish swarmed around them; some they took up with the landing-nets, the big eels John forked with his prong, the tench and perch they caught with their hands; the other men were wading about with landing-nets, putting the fish into buckets, to transfer them alive to another pond while this was being cleansed. The water still kept running off, and more and more fish appeared. The boys and Kate shrieked again and again with delight. Their eagerness increased. John was aiming his prong at a large eel, the young party all leaned over on the same side, not seeing that the other edge of the punt was on the mud. The bottom was slippery with the slime of the tench and eels, John's foot slid away—in an instant over went the punt, and let them all out into the water and mud. At first Kate was frightened and shrieked, and Digby was alarmed on account of her and little Gusty, but he only laughed, and they soon found that there was very little water there, and that the bottom was hard, and so they thought it very good fun, and refused to get into the punt again. Away they went, floundering about in chase of the fish, covered from head to feet with mud, but thinking it very good fun. Digby's fear was lest some big pike should catch hold of Gusty. He himself had a desperate tussle with a big fellow, which would have got away, or, perhaps, bit him, had not John Pratt come to his assistance. Certainly very curious figures were the four children, and no one would have supposed that they were the descendants of long lines of well-born, proud ancestors.

Scarcely had Kate left the house, when the expectant governess, Miss Apsley, arrived. After she had taken luncheon, as she was not tired with her journey, Mrs Heathcote invited her to take a stroll through the grounds to the ponds.

"We shall find the children there, and you will be able to observe them without being remarked," said Mrs Heathcote. "I hope that you will think well of them, for they are, I believe, as well-behaved, tractable children as any in the county. Digby is a dear good boy, and Kate is a clever little thing, though slightly hoydenish I own, but every one may see at a glance that she is a perfect little lady as Digby is a gentleman. You will find no difficulty in managing them."

Mrs Heathcote spoke with the pardonable pride of a mother. She was much pleased with the new governess, and wished to impress her with a favourable opinion of her children.

Miss Apsley, who was a very sensible, ladylike, right-minded person, thought that she should like Mrs Heathcote, and was congratulating herself on having such nice well-behaved little children placed under her charge. Engaged in pleasant conversation the two ladies drew near the ponds. Shouts and shrieks reached their ears, and expressions anything but refined, which Mrs Heathcote fancied must be uttered by some groom boys, or young gipsies, were heard. When they got in sight of the pond they both stood aghast. There were the children, on whom their mother had just been passing so warm an eulogium, covered from head to foot with black mud, shouting and bawling as they ran after the fish—the refined little ladylike Kate being in no better condition than her brothers, while Julian Langley, having in his eagerness thrown off all restraint, was shouting and swearing, and using expressions which would disgrace the lips of any but the most ignorant heathens.

Poor Mrs Heathcote was horrified. For some time so eager were the children that they did not perceive her. Kate was the first to see her mother and the strange lady, as she was chasing a big eel close up to where they were standing.

"Oh, mamma, the punt upset and we tumbled in and got all muddy, and so I thought that it was a pity to come out,

and it is such fun," she exclaimed, making a grab at the eel, and not thinking it at all necessary to appear ashamed of herself.

She probably was not aware of the very odd figure she, appeared. Miss Apsley smiled, but said nothing.

Poor little Gusty next came up, with his pockets full of the smaller fish he had managed to catch hold of. Digby was too much engaged to see anything but the fish he was chasing. Away he went, as indifferent to the dirt as any mud-larker on the banks of the Thames, floundering away after the fish, and throwing them as he caught them into the pails and baskets prepared for their reception.

"They seem to enjoy the amusement," observed Miss Apsley at length; "I hope they will not catch cold."

Mrs Heathcote was pleased that she did not speak in a satirical tone. She thought, however, that it was high time that the amusement should come to an end, so she desired Kate and Gusty to come out of the pond, and directed John Pratt, who at length caught sight of his mistress, to tell the other boys that she wanted them. John could not help feeling that the young people who had been entrusted to his charge were not in a very presentable condition, so he thought that he ought to make the best apology in his power.

"They bees very like young frogs, I does own, Mrs Heathcote, marm," said he; "but they does take to it so kindly loike, I couldn't find it in my heart to prevent them."

I feel that I cannot do justice to worthy John's peculiar provincial phraseology. Mrs Heathcote smiled. She did not think that John had paid her children any very great compliment. At last Digby and Julian came forth from the mud, without a single white spot about them—hands and face, and hair and clothes, all covered with mud. They were not at all pleased at being told to go into the house to be cleansed, for they were not nearly tired of their sport, but Mrs Heathcote was afraid of Digby's catching cold, and was firm, though they pleaded hard to be allowed to remain.

"There mamma, there, see that huge pike," exclaimed Digby, about to dart back again; "he's one of the giant fellows we have been looking for all along, and thought he must have got out somewhere. I wonder you don't feel inclined to jump in after him. There, they've caught him; he must be thirty pounds weight."

Mrs Heathcote fairly laughed at the idea of her rushing into the mud in chase of a pike, but still Digby had to accompany her home. Whatever might have been his other delinquencies, he never had disobeyed her expressed wishes, for he loved her dearly. He and Julian, however, as they followed a little way behind, looked at the strange lady and thought that she had, in some way or other, something to do with their being called in. She was so ladylike and young, and nice-looking, and so different from what they had fancied the new governess was to be, that they never suspected that she was the awful and dreaded Miss Apsley.

Great was the dismay of Mrs Barker when the mud-besprinkled, or rather mud-covered children, made their appearance. Mrs Carter was summoned to give her assistance, and much soap and many tubs of hot-water were used before they were at all in their usual presentable condition. They scolded them much more severely than their mother had done. Poor little Gusty cried, and could not help fancying that he had been very naughty. When also Digby and Kate found that the lady with their mother was the new governess, and that it was owing to her arrival that they had been compelled to come in thus early, their hearts, in spite of her kind manner and nice looks, hardened towards her, and, instigated by Julian, they resolved to put into execution the plan which Kate had concocted. Mr Heathcote dined out that day, so the parlour dinner was soon over. Mrs Heathcote was fatigued, so lay down on the sofa and fell asleep. The boys had disappeared. The summer evening was drawing to a close. Now or never was the time. Kate had scarcely seen Miss Apsley.

"Will you come and look over the old house," she said, at length, in a voice which trembled somewhat.

It was late, and getting dusk, but Miss Apsley was glad of an opportunity of having some conversation with her rather silent pupil, and consented readily.

Kate really was very much agitated, and repented of her undertaking before even she reached the picture gallery. She hurried through the other rooms; she felt that she was acting a treacherous part; she tried to talk, but her tongue clung to the roof of her mouth; still there was so much determination, or obstinacy some would have called it, in her composition, that she would not turn aside from her resolution. Miss Apsley guessed that there was something or other on her young friend's mind, but made no remark. The gallery was reached. It was a long, wide, and high passage in the centre of the house, lighted at both ends and partially from the top. The portraits reached to the very roof, and looked very grim and dark—very few of them deserved much commendation as works of art. The gallery Kate thought looked more gloomy than ever; she could scarcely bring herself to utter a word.

"Come to the other end, marm," at last she said in a faltering voice.

She could scarcely help running away and screaming even before she got to the portraits whose faces she had so ill-treated. She got up to them; she dared not look at them; she was certain that the eyes were rolling horribly. Miss Apsley walked calmly on. Kate thought that she saw the governess look first on one side, then on the other, but she was not certain. They reached the end of the gallery; there was a fine view from the window; the rich glow of that fine summer evening still lingered in the sky. Miss Apsley seemed to enjoy it very much, as she stood contemplating it for some time, till hill, and wood, and fields became so blended as to be scarcely distinguishable.

"We will now return to the drawing-room, Kate, if you please," she said quietly.

Kate followed her. Again they reached the two portraits on the floor; there was a groan on one side, and what was meant for a sigh on the other. Kate was really frightened, and rushed off shrieking.

"Stop, stop, Kate, my dear, there is nothing to be alarmed about," said Miss Apsley, in a calm voice. "Come back and see."

As she spoke she caught hold of the nose of one of the portraits, which squeaked out "Oh, oh, oh!" Kate's fancy was tickled, and she burst into a fit of laughter; her admiration, also, was much excited for her new governess. Digby came forth from behind the other portrait; Julian, whose nose had been caught literally in his own trap, drew it back as he did his tongue, which he had protruded as far as he could, and also came out looking very sheepish, without a word to say for himself.

Digby, however, in a manly way, at once said—"I beg pardon, Miss Apsley, I thought that we were going to play you a good trick, which would have frightened you very much; but I am glad it did not, and I am sure we are very sorry, and I hope you will forgive us."

Miss Apsley's calmness had won Digby's admiration even in a greater degree than it had Kate's.

"Yes, indeed I will," she replied, pleased at his frankness. "It was silly and wrong in you, and the consequences might, in some instances, have been serious. I am bound to tell you this that I may warn you against playing such tricks in future; but as far as I am individually concerned I most heartily forgive you, and will entirely overlook the matter."

Julian could not understand these sentiments, and thought Digby a very silly fellow to make what he called an unnecessary apology. They all went downstairs together, and then Kate took the governess to her room, and confessed that she had herself concocted the scheme which had so signally failed, and told her, indeed, all I have already described about the matter. With eager haste she undid, too, the apple-pie bed which Digby and Julian had made, and assuring her how different a person she was to what she expected, promised that she would never again attempt to play her another trick, and that she would be answerable that Digby would not either.

"Why did you come out and show yourself, Digby?" said Julian, when they were alone together. "I don't understand your way of doing things; if you had groaned, as it was arranged, when that Miss Apsley and Kate first appeared, we should have put her to flight, and I should not have had my nose pulled—she knows how to pinch hard let me tell you."

Digby confessed that she really was so nice a person that he did not like to frighten her, and that had he not undertaken to groan, he could not have brought himself to do so at all.

Julian only sneered at this, and said no more on the subject.

It was most unfortunate for Digby that he had at that time so evil a counsellor as Julian to turn him aside from the right course, in which Miss Apsley was so anxious and so well able to direct him. Often and often have boys been warned to avoid bad companions. Let me assure my readers, that they are the emissaries of the evil one, and that their vocation is to destroy, both in body and soul, all who come under their influence.

Chapter Three.

More Mischief—Julian's Bad Advice—Digby's First Tutor—How Time was Spent at Osberton—Toby Tubb and his Yarns.

There was a large gathering at Bloxholme Hall, both from far and near, of most of the principal families in the county. The house was full of those acquaintances of Mr and Mrs Heathcote who lived too far off to return the same night, but numbers came who were to drive home again the same evening.

There was an archery meeting in the morning, and then a dinner and a dance afterwards. Julian and Digby voted it very slow work. It was, probably, so to them. Kate liked the archery, and especially the dancing, for gentlemen asked her to dance, and chatted with her, and she skipped about like a little fairy, as merrily as possible. The boys had not gone in to the dinner, but they had helped themselves plentifully to the good things on which they could lay hands, and Julian especially had got hold of some wine. In consequence of this, he had become very pot-valorous.

"I'll tell you what, Digby," said he, "we must do something, or I shall go to sleep. This dancing is all nonsense. Come into the garden. I dare say I shall knock out an idea; it's seldom I fail, when I try."

That was true; but they were very bad ideas Master Julian knocked out.

Before long they found their way into the court-yard, where the carriages of the company were left standing by themselves. The horses were in the stables, pleasantly munching their corn. The coachmen and grooms were in the servants' hall, as agreeably occupied in eating their suppers.

Julian went in and out among the carriages, and whatever rugs, or gloves, or wrappers, or halters he could find, he transferred from one carriage to the other.

"I say, Digby, it will be a capital joke," he exclaimed. "When the fat old coachmen come out, they'll all set to quarrelling. One will think that the other has stolen his things; and they will never dream that we did it."

Digby thought the joke a good one, and helped to take the articles out of some carriages and to put them into others, till it was evidently almost impossible for any one, in the dark, to regain their lost property. When this was done, and the joke, as they called it, enjoyed, the boys sat down to consider what else they could do.

"I have a notion of something," said Julian. "It is dangerous, because, if we were found out, we should get into a

terrible scrape; but I should like to try it.”

“What is it?” asked Digby, eagerly. “As for the scrape, I don’t mind that; I rather like the risk.”

“Well, young ’un, that’s according to fancy,” said Julian. “I like to take care of myself, but still I like fun. My notion is, that if we were to take the linch-pins out of the carriages we should see a scene not often beheld. As soon as they begin to move, the wheels will go spinning off in every direction, and the people will be spilt right and left into the road. Wouldn’t it be fun?”

Digby did not think so. He could scarcely fancy that Julian was in earnest. “Why, some of the coachmen might be killed,” he exclaimed; “and the people inside would certainly be hurt.”

“Oh, nonsense,” answered Julian. “You are qualmish. I’ll do it. You just stand by and see. Look, they are out in a minute. Just untwist the wire. Here’s somebody’s chaise; I suspect it is the parson’s. There, he’ll get a spill. Now, then, this old family coach; it belongs to those old frumps the Fullers. Lord, what fun, to see them all sprawling out into the road.”

Thus Julian went on, Digby felt very much inclined to stop him, and to entreat him to replace the linch-pins; but Julian rattled away, and was so amusing, that his first feeling of the wrong to which he was a party wore off. It never occurred to him that, if he could not stop Julian, his wisest course would have been to tell the coachmen to look to their linch-pins. Fortunately, many of the carriages had been built in London, and were supplied with patent boxes, so that they escaped the contemplated mischief.

While the boys were thus engaged they heard some footsteps, and they guessed that the coachmen were returning from their suppers to look after their horses. They therefore beat a precipitate retreat through the gate which led into the garden, and quickly made their way into the ball-room.

Mr Bowdler was walking about the room, speaking a kindly word whenever he had an opportunity, both to young and old, of those among whom he had come to live, and whom he was anxious to instruct, and endeavouring, as he felt it most important to do, to win the confidence of all, when he saw the two boys return. Their hair was disordered, their shoes were far from clean, and there were thin lines of dust or mud on their jackets. Julian looked flushed, and Digby had a sheepish abashed manner, very different from that which usually distinguished him. He was very certain that they had been about something they should not, but the question as to what they had been doing he did not think fit to ask. It was already getting later than the hour which he liked to be away from home, so, wishing Mr and Mrs Heathcote good-night, in that pleasant cordial manner which had already gained him their good-will, he walked out to get ready his own carriage. The glass door of the house which led into the garden was open, and so was that which led from the garden into the court-yard. Near his own carriage he saw something shining on the ground. He stooped down, and picked up a clasp knife which he himself had given to Digby a few days before. A groom came and brought out his horse and harnessed it to his carriage. When, however, the man led it out to be clear of the other carriages, in crossing a shallow open drain, first one wheel came off, and then, to his surprise, another followed. As the carriage was moving very slowly, and no one was in it, there was little harm done.

Mr Bowdler said nothing. “That was a cruel trick of those thoughtless boys,” he uttered to himself. “They could scarcely have wished to injure me, but I fear they are the guilty ones.”

He and the groom hunted about till they found the linch-pins and the wires which kept them in, and, having examined the other wheels, he got in and drove off.

The groom, of course, wondered how it could have happened, but it did not occur to him to accuse the young gentlemen.

Soon after this, Mrs Fuller’s coach was ordered. The fat coachman put the horses to, and drove slowly up to the front door. She and four daughters, and two young sons, came down the steps, the first got in, and the latter got up outside, while Digby and Julian stood in the hall looking on. Digby nearly bit off the thumb of his glove in his eagerness, and hesitation and regret, as he watched for the catastrophe he expected. Julian, fancying that they were secure from detection, stood more in front, highly amused at the thoughts of seeing the fat coachman tumble off into the dust.

Just as they were starting, a carriage was heard coming rapidly along the road. The fat coachman thought that he ought to move out of the way, so he whipped on his horses and away they trotted. A stone had been cast on to the carriage-way—the old family coach bumped over it—off flew a wheel—over went the carriage, the coachman and the two lads were thrown off with no little violence, right and left, greatly to Julian’s delight, and the ladies screamed.

Fortunately the windows had not been drawn up, and no one was cut, but being stout people and closely packed, they were very much jammed together. The poor coachman was the most hurt, and the young men had their coats spoilt. They were on their legs in a moment, and while one helped up the coachman the other ran to the horses’ heads. The next thing was to get out the ladies, who, trembling and alarmed, reentered the hall. Grooms, and servants, and gentlemen, assembled from all quarters.

“Look at the other wheels,” said a voice.

It was that of Mr Bowdler. His mind had misgiven him that the trick which he had discovered might have been played to other carriages, and he had driven back. He returned to the coach-yard and warned the coachmen of what he suspected. He found them in a state of great commotion, all crying out for the things they had lost, one accusing the other of having appropriated them. Their anger was still further increased when, in accordance with Mr Bowdler’s advice, they discovered the linch-pins had been abstracted from several of the carriages, and that the necks of some of them had narrowly escaped being broken. They were loud in their threats of vengeance on the heads of the

unknown ragamuffins who had committed the atrocious act.

"It's they gipsies," said one; "they've done it to rob the ladies as we drove along."

"It's some on old Dame Marlow's tricks. I don't think az how any one could a come in here to play zick a prank," observed another, a believer in the Dame's powers.

Some, however, ventured to suggest that as there were young gentlemen at the Hall, and young gentlemen did play very bad tricks at times, they might have done it. Opinion was setting very much in this direction, when John Pratt appeared, and was highly indignant that any such reflection should be cast on his young master.

Mr Bowdler having assured himself that no more harm was likely to occur, drove away again.

"I am not justified in allowing the boys to go on in this way," he said to himself. "I must inform Mr Heathcote of what has occurred, and get them sent to where they will be properly looked after; I should like to get them separated; one will learn no good from the other."

Meantime the disturbance in the coach-yard increased, and John Pratt had at last to summon his master from the ball-room to quell it. Mr Heathcote's voice was now heard inquiring what was the matter, when a dozen people tried to give their own versions of the state of affairs.

"Very well, my friends," said Mr Heathcote, after listening to them patiently, "keep the peace among yourselves for the present, and if the culprits can be discovered, I will take care, I promise you, that they shall be properly punished. And John Pratt, get more lanterns, and have all the things in the carriages collected, and distributed to the proper owners as they are claimed."

Having said this, the master of the house returned to his guests. Julian and Digby, when they heard what Mr Heathcote had said, were in a great fright. Digby knew very well that what his father said he would do—that he assuredly would do. He had no hope of escaping detection, and was certain that he should be punished. Of course, he remembered that he had not actually taken the linch-pins out of the carriages, but he had stood by, if not aiding and abetting, at all events not making any strenuous effort to prevent the deed. He, therefore, never for a moment dreamed of sheltering himself under the plea that he had not touched the linch-pins. It scarcely occurred to him that Julian might have exonerated him in a great degree by generously declaring that he himself had proposed the trick and had carried it out. Had he been in Julian's place, that is what he would have done; but he did not ask Julian to act thus for him, and he made up his mind to abide the consequences. He felt that any excuse he could offer for himself would throw more blame on Julian, and it did occur to him that even then his word might be doubted.

In the meantime Mrs Fuller's carriage was put to rights, the coachman mounted on his box, the ladies were handed in, and the young gentlemen got up once more on the rumble, all of them very angry and annoyed, as well they might be, and some not a little bruised. Mr Heathcote assured them of his vexation at what had occurred, and promised them, as he had the coachmen, that he would get the culprits properly punished.

The party at length separated, and Digby, more unhappy and discontented with himself than he had been for a long time, went to bed and cried with very vexation till he fell asleep. It was a pity that his repentance was not of a more permanent nature.

The next morning he arose refreshed, and though he felt an unusual weight at his heart, yet he looked at things in a brighter light. Julian looked immaterial (as Kate called his expression of countenance) when he came down to breakfast, and had evidently made up his mind to brazen out the affair, should suspicion fall on him. The event of the evening naturally, however, became the subject of conversation, and Digby felt conscious that he was blushing, while he dared not meet the eye of any one present. He eat away perseveringly at his breakfast, and bolted so hot a cup of tea, that he scalded his mouth, and was about to make his escape, when his father's eye fell on him. Digby knew it, though he did not dare to look up, and Mr Heathcote felt very nearly certain that the culprit was his own son. Had he doubted it much, he would have asked him, in joke, if he could tell how the affair happened; but he was silent, and felt sad and annoyed. He was sorry to suppose that Digby had been guilty of so foolish and really wicked an act, and his pride too, of which he had a good deal, was hurt at the thought of having, in accordance with his word, publicly to punish him.

All doubts were at an end when, in a short time, Mr Bowdler appeared, mentioned what he had ascertained, and firmly recommended the course he thought ought to be pursued.

"You are right," answered Mr Heathcote, "but he is such a child—it seems to me but the other day that he was a baby. Let me see, how old is he? Ah, to be sure, I went to school at an earlier age. Old or young, I am bound to punish him, however. Yet stay, we have no right to condemn him unheard."

Mr Heathcote rang the bell, and ordered the servant to send in Master Digby to him. He felt very like that Roman father we read about, who condemned his own son to death.

"Digby," said Mr Heathcote, when his son and heir stood before him, "did you take the linch-pins out of the carriages last night?"

Digby thought a moment.

"No, I did not," he answered firmly.

"Do you know anything about the matter," said Mr Heathcote, somewhat astonished but firmly believing the assertion. Oh what a blessed thing is that perfect confidence in the honour and truthfulness of those connected with

us.

"Do you say that I must answer that question, papa?" said Digby.

"I do not wish to force you to say anything," remarked Mr Heathcote, "but I do wish to ascertain how the circumstance occurred."

Digby thought for some time, while his father sat looking at him.

"I should like to know how you intend to punish the person who committed the mischief," he said at last.

"If you had done it, I should probably have flogged you, and have sent you off to school, as soon as I could find a suitable one. That would have been a lenient punishment for you. A poor boy would be flogged and sent to the house of correction."

"Then you must send me to school, papa, though I should be glad if you would omit the flogging," replied Digby, frankly. "I will not say who played the trick; but, as I see somebody ought to be punished, I'm ready to suffer, as I think I ought."

Mr Bowdler was very much interested in hearing this conversation, and certainly thought very much better of Digby than he had before been inclined to do. "There is a great deal in that boy which may bring forth good fruit, if it is properly developed," he said to himself. It made him very anxious that Digby should go to some school where the moral as well as intellectual qualities of the boys were attended to.

Mr Heathcote did not wish to press the matter further on his son. He was convinced that he was innocent of the act committed, and he had no doubt of the real delinquent. Still he was very unwilling to have to punish Julian, and he wished to pass the matter over, unless the boy was positively accused before him of the crime. Digby was told that he might go back to the schoolroom and prepare for Mr Crammer.

Mr Bowdler had heard Mr Nugent, Mrs Heathcote's brother, very highly spoken of, and he recommended that Digby should be placed under him till a good school could be found.

Mr Heathcote liked the notion. He could not bear the idea of having Digby far separated from him. Not that he saw much of the boy, but he liked to feel and know that he was near him. He fancied that he was getting on very well with Mr Crammer, and, now that so excellent a governess had come to instruct him, he thought that his education would be well provided for. He promised Mr Bowdler, therefore, that he would ride over to Osberton and get his brother-in-law to take charge of Digby.

Mr Bowdler, on his part, undertook to make inquiries for a good school for the boy.

"I will send young Julian home," said Mr Heathcote. "I see no particular harm in him. He seems a quiet, inoffensive lad; but, as you think it advisable, it will be a good excuse for separating the two."

"Yes, a very good excuse," said Mr Bowdler.

Julian had been with Digby when the footman summoned him into his father's presence. He waited anxiously for his return.

"You've not peached, I hope, Digby?" said he.

"No, indeed," answered Digby, rather proudly. "I wasn't going to tell a story, either. Your name wasn't mentioned, so you need not be afraid."

"That's jolly," exclaimed Julian, brightening up. "I was afraid that you would be letting the cat out of the bag."

"I don't know exactly what that means," answered Digby; "I said that if some one was to be punished I was ready to suffer, and so I'm to be sent off to school, and that's not very pleasant, let me tell you. Not that I mind the idea of school. It may be a very good sort of place; but I don't like to have to leave so many pleasant things behind me. What will my poor dear old dog Tomboy do without me? And there's my pretty pony Juniper, which papa only bought last spring for me, and which I've taught to know me and follow me about the field like a dog. How many pleasant rides I expected to have on him; and he will have forgotten all about me when I come back. Then I was to have gone out shooting with John Pratt in September; and I'm pretty certain papa would have got me a small gun, for I know he would like to see me a good shot; he's a first-rate one himself. John says he'll back me up to kill a brace of partridges within a week after I get my gun; but all that's come to an end. Then we were to have had such capital fishing. John has been getting my tackle ready for me, and has made me a prime rod, much better than can be bought in the shops. Trap and ball, and hoops, and cricket, and marbles—not that I ever can endure marbles—and rounders, and prisoner's base, and all those sort of games, can be had at school even better than at home, with the fellows one may pick up; so that won't make any difference. But, as far as I can make out, they don't let one go out birds'-nesting, or ferreting, or cross-bow shooting, or badger hunting, or any of those sort of things which John Pratt is up to. Schools must be very slow places, that's my opinion. I don't suppose we might even blow up a wasps' nest, if we were to find one. If John Pratt might go and live near, and take me out every day, and have some fun or other, I shouldn't mind it. Then, you see, I don't like leaving Kate and little Gusty. What Kate will do without me I do not know at all. I hope Miss Apsley will treat her kindly; if he don't I'll—" and Digby looked very fierce, but said nothing more.

"If you don't like school, all you've to do is to run away," said Julian, ever ready to offer evil counsel. "That's what I would do, I know; or, if you don't like the idea of going there, run away before. Send to me, and I'll help you; I'm always ready to help a friend in need."

"Thank you," said Digby; "oh, I know you would be, but I promised my father that I would go willingly if he wished to send me; so go I must."

Julian might have urged that promises were like piecrust, as the vulgar saying runs, made to be broken: but he already knew enough of Digby to be aware that such an opinion would have no response in his bosom, so he only said, "Well, when you get there, and change your mind, only let me know, and I will help you if I ran."

Julian, two days after this, to his astonishment found that his things were packed, and his father's carriage coming to the door, he was told that after he had had some luncheon he was to go home. Mr and Mrs Heathcote, however, wished him good-bye very kindly, and so did the Miss Heathcotes, and of course Digby did, so he began to hope that nothing had been discovered. No one, however, said that they hoped soon to see him again. He went away smiling in very good humour with himself, and tolerably so with the rest of the world. The next day Digby was sent off to Mr Nugent's; this he did not at all like; he would rather have gone to school at once. He recollected how very slow he had always thought the life there—the hours were so regular and early, and he had no field-sports of any kind to indulge in. Kate, however, promised to keep up a constant correspondence with him, and to tell him all that went forward at home. He undertook to write long letters to her in return, at which she smiled, for hitherto he decidedly had not exhibited any proficiency either in orthography or calligraphy, indeed it required a considerable amount of patience and ingenuity to decipher his epistles. Digby loved his father and mother well, though I have not said so; he had an affectionate parting from them. John Pratt drove him over to Osberton. His uncle received him in a very kind way; he did not allude in the slightest way to any of his late misdemeanors. There were four or five other boys there as pupils, considerably older than he was. They seemed very quiet, well-behaved lads, and perfectly happy and contented with their lot. Mr Nugent, though strict in insisting on his directions being obeyed, evidently ruled by love rather than by fear. Mrs Nugent was also a very amiable, kind person, who took a warm interest in the lads committed to her husband's charge. Digby had before seen very little of his aunt. Before he had been there many days he felt that he liked her very much. Really the time was much more pleasantly spent than he expected. Mr Nugent was never idle for a moment; when out of doors he was always moving about visiting his parishioners; in the house, he was superintending the studies of his pupils, or writing or reading himself. In an evening he would always read some interesting book to them—he never failed to select one with which they were anxious to go on; he encouraged those who could draw, or net, or make models of wood, or pasteboard, to go on at the same time with their manual occupations. Digby could do nothing of the sort. His notion of drawing was very limited indeed; however, his aunt undertook to teach him. By learning how to hold his pencil properly, and to move his hand freely, he was surprised to find what rapid progress he made; he first had very simple sketches to copy—houses and barns, the greater number of the lines in which were perpendicular or horizontal. She would not let him have any other sketches till he had learned to draw what he called the up and down, and the along lines properly.

"You must do that again, Digby," she used to say in her laughing, kind tone. "I make my houses stand upright, and I cannot allow you to let them tumble down. Till you have learned to build up a barn or a cottage you must not attempt to erect a church or a castle. See, you will be able, if you persevere, to do drawings like these."

And she showed him some very attractive coloured sketches, well calculated to excite his ambition to equal them. The books, too, his uncle read, or which he allowed one of the other boys to read, were frequently very amusing, though instructive fictions—accounts of the adventures and travels of lads, just such as boys like; sometimes history was read, and always once in the week some very interesting book on religious subjects. It is a great mistake to suppose that such subjects cannot be made interesting, independent of their vast, their unspeakable importance. Altogether Digby found the evenings pass much more pleasantly than he had when he spent them in the idle, do-nothing way to which he had been accustomed at home. What numbers and numbers of valuable hours are thrown away—not even spent in amusement, but literally in doing nothing, and in being discontented, and sleepy, and stupid, which might and ought to be employed in so profitable and interesting a manner. Mr Nugent frequently spoke to his pupils on the subject of the proper employment of their time, and although many had come to him as accustomed to idle and waste it, as was Digby, they very soon, from experiencing the pleasure and advantages it afforded them, began to wish to spend it profitably. He used to remark—"Never suppose that you are doing no harm when you are idle. Remember, in the first place, that 'Satan finds some evil still for idle hands to do;' so you are voluntarily exposing yourself to his temptations. In that alone you are wrong; but also understand that time is given us to be employed aright; that is tilt tenure, so to speak, on which we hold our existence; our intellects, our talents, our strength, our faculties of mind and body, were bestowed on us for that object. Boys and young people, and even grown men and women, fancy they were sent into the world only to amuse themselves. If they have wealth at their disposal they think that they are at liberty to spend their time in as pleasant a way as possible, and as for reckoning up each day what good thing they have done in the world, and saying how have I employed the talent entrusted by my Maker to my charge, such an idea never comes into their heads; but, my boys, I want it to come into your heads and hearts, and to fix it there firmly. If you have wealth at your disposal, consider, and reflect, and pray, that you may be guided how to employ it aright; if you are compelled to labour for your existence, work away with a willing heart and hand, always remembering that you are labouring in the sight of God, and that he approves of those who are doing their best to perform their duty in that state of life into which he has called them." Digby listened to these remarks; they were quite new to him, and he did not entirely understand them; but they made an impression, and got stowed away somewhere in the crannies of his mind and heart, and in after years found their way to the surface to some effect. Digby got on much better with his lessons than he had done with Mr Crammer. All that gentleman seemed to aim at was to make him *say* a lesson; he learnt to say his Latin grammar glibly enough, and to answer set questions in geography and history; and as to his comprehension of what he was repeating, no inquiries were made. The consequences may be supposed, and poor Digby, with fair natural abilities, possessed the very smallest modicum of the information which the books he had read were capable of affording. Mr Nugent, on the contrary, cared little how a pupil said his lessons from a book; his object was to put information into his head, and not only to make it stay there, but to show him how to employ it profitably when required. He used to explain that dictionaries, and grammars, and delectuses, and graduses, and pens, and ink, and paper, and the art of reading, were only so many mechanical contrivances for acquiring knowledge. The first thing to be done is to learn to use them to the best advantage.

(Note: a Gradus is a textbook used to train people learning Latin in the art of writing Latin verse, especially hexameters and pentameters.)

"Now, Marshall and Digby, take those two Latin dictionaries, and find me out the meaning of the words *Luna circum terram movetur*."

Marshall placed his dictionary well before him, rapidly turning over the leaves with the thumb of one hand, while he held them fast with the other: as his quick eye caught sight of them, he wrote them down on a piece of paper by his side.

Digby fumbled away awkwardly, going backwards and forwards, showing clearly that he did not know how to handle a dictionary. "What were the words you said, Uncle?" he asked at last.

Marshall had looked out and written all his down and poor Digby had actually forgotten them before he had been able to find one of them out.

"The moon moves, or is moved, round the earth," said Marshall, quietly.

"Now you see, Digby, the advantage of being able to turn over the leaves of a dictionary rapidly," said Mr Nugent. "Of two people with equal talents, the one who possesses that simple mechanical power to the greatest perfection will beat the other, in as far as he will gain the information for which he is seeking in so much less time. A rapid, clear writer, and a person with a quick observant eye, has a great advantage over those who do not possess those qualifications."

Digby very well understood these observations, and set to work to practise turning over the leaves of his dictionary and in looking out words, till, with no little triumph, he proved that he could find out a word almost as quickly as Marshall.

It was not, however, all work and no play at Mr Nugent's. He was near a river as well as near the sea, and, though he did not wish to give the boys a taste for a naval life, yet he was anxious that they should be instructed in rowing and sailing a boat, and in swimming. Digby had prided himself in being a proficient for his age in all manly sports, but he found that he was very inferior to his fellow-pupils with regard to those connected with the water. It was satisfactory, however, to find from Marshall, who became his chief friend, that when they first came they were no better than he was. They were mostly as ignorant, and accustomed to be idle, and knew nothing of aquatic amusements. Mr Nugent, who was very fond of boating, though he had little time to spend in it, occasionally went out with them; but on other occasions they were committed to the charge of an old seaman, Tobias Tubb by name. Of course he was always called Toby Tubb, or still more familiarly spoken of as Toby. Toby had served in all sorts of craft, from a line-of-battle ship to a collier, and, report said, at one time in a smuggling lugger; but he had good reasons for not wishing that circumstance to be alluded to. He was loquacious enough, however, with regard to all the other events of his life, which he pumped up from time to time from the depths of his memory, and sent them flowing forth in a rich stream for the benefit of his hearers. He was a great favourite with the boys, who delighted to listen to his yarns; and he took an interest in his young charges, and was equally pleased to describe the events of his nautical career. His boat was a fine wholesome craft, eighteen feet long, with good beam. She had a spritsail, jib, foresail, and mizen. Never did he appear so happy as when he had them all on board for an afternoon's sail. Tubb was a very appropriate name for him. He was somewhat stout and short, with a round, ruddy, good-natured countenance, a bald forehead, and white hair on either side of it. He was all roundness. His head was round, and his face was round, and his eyes, and his nose, and his mouth were round. His nose was like a very funny little round button; but it looked so good-natured, and cocked up so quaintly, that the boys declared that they would not have it changed on any account for the first Roman nose in existence. No more, probably, would Toby, who had been very well contented with it for full sixty years, it having, as he said, served him many a good turn during that period. "No, no; we should never be ashamed of old friends who have been faithful and true, and wish to exchange them for finer folk," he used to remark, when, as was sometimes the case, his fellow-boatmen humorously twitted him about his nose.

The first day that Digby went out in the John Dory, as Toby called his boat, he discovered his ignorance of nautical affairs. He had day after day been on the ponds at Bloxholme, but then John Pratt had rowed him about, and he had never thought of learning to row himself.

The river was wide at the mouth, and, as there were deep sheltered bays, it was a good place for rowing. When sailing, however, it was necessary to be careful, for gusts often came down suddenly between the cliffs, and had frequently upset boats the people in which had not been ready to let go the sheets in an instant. There was no wind this day.

"Now, young gen'man," said Toby, looking at Digby, "you'll just take an oar and pull with the rest?"

"Oh yes," answered Digby, who was always ready to undertake any manual exercise, "I'll row."

Marshall and the other boys got out the oars. Toby eyed Digby, and guessed, by the way he handled his oar the state of the case. However, Digby persevered in silence.

The boat slowly receded from the shore, Toby steering. Digby, who sat about midships, looked at Marshall, and Easton, and Power, who sat further astern, and tried to imitate their movements. He did so very fairly. He thought that he was performing his part wonderfully well.

Toby's nose curled more than usual as he looked at him.

"Give way, my lads, give way," he sung out.

The other boys instantly bent to their oars, and made much more rapid strokes than before. Digby had not the slightest notion what "giving way" meant. He only knew, to his cost, that he gave way, for his oar caught in the water, and over he toppled on his back to the bottom of the boat.

"Caught a crab, caught a crab," sung out the other boys, laughing.

Digby jumped up immediately, full of eagerness, not minding his bruises a bit.

"Have I? Where is he? where is he? Let me see him," he exclaimed.

This made the rest laugh still more.

"It's only the sort of crab most young ge'men catches when first they begins to learn to row," said Toby; "jump up and take your oar, and you'll soon catch another, I warrant."

So Digby found, but he was not a boy to be beat by such an occurrence. Each time he jumped up as quickly as he could, and grasping his oar, went on pulling as before.

"What do you mean by 'Give way?'" he asked, when he discovered that these words invariably produced the unpleasant results.

"I means much the same as the soldier officers does when they says 'Double quick march.'"

"Oh, I see, we are to make the boat go as fast as we can," observed Digby.

After that he caught fewer crabs, Toby having also advised him not to dip the blade of his oar so deeply in the water. In a few days he learned how to feather his oar, that is, when lifting the blade out of the water, to turn it, so as to keep it almost horizontal with the surface. This is done that it may not hold wind, and in a rough sea, that it may be less likely to be struck by a wave, or if it is, that it may cut through the top. He also learned to keep time with the rest, a very essential requisite in rowing.

"You've done capitally," said Marshall, after they landed the first day, "many fellows have been here for some time before they have done as well."

This praise encouraged Digby, and he determined to learn to be a good boatman. He expressed his intentions to Toby. The old man laughed.

"You'll be good enough in time, I've no doubt, master, but it will take you some years before you are fit to be trusted. There's nothing but experience will make a sailor. You must be out in gales of wind, and have all your sails blown away, and your masts carried over the side, and find yourself on a lee shore on a dark night, with rocks close aboard, and no room to wear, and the wind blowing great guns and small arms, and a strong current running here and there, and setting you on to the coast; and then, if you find means to save the ship, I'll allow that you're something of a sailor."

Digby did not know what all this meant, but he thought the description very dreadful, and certainly he had no notion how he should act. As, however, he had no wish to become a real sailor, that did not trouble him. Easton, however, took in every word that was said. He had set his heart on going to sea, and none of the descriptions of shipwrecks and disasters in which the old man indulged had any terrors for him. They only the more excited his ardour, and he longed to encounter and overcome them.

When Toby Tubb saw that Digby could row fairly, he began to teach him to sail a boat.

"First you have to learn how to steer, Master Digby," he observed; "look over the stern, you see how the rudder is, now put your hand in the same line above it. Now I press against your hand, the water is pressing just in the same way against the rudder. If you keep your arm stiff, I should make you turn round. Now, the rudder is stiff as long as you don't let the tiller move, and so the water turns the boat round. Now put the tiller over on the opposite side, then you see the boat also turns the opposite way. You understand, to steer you must be going on, or, what's the same thing, a current must be running past you. If there is no movement in the water, you may wriggle the tiller about as much as you please, and you can't turn the boat's head. Just understand, too, that the water is a thing that presses. It will give way, certainly. It is not like a rock, but still it presses all around you. That's the reason why a vessel sails stem first, that is to say, she cuts the water with the sharpest part, if the sails are trimmed properly to make her do so. You may trim the sails to make her sail stern first, or if there's a gale of wind right abeam, she goes partly ahead, but also drives before it with her side, that's what we call making lee way. Now as to the sails, you see, we have to balance them, or to trim them, as we call it. Once, I'm told, ships were only made to sail right before the wind. Funny voyages they must have been, I'm thinking. What a time they must have been about them, waiting for a fair wind; no wonder they didn't get round the world in those days. Now, you see, we can sail not only with the wind abeam as close, as four and a half points to the wind in fore and after craft. Still if we want to get where the wind blows from, we could never do it if we couldn't tack ship, and sail away four and a half points on the other side of the wind. That's what we call working a traverse. Away a ship sails, zig-zagging along if there isn't too much wind to blow her back, every tack making good some ground till she reaches the port to which she's bound. That's what I call the *philusfy* of navigation. But I haven't yet told you how the sails act on the vessel. You see the wind presses on them, just as the water does on the hull. The better you can get the wind to blow on them at what they calls a right angle, the greater force it has. So in a square-rigged ship, if you can bring the wind a little on the quarter, so that every sail, studden-sails, alow and aloft, can be made to draw, you'll have the greatest pressure on the sails, and send the ship on the fastest. But we come to balancing, when a ship is on a wind. If all the sail was set forward, it would turn her head round, or if all was set aft it would turn her stern round. So we set some forward, and some aft, and some amidships, and then we trim them together properly, and away she goes in the direction we put her head. Then, you

see, if we want to turn her head round we shake the wind out of her after sails, or trice them up, and if we want her stem to go round, we do the same with her head sails, and that, Master Heathcote, is what I call the theory of sailing. There's a good deal more for you to learn before you will be fit to be trusted in a boat by yourself, but if you keeps close to those principles, you can't be far wrong in the long run."

Such was Digby's first lesson in seamanship. He did not take in all that was said to him; indeed he was rather young for comprehending the subject, but it made him think and inquire further; and Toby Tubb was perfectly satisfied that his lessons were not thrown away.

"It's very strange," soliloquised Toby, "the fathers and mothers of these young ge'men pays lots of money to have 'em taught to ride and dance, and to speak Latin and French, and all sorts of gimcrack nonsense, and not one in a thousand ever thinks of making them learn how to knot, and splice, and reef, and steer, and to take an observation, or work a day's work, which to my mind is likely to be far more useful to 'em when they comes to take care of themselves in the world. As for me, I don't know what I should have done without the first, though the shooting the sun and the navigation was above me a good way."

"There's nothing like leather." Toby would have said, there is nothing like hemp, and pitch, and tar, and heart of oak. It is quite as well that different people should have different opinions. Thus the world is prevented from stagnating.

Chapter Four.

Digby Gains a Knowledge of Boating and other Manly Employments—The Wonders of the Sea-Side—A Shipwreck—Digby Proves himself a Hero—How he gained a Friend.

Digby, as he became more practised in the arts, gained a keen relish for boating, not mere pulling, but for sailing—the harder it blew, the better pleased he was. In this he was joined by Easton, who was always delighted when old Toby would take them out on a stormy day. Marshall and the others confessed that they liked fine weather sailing.

"But, suppose the boat was capsized, what would you do?" said Marshall to Digby.

"Hold on to her, I suppose," was the answer.

"But very likely you would be thrown to a distance, what then?"

"Why I should try and catch what was nearest to me," replied Digby.

"But suppose there was nothing near you," remarked his friend.

"Then, I suppose I should—. Let me see, I scarcely know what I should do—I should try to swim," said Digby, after some hesitation.

"That is just what I wanted to bring you to," said Marshall. "You have not learned to swim, you know, and you assuredly would not then swim for the first time, so that if no one was near to help you, you would inevitably be drowned. Take my advice—learn to swim forthwith; Toby will teach you. If you were to go to Eton, you would not be allowed to go in the boats till you had learnt. Everybody should know how to swim, both for their own sakes and for the benefit of their fellow-creatures. It is really disgraceful for an English boy not to know how to do what even savages can do so well."

Marshall went on in this style till Digby felt perfectly ashamed of himself, and resolved to learn as soon as possible if Toby would teach him. He was manly enough, as has been seen, in disposition, but all his knowledge of manly exercises he had acquired from John Pratt, except riding, which his father had taken a pride in teaching him. Swimming was not among John Pratt's accomplishments, and so Digby had remained ignorant of it. There are many boys like him, brought up at home or at small private schools, who are even worse off. In many instances their education is very carefully attended to, but for fear of accidents they are not allowed to bathe, or climb trees, or to shoot. Numbers have suffered from this mistake when they have had to go out into the world and take care of themselves—they have been drowned, when, had they been able to swim, their lives would have been saved; had they been accustomed to climb, they might have scaped from a burning house, a wrecked ship, or a wild beast, while they have been called upon to use fire-arms before they know how to load a gun.

"Toby," said Digby, "I want to learn how to swim."

"Then come along, master," replied the old man, and they rowed across to a quiet little bay, with a sandy shore, sheltered by rocks, on the side of the river opposite the town. "Pull off your clothes, master," said Toby, as they were still some little way from the shore.

Digby did as he was bid.

"Now, jump overboard," added Toby.

Digby stood up, but as he looked into the water and could see no bottom, he shuddered at the thought of plunging in. Toby passed a band round his waist with a rope to it, but Digby scarcely perceived this—he felt himself pushed, and over he went, heels over head, under the water.

"Oh, I'm drowning, I'm drowning," he cried out when he came to the surface.

"Oh no, you're not, master, you're all right," said the old man. "Strike out for the shore, and try if you can't swim

there.”

Digby did strike out, but wildly, and not in a way that would have kept him afloat.

“That’s the way you’d have done if the boat was capsized, and you’d have drowned yourself and any one who came to help you,” remarked Toby; “but catch hold of this oar. Now strike away with your feet, right astern; not out of the water, though; keep them lower down. That’s the way to go ahead. Steady, though; strike both of them together. Slow, though; slower. We’re in no hurry, there’s plenty of time; you can learn the use of your hands another day. Draw your legs well under you. Now, as I give the word—strike out, draw up; strike out, draw up. That will do famously. If you keep steadily at it you’ll learn to swim in a very few days.”

Digby felt rather tired when he and the boat at length reached the shore. He had some notion that he had towed her there, which he had not, though. He had learned an important part of the art of swimming. When he came out of the water, and had dressed, Toby showed him how to use his hands.

“Now, Master Heathcote, look here. Do as I do.”

Toby put his hands together, with the fingers straight out and close to each other, and the palms slightly hollowed. Then he brought them up to his breast, and darting them forward, separated his hands and pressed them backwards till he brought his elbows down to the hips, close to his body, and again turned his wrists till his hands once more got back to the attitude with which he had started. He made Digby do this over and over again, till he was quite eager to jump into the water and put his knowledge into practice.

“No, no, master,” said Toby, “you’ve had bathing enough to-day. Just do you keep on doing those movements whenever you have a spare moment, and to-morrow we’ll see how well you can do them in the water.”

Digby was certain that not only would he do them perfectly, but that he should be able to swim any distance.

Toby said nothing, but his nose curled up in its quiet funny way.

The next day was very fine, and all the boys came down to bathe, and to see Digby swim, as he boasted he could do perfectly well. They crossed over to the bay, all of them getting ready for a plunge.

“Now, Digby,” cried Marshall, when they got near the shore, “overboard we go.”

“All right,” cried Digby, putting his hands into the scientific attitude, as far as he could recollect it; and, with great courage, he jumped into the water.

Somehow or other, he could not tell why, down he went some way under the surface, and when he came up he had forgotten all about the way to strike out which Toby had taught him. Instead of that, he flung about his arms and kicked his legs out in the wildest manner, and would have gone down again had not Marshall swam up alongside him, and, putting his hand under his chin, told him to keep perfectly quiet till he had collected his senses. He had resolution enough to do this, and was surprised to find himself floating on the surface of the water with so little support.

“Bravo, Master Marshall,” cried Toby. “Now strike out, Master Heathcote, as I showed you.”

The recollection of how to strike came back to Digby, and, to his great delight, he found himself making some progress towards the shore, his friend still holding him up by the chin.

“Let me go, I am sure I can swim alone,” he cried.

Marshall did so, but, after a few strokes, down he went, and again he forgot what he had done so satisfactorily on dry land. His feet, however, touched the bottom, and, hopping on one leg, he went on striking out with his hands, and fancying that he was swimming, till he reached the shore. His companions, of course, laughed at him, but he did not mind that, and, running in again, he made one or two more successful attempts, but he forbore boasting any more of the distance he was going to swim. When once again he had gone out till the water reached his chin, he found the boat close to him.

“Don’t be swimming any more, Master Heathcote, but give me your hand,” said Toby, taking it. “There, now throw yourself on your back, stick your legs out, put your head back as far as it will go, lift up your chest, now don’t move, let your arms hang down. There, I’ll hold you steady; a feather would do it. Now you feel how the water keeps you up. There, you might stay there for an hour, or a dozen hours for that matter, if it wasn’t for the cold, in smooth water. You’ll learn to swim in a very few days now, I see, without your clothes, and then you must learn with your clothes on. If I couldn’t have done that I should not have been here; I should have been drowned long ago.”

Thus discoursing, the old man let Digby float by the side of the boat till he had been long enough in the water, and then he helped him out and made him dress quickly.

The other boys then got in, and consulted together how they should spend the remainder of the afternoon. Power, who was the chief fisherman of the party, voted for going outside and trying to catch some mackerel. No objections were made. Toby consented: he had lines and hooks in the boat.

They pulled down to the mouth of the river, and were very soon in the open sea. There was scarcely any wind, the sea was blue and bright, the coast was picturesque, with rocky headlands, and white sandy bay; and green downs above, and cliffs on which numberless wildfowl had taken up their habitations. As they pulled close under the rocks, numbers of gulls flew out, screaming loudly at the intruders on their domains.

"I have often thought, when I have heard people talking of their ancient families and their ancient homes, how much more ancient are the families and the abodes of those white-coated gentry," observed Marshall. "Up there, now, perhaps, the ancestors of those birds have lived, from generation to generation, since the flood. They witnessed the first peopling of our tight little island by the painted savages, who were as barbarous as the New Zealanders or the Fejee Islanders of the present century; the landing of Julius Caesar and his warriors, the battles of the Norsemen, the Danes, and the Saxons, and the defeat of the Spanish armada. I wish that they could tell us all the interesting things they have seen."

Easton liked the idea. Digby did not understand it, for his knowledge of history was very limited.

"I know what they've seen," observed Toby. "They've seen many a cargo of smuggled silks, and teas, and brandies run hereabouts, in days gone by."

"Oh, those smugglers are jolly fellows!" exclaimed Digby. "I should like to see something of their fun. I can't fancy any finer sport than landing a cargo and having to run the gauntlet among a whole posse of revenue officers."

"Something like prisoners' base, you would say," observed Marshall, "only, I suspect, with a greater chance of being caught and shut up for a longer time than would be pleasant."

"I'll tell you what it is, young gentlemen," said Toby, who had been listening in silence to Digby's and the other boys' thoughtless remarks, "smuggling is a very bad business, let me tell you. I've seen something of it, and I know what it is. I've seen money made by it, I'll allow, just as I've seen money made by other evil practices; but I've seen very many fine fellows brought to a bad end by it, and have never known any to prosper long at it. Laws were made for the good of all, and no man has a right to break them for his own advantage or pleasure. Though I'm only a poor boatman I've found that out, and it's my duty to make others understand the truth, as well as I can."

The boys confessed that they had never before seen the matter in that light. They had thought smugglers, and pirates, and bandits, and highwaymen, and outlaws of all descriptions very fine fellows; and it had never occurred to them that they should be looked upon as base scoundrels, who deserved to be hung, or severely punished in some other way.

"Now let us have out the lines," exclaimed Power, who was eager to begin fishing. Two of the party paddled the boat on, relieving each other, at the rate of about two miles an hour.

Toby produced four long, thin lines, wound up on wooden reels. The lines were considerably slighter than log-lines. Five hooks were fastened to each, about a yard apart.

"But where is the bait?" asked Digby. "You cannot catch fish without bait."

"Oh, mackerel are in no ways particular," answered Toby; "a bit of tin or white rag will attract them; but see, I have some hooks with some capital bait. It is called a white cock's hackle. The feathers are fastened on to the butt, and project an inch or more beyond the bend, so as to cover the barb. This is certain to catch any fish which see it."

The lines were thrown overboard, one on each side, and one over each quarter. Toby assisted Digby to manage his.

Digby was quite delighted when he felt a sharp tug at the end of his line.

"Haul in, haul in; you've got him," said Toby.

Digby hauled away, and soon he saw a fish skimming and jumping along on the smooth surface of the blue water, leaving a thin wake behind him, while his bright scales glistened in the sun. Digby shouted with glee,— "I've the first, I've the first. Huzza!"

He almost tumbled overboard in his eagerness to catch hold of the fine mackerel which came with what he called a hop, skip, and a jump alongside. He lifted the fish in. The poor mackerel, with his dark back and white belly, did not look nearly so bright out of the water as he had done in it. Digby thought it a very elegant-looking fish, and very unlike any he had ever before caught with John Pratt.

"Now we shall catch a plenty," said Toby, as, to Digby's dismay, he took the fish, and, cutting it up into strips, baited each of the hooks with it. "These mackerel like nothing better than their own kind."

Two or three dozen mackerel were quickly caught, of which Digby hauled up several.

"But have we no chance of catching any carp, or tench, or perch?" he asked, seriously. "I should have thought that there must be plenty about here."

His companions laughed heartily.

"What is the taste of the water alongside?" asked Marshall.

"Salt," said Digby, tasting it.

"Do you think freshwater fish will live in salt-water?" observed his friend.

"Oh, you fine sportsman! You laugh at us for not knowing so much about dogs, and horses, and shooting, and racing, and hunting as you pretend to do, and yet you are ignorant of far more important, and just as interesting matters."

"Still, young gentlemen, I'm thinking that every man shines most in his own element, as the mackerel would say, if

they could speak, and would rather be left there," observed Toby, who was a great philosopher in many respects, although no man could be much more prejudiced with regard to his own calling of a sailor than he was. Such is often the ease. When judging of the opinion of others, we should always try to discover whether we are not prejudiced too much in favour of our own.

The boys had a capital evening's sport, and Digby learned much more about conger-eels, and whiting, and bass, and mullet, and turbot, and plaice, and John Dories, and brill, and other salt-water fish, than he had ever known before. He was daily discovering, by practical experience, that there are many things in creation "of which he had never before dreamed in his philosophy." In other words, he began to suspect, that though he was a very fine fellow, daring to do anything, and ready to fight any boy of his age, he was in reality a remarkably ignorant young gentleman. This, to a lad of Digby's disposition, was a very important discovery. He was, I hope, on the high road to improvement. There is a saying, that "Where ignorance is bliss, it is folly to be wise;" but depend on it, the moment the ignorance is suspected, it is much greater folly not to set strenuously to work to correct it.

When the lads got home, they recounted with great glee their adventures, and offered, with much satisfaction, their baskets of fish to Mrs Nugent. They were served up fresh for breakfast and dinner the next day, and for two or three days afterwards, cut open and salted.

Digby heard Mr Nugent speaking of the wonders of the deep.

"What, uncle, are there any things besides fish in the sea?" he asked with, what the other boys thought, an almost incredible amount of simplicity.

One of the few recreations Mr Nugent allowed himself, was a fishing expedition on board a trawler. Not that he cared much for the fish which the trawl caught, but his delight was to examine the numberless specimens of animal marine life which came up at the same time. Digby heard his uncle and Marshall talking about Noctilucae, and Medusae, and Cydippi Actiniae, and Asterias, and Echini, and Terebellae, and Nereides, and Cirripedes, and Solens, and Gastropods, and numberless other creatures with hard names, which he thought that he could never recollect, and about which he was persuaded he could not understand.

"And are all these animals found in the sea near here?" he asked.

"Yes, and thousands more," answered his uncle; "it would take a lifetime to catch and note the habits of those found on this coast alone. Each person can only hope to add a little to the stock of knowledge which others have obtained, and to ascertain what has been discovered by others. Still, the pursuit of that knowledge is so delightful, as is, indeed, the study of all God's works, that those occupied in it find themselves amply repaid for all the physical and mental exertion they have to take to attain it."

"Are the things you speak of like horses, and dogs, and cats, or more like fish?" asked Digby, seriously. "I should think with such curious names they must be very curious looking things."

Marshall and Power laughed heartily, and even his uncle could not help smiling as he replied:

"Curious and wonderful, indeed, they are, but they are not fish in appearance, and still less like terrestrial quadrupeds. Some have their heads at the end of their feet, and their eyes at the extremities of their arms. Some walk on their heads, and others have their arms growing from the top of their heads. Some, too, can turn themselves inside out, and others of their own accord, break themselves to pieces, and then, what is more wonderful still, like one of the tricks to be seen at a pantomime, the bits send forth arms, and legs, and heads, and tails, and become perfect animals again."

Digby listened with mute astonishment. He knew that his uncle would not tell him an untruth, and yet he fancied that, somehow or other, he must be laughing at him. The account he had heard, however, made him look forward eagerly to the promised trawling expedition.

The day approached, but Digby was doomed to be disappointed. A heavy gale of wind sprung up in the evening, and blew with great violence during the night.

The next day was Saturday, and was a half-holiday. Just as the boys had finished their lessons, a servant-girl came running in, exclaiming:

"Oh, sir, they say that there is a big ship driving on the shore, and that all the poor souls in her will be lost. Oh, it's very dreadful! oh dear! oh dear!"

Mr Nugent seized his hat and stick, and the boys prepared to follow him.

"Stay, we will take a brandy-flask, and any rope to be had—a long pole may be useful."

These articles being quickly found, the boys carrying them, they hurried out to the beach.

Not the eighth of a mile from the shore was a dismayed vessel, rolling and tumbling about in the most fearful manner. The crew were trying to get up jury-masts, or sheers rather, which are formed of two spars, the butt ends resting against the sides of the ship, and the others joined together. The sheers were got up, and then an endeavour was made to hoist a sail on them, to beat the ship off the shore. It was utterly useless. The sail was blown to ribbons, and the sheers blown away. The last resource was to anchor. This was done, and the ship rode head to wind, plunging, however, even more violently than before. Toby Tubb just then joined Mr Nugent and his pupils.

"There's no use in it. There's no ground here will hold an anchor ten minutes together." His prediction proved too true. On drove the hapless ship. She had parted from her anchors, no human power could avert the expected

catastrophe. The only hope that any of those on board could be saved, would be that the ship might drive into the sandy cove in which they were standing. If she struck on the dark ledges of rock outside, not a person on board, it was thought, could be saved. The sea was breaking with tremendous violence over them, creating sheets of foam, which were driven towards the shore, almost blinding the lookers-on.

Digby thought he could almost hear the shrieks of the unfortunate people on board. He could see them, clearly, throwing up their arms, as if imploring aid from their fellow-men, who were utterly unable to afford it.

“Could no boat go off to them?” asked Mr Nugent, eagerly.

“No, sir, no boat would live a second in that sea, alongside those rocks,” answered Toby; “what men can do we will do, when the time comes; more is impossible.”

“I have a rope and some poles, you see,” said Mr Nugent; “they may be useful.”

“So have I, sir, but two ropes may be better than one,” was Toby’s reply. “Now, lads, be ready to do what I tells you; follow me.”

He addressed a party of seamen and fishermen, not all very young though, who were standing near with their hands in their pockets, exhibiting, apparently, very little interest in what was going forward. The ill-fated ship rose on the top of the huge waves which rolled onward towards the shore. Now it appeared that she would be engulfed between them. No further effort was made on board to save her. Such would have been hopeless. Each person was intent on making preparations for his own safety. Digby gazed with horror; he felt inclined to shriek out himself, as he saw the danger of the poor fellows on board. He would gladly have run away and forgotten all about it, but yet he could not tear himself from the spot, or his eyes from the driving ship. A few minutes more, and her fate would be sealed.

“Follow me, lads,” suddenly exclaimed old Toby, and led the way towards a ledge of rocks which jutted out into the sea, and formed one side of the bay of which I have spoken.

In a moment the fishermen had their hands out of their pockets, and were all life and activity. Carrying some long spars and several coils of rope, they hurried after Toby to the end of the reef. Toby was seen to stop. Digby and his companions held their breath—well they might. It seemed as if the ship must strike the very end of that black reef, over which the sea was breaking with violence so fearful that it must have shattered to fragments the stoutest ship that ever floated. On she came; there was a pause it seemed; a cross-sea struck her, and amidst a deluge of foam she was hurled past the point, and driven in towards the bay. Another sea lifted her up, and then down she came on the beach, still far out among the breakers, with a tremendous crash, which seemed to shake the very shore. Now was the moment of greatest peril to those on board—the seas meeting with a resistance they had not hitherto found, dashed furiously over the hull, carrying away the bulwarks, and the boats, and caboose, and everything still remaining on deck. The crew clung to ropes made fast to the stumps of the masts, or to ring-bolts in the decks, but the strength of many of them could not withstand the fury of the seas. One after the other was torn from his hold, and hurled among the boiling breakers. In vain the poor fellows struck out; the receding waves dashed them against the side of the ship, or carried them struggling hopelessly far out to sea, where they were lost to sight among the foam.

While this was going forward, Toby and his companions were trying every means they could think of to get a rope carried to the wreck. Unfortunately they were unprovided with Captain Manby’s apparatus, or any other contrivance for throwing a shot with a line attached to it over a wreck, so that by the line a hawser might be hauled on shore. There were none of those excellent inventions—life-boats—in the neighbourhood, which are now, happily, stationed all along the British coast, and have been the means of saving the lives of numbers of human beings; even the coastguard officer and most of his men had gone that morning to a distance. Toby had, therefore, to trust to his own resources. The crew seemed utterly unable to make any effort to save themselves; indeed they saw that should they let go their hold, any moment they might be washed overboard and drowned. Toby had got a small keg, to which he fastened a line, and seemed to hope that it might be carried out by the receding wave towards the wreck, but though it went some way, another wave came in before it got far enough to be of any use, and sent it rolling back again with a coil of seaweed, mixed with sand and foam, on the beach. Toby next fastened a rope round his own waist, and seemed to contemplate the possibility of swimming off himself to the wreck, but the men round him held him back, persuading him that the risk was too great. He stood, evidently seeing that there was very little chance of success. Now another huge wave came foaming up. The crew turned their heads with a gaze of horror and alarm as they watched its approach. On it came, roaring loudly. All on board grasped with a gripe, in which the force of every sinew and muscle was exerted to the utmost, the masts and ropes to which they were holding. The wave struck the ship, shaking her huge hull to the keel, and driving her still further on the beach. One poor fellow must have had a less secure gripe than the rest, or else its fury must have been concentrated on him. It tore him from his hold, lifted him up, and as it passed over, he was seen struggling in the water. He struck out boldly. Now the roaring hissing sea carried him onward, then back again, now a side wave took him and drove him in the direction of the spot where Toby and his companions were standing. Toby signed to the men to hold the rope, and plunging in amid the foam, struck out towards the struggling seaman. Now they were separated, now they were brought nearer together. Now it seemed as if the stranger would be carried out, as had been the others, by the receding wave. But the brave fellow still struggled on. It was too evident, however, that his efforts were growing weaker and weaker. Toby sung out to him to encourage him to persevere. Toby got close to him, but just then a hissing wave went rolling back, the stranger threw up his arms in despair, and was buried beneath the foam. Toby darted forward and disappeared beneath the water.

“Oh, he is gone, he is drowned, our poor Toby!” exclaimed Digby, giving way to his feelings.

But Toby had only dived, and the next instant appeared grasping the body of the seaman, but was being carried at a

fearful rate out to sea. His friends on shore hauled in, however, gently on the rope, and gradually drew him and the seaman towards them. Still, Toby had much to contend with; the sea tumbled about and broke wildly around him, and now the water would make a rush in one direction and then in another, rendering swimming almost impossible. At length the rocks were reached. Several of the fishermen who had fastened ropes to their waists, rushed into the sea to his assistance, and at length he and the nearly drowned man were hauled up on the rocks.

"Bravo! excellent, brave fellow!" exclaimed Mr Nugent, enthusiastically, "thank heaven, too, that the poor man is saved."

Digby shouted with delight. "Oh, Toby is a grand fellow!" he exclaimed; in which sentiment he was joined by his fellow-pupils.

Meantime, Mr Nugent hurried off to be of assistance, if required, to the rescued man.

The escape of one of their shipmates seemed to give courage to the other people on board. Another man leaped off the wreck with a line, and boldly struck out for the rocks. Toby, notwithstanding his previous exertions, dashed into the sea to meet him, but whether or not he would succeed appeared very doubtful.

Meantime, another sea came rolling over the wreck. Directly afterwards, two human forms were seen struggling in the waves. Sometimes the sea carried them so close to the beach, that it seemed as if they could almost touch the sand with their feet; then out they were carried once more, and it appeared that they would be lost altogether. This was the more sad as Toby and the man, who had jumped off the wreck with the line, had almost succeeded in establishing a communication between it and the shore. One of the people got so close to them that they could see his features. He was evidently a lad, not so old as Marshall.

"I am certain I could get hold of him," cried Digby, suddenly fastening the rope round his own waist in the way Toby had taught him. "Here, do you hold the rope tight."

"I ought to go," said Marshall, throwing off his jacket.

"No, no—no time to be lost—now or never," cried Digby, rushing into the sea just as the wave, having brought the almost senseless lad close to the beach, was about to carry him off again.

Had he hesitated for a moment he would have been too late. He thought not of his own safety. On he rushed. The receding water took him off his legs. He struck out; he was turned heels over head. Still he dashed on. He was within half an arm's-length of the drowning lad. "Oh, I must have him," he thought to himself. He sprung on; he caught him by the collar of his jacket. "Haul away," he sung out.

Marshall and the rest saw that he had got hold of the boy, though they could not hear him speak.

Nothing but death would have made him relinquish that grasp, he felt.

His companions hauled away, and much force was required, for so strong was the reflux of the wave that all his own strength would not have opposed it.

Almost drowned himself, and scarcely sensible, holding tight on to the boy, he at length was caught hold of by his friends, who ran up with him and his burden out of the reach of the waves.

They undid the lad's collar and handkerchief. He was breathing, but insensible. He was as well dressed as they were, and was certainly not a poor sailor-boy, as Digby had fancied,—not that that would have made any difference, of course.

Easton ran off to call Mr Nugent, while Marshall, Power, and Norton attended to the stranger and Digby.

Meantime, they were anxiously looking out for the other person they had seen in the water. They could just distinguish him, but he had drifted a long way out, and was making no effort to save himself.

Digby very soon came to his senses, as did the boy he had so gallantly rescued. No sooner did the latter open his eyes than he looked up and exclaimed, "Oh, my father, my father; where is he?" He gazed with a countenance expressive of the greatest fear towards the ocean. Then he started up, and would have rushed back into the water, had not Marshall and Digby prevented him.

In the mean time, some more fishermen and other persons had assembled at the scene of action. One of them was noted for being a first-rate swimmer. He was somewhat of a rival, too, of Toby's, though they were excellent friends. Fastening a rope round his waist, he plunged in and swam out boldly and strongly amid the foaming breakers towards the drowning man. When the rescued boy saw what he was doing, he was immediately calm, and kneeling down on the sand, with uplifted hands, regardless of the bystanders, was evidently praying. What mattered it to him what others thought; the life of a beloved parent was in the greatest extreme of danger. He saw clearly that no help which he could afford him or could obtain would be of any avail, and thus wisely and with right faith he sought it whence alone it could be given.

The other boys stood around. Marshall joined his prayers to those of the young stranger, that his father might be saved. Digby wished it, and would have done anything to assist the struggling man; but how to pray he knew not. It was a moment of awful suspense; he felt it so himself. How must that kneeling boy have felt it!

The brave fisherman—John Holmes was his name—swam on. He was joined by Toby, and at the same time the cask was floated out. It was let go at the light moment. The person struggling in the water saw it, and endeavoured to reach it. Twice he was washed away far off from it. No exclamation all the time was heard from the lips of his son. He

gazed intently on what was going forward. Sometimes he appeared to be about to rise and rush towards the ocean; but he restrained himself, and continued kneeling. A shriek, it was one of joy, escaped him when he saw his father at length grasp hold of the cask.

The two brave fishermen now swam up near him and assisted to hold him on, while all three were hauled through the foaming surf towards the rocks.

Then, and not till then, did the young stranger rise from his knees, and hurry on towards the spot where he believed his father was about to be landed.

Those in the water were, however, still exposed to a very great danger. This was from the pieces of wreck which were dashing about in every direction, and a blow from which might prove fatal.

The boy hurried along over the slippery rocks. He got near enough to see his father's countenance turned with eyes of affection towards him. The son knew that he was recognised, and that his father was aware of his safety. A piece of timber came dashing by. Had not the fishermen been near him, it would have torn him from his hold. As it was, Holmes received a severe blow which almost disabled him, but he held on, and in another minute all three were in the grasp of the men collected on the rock to assist them.

The first impulse of the father and his son was to throw themselves into each other's arms, and then the father knelt down and returned thanks to Heaven for his preservation.

While this episode in the fearful history of that shipwreck was going forward, a hawser or stout rope had been carried from the stranded ship to the shore. Several seamen worked their way along it, and readied the rock in safety. Then another came, but a sea rolled by, and, sweeping him from his hold, he was carried far away out of sight.

The tide was rising, and rendering it more dangerous every moment to those remaining on the wreck. This made the seamen hurry on along the hawser. Dangerous was the transit, requiring a strong arm and firm nerves. Another huge sea came rolling in. The already shattered vessel could not withstand its force, and in a moment, as if it had been formed of the most brittle materials, was shivered into a thousand fragments, which came rolling on in tangled masses towards the shore.

Most of the men, and two of the officers, had reached the rocks; but the master and one of his mates, who had refused to leave the ship till all had left her, with two or three of the men, still remained on board at the moment she broke up. They were now seen struggling in the waves among the broken masses of the wreck.

In vain the brave fishermen dashed into the sea to save them. One after the other, struck by pieces of timber, or spars, or floating packages, were seen to go down without further efforts to save themselves. At last, one only remained alive. On him all the interest of those on shore was concentrated.

"Our captain, our captain," cried some of the rescued crew; "oh, how can we save him? how can we save him?"

He seemed a fine old man, with a noble forehead and grey hair. He reached a spar, and threw his arms over it. Thus supported, he lifted himself out of the water, and looked calmly around, as if considering how he might best reach the shore. The spar was sent rushing on towards the beach. Many of his crew, all indeed who were uninjured, got ropes ready to dash forward to his assistance. He seemed to observe the efforts preparing to aid him. Digby was struck with the wonderful calmness of the old man. Death and destruction on every side, he seemed not for a moment to have lost his presence of mind. He fancied even that he could see him smile, as the fishermen and his own people made a rush towards him. It proved unsuccessful. He looked in no way disconcerted. Another wave came on and carried him forward; now he beckoned them to come to him; on they dashed. It was the work of a moment. They seized him by the collar of his coat, and Digby saw that they had him safely landed on the beach. Digby could not help running forward and saying—

"I am very glad that you are saved, sir."

"Thank you, my boy," answered the old master, "if I mistake not, you are one of the lads who saved my young Haviland there. His father will thank you, I know. I saw it all from the wreck. Nobly done, it was!"

Digby felt highly pleased at being thus praised; not that he thought that he had done any great thing after all.

The master having thus expressed himself, called the rescued people round him, and spoke a few words to them, telling them how thankful they ought to be at being saved. When he looked round and missed so many of his late shipmates, he dashed his hand across his eyes as if he felt severely their loss. "God's will be done," he said, in a voice trembling with agitation. It was clear that, though his nerves were strong, his heart was tender.

Mr Nugent, who had all along been attending to those who most required his aid, now came forward and invited the gentleman who had been saved and his son, as well as the old master, to his house. The chief magistrate and other authorities of Osberton undertook to look after the crew, while Toby and Holmes were appointed to take charge of the cargo which might be washed on shore.

Mr Haviland and his son, as well as Captain Burton, gladly accepted Mr Nugent's invitation, greatly to the delight of the boys, who were eager to know where the ship had come from, and how she had been wrecked. Mr Nugent hurried them up to his house, where he had beds immediately made ready for them, into which he insisted on their getting, although the old captain protested that, for his part, he was not a bit the worse for his ducking.

That evening all the family, with the rescued strangers, were seated round Mrs Nugent's tea-table. Mr Haviland seemed to be a very gentlemanly person, and his son, Arthur, quickly won the regards of all the party by his kind and

gentle manners, his intelligence, and the affectionate and dutiful way in which he treated his father. Captain Burton was a fine old seaman; he had been so knocked about in the world, and had met with so many adventures and mishaps, that he seemed to make very light of the mere wreck of his ship, much as he grieved for the loss of so many of his crew.

“We seamen know well what we have to expect one day or other. We may well be thankful when we are able to reach the shore alive in a civilised land,” he remarked; “sad is the fate of the poor fellows who may be cast on a barren coast, or one inhabited by savages, cannibals may be, who may knock them on the head as soon as they set foot on shore. Now I hope in a few days to be at home with my wife and family, and soon to forget all my misfortunes.”

The ship had come, he told them, from South America. Owing to the thick weather, they had not made the land; though he knew that he was running up channel, he was not aware how near the shore he was when he was struck by the gale and dismayed. The ship in that condition, no seamanship was of any avail to preserve her.

The next morning he and his crew took their departure from Osberton, after he had collected all the articles of his private property which had come on shore.

Mr Haviland gladly accepted Mr Nugent’s invitation to remain some days longer, that he might sufficiently recover his strength to enable him to travel to London. Again and again he expressed his gratitude to Digby for having rescued his son from the waves, and Arthur himself endeavoured to show how much he felt, and how unable he was to repay him.

Mr Haviland was able to repay both Toby and Holmes, as well as the other men, in a more substantial mode, for the gallant way in which they had exerted themselves to save him. Remittances from London supplied him amply with funds; and all those who had assisted on the occasion of the wreck declared, that so liberal a gentleman had never before appeared in their town.

Chapter Five.

Sea-Side Sports—Toby Tubb’s Naval Yarn—A Pic-nic, and what occurred at it.

“You must come and stay with us when we settle,” said Arthur Haviland to Digby, the morning on which the former, with his father, was to take his departure from Mr Nugent’s. “I am to go to school, but papa intends to take a house to receive me in the holidays, when we shall expect you, and then I will tell you more about the Brazils, and the wonders of other parts of South America.”

Digby replied that if he could get leave he should be delighted to accept the invitation for a part of the holidays. “I tell you that I should not like to be away the whole time: I could not miss seeing my dear little sister Kate, and Gusty and the rest at home, on any account. I don’t fancy that I should like to be anywhere so much as at home. Oh, it is such a dear, jolly place. You must come to my home, Arthur, some day, and then you’ll see that I am right.” Such were the terms on which Digby and Arthur Haviland parted.

Digby felt very sorry and quite out of spirits when his new friend had gone. He liked Marshall, and Eastern, and Power, indeed all his companions, very much, but there was something so gentle, and amiable, and intelligent about Arthur; in many respects he was so different to himself, that he had been insensibly attracted towards him. He had been the means of saving Arthur’s life, too, and though his friend was so much older than himself, he ought to be his protector and guardian. “I wish that we had been going to the same school,” he said to himself; “Arthur is just the sort of fellow the boys will be apt to bully. How Julian would sneer at him and tease him. Even Power and Easton couldn’t help now and then having a laugh at his notions. How I should like to stand up for him, and fight his battles. I’m not very big, but I would not mind a thrashing for his sake.”

The summer was drawing to a conclusion, but still the weather was very warm. One evening Mr Nugent had been called out to visit a sick person. On his return he invited his pupils to accompany him to the beach.

“I have seldom seen the water so beautifully luminous as it is to-night,” he observed. “Bring two wide-mouthed bottles, my naturalist’s water nets, and a long pole, and we will go and fish for night shiners.”

Digby was puzzled to know what his uncle meant. The nets which Marshall produced were in shape like a landing-net, but smaller and lighter—fine gauze being used instead of the twine net. It was a dark night, and the party stumbled along over the not very well-paved streets of the little town till they reached the water. Great was Digby’s surprise to see the whole ocean covered with glowing flashes; while, as the gently rippling wavelets came rolling in, a line of light was playing over them, and as they reached the shore it broke into still greater brilliancy, leaving, as they retired, thousands of shining sparkles glittering on the smooth beach.

“What is it?” he exclaimed, after gazing for some time in mute astonishment. “What has come over the ocean?”

“A mass of phosphorescent creatures,” answered his uncle. “We will go to the deep pool (this was a quiet little bay close at hand). We shall then be able to fish up a supply for examination.”

On reaching the pool all at first appeared dark, but Mr Nugent and Marshall stooping down, swept the surface with their nets, when wherever they touched the water, it glowed with the most brilliant flashes. Having filled the bottles, they lifted the water up in the nets, when it looked as if they had got in them a lump of the most glittering gold, or a mass of molten lead. A still more beautiful appearance was produced when they threw the water up in the air and it came down in glittering showers, like the dropping stars from a firework.

"Glorious! beautiful!" shouted Digby; "I did not think the sea could produce anything so fine."

Then they stirred the water about with a long pole, till the whole pool, which had been in tranquillity so dark, became like a caldron of boiling metal. After amusing themselves with the variety of effects to be produced, the party returned homeward.

"What is the use of all that shining stuff, now, I wonder?" said Digby.

"I am glad to hear you ask the question," replied his uncle. "That shining stuff is called the phosphorescence of the ocean. It is composed of numberless minute animals, each not larger than a pin's head. Through a microscope we should see that all parts of the animal shine, but at different times. It emits, as it were, sparks, now from one part of its body, now from another. It is a very beautiful object, especially in southern latitudes, and that alone may account for its creation; just as birds with gay plumage, and flowers of varied hues and sweet scents, were formed for the benefit of man. It wonderfully relieves, also, on a dark night, the obscurity of the ocean, and its light is so great during storms that it enables seamen the better to perform the duties of the ship. Of one thing you may be certain, that nothing is created in nature without a very adequate object."

On reaching home, Mr Nugent got out his microscope, and exhibited to Digby the wonders of the creatures they had caught. Power had also brought home a bucketful of water. It contained, among other creatures, a little melon-shaped animal, which Mr Nugent turned into a glass tumbler. It was smaller than a small hazel nut, of a transparent consistency, and with bands down it like the divisions in a melon. These bands, when the tumbler was shaded, glittered in the most beautiful way, while the creature moved about in the water, now rising to the surface, and now sinking almost to the bottom. When again brought to the light, it was seen putting forth what Digby called its fishing lines. These, when it was on the surface, reached to the bottom, and were evidently employed for the object Digby supposed.

"This beautiful little creature is called a Cydippe or Beroë," observed Mr Nugent. "Those bands are denominated cilia. See, they are like little paddles. They are the means by which the animal moves. Now look—he has turned his head down, and away he plunges to the bottom; now he rises slowly, like a balloon. I doubt not that there is much enjoyment even in that little mass of jelly. Wonderful are all God's works. Who can measure the happiness which exists even in an atom."

Digby became far more interested than, a few weeks before, he would have thought possible. At the same time he did not take in all the remarks his uncle and Marshall made. He would have found it impossible to describe the curious marine animals they showed him. At the same time the impression left on his mind was beneficial, as he in that way learned to comprehend the fact of the existence of the numberless wonders of nature, and to regard them with interest and respect. Although he could not manage to recollect a single one of the hard names he heard, he surely was better off than a person who remains ignorant that even such things exist.

The day after the Noctilucae had exhibited their brightness on the sea in so remarkable a degree, a heavy gale sprung up and blew on the shore for some hours with great violence.

"I hope no other shipwreck happened last night," said Digby, as they got up in the morning.

"I hope not," answered Marshall. "We should have heard of it before this. But if you will come down with me to the beach, by and by, we shall find that other floating things have been wrecked, and that the sea has cast them up in great numbers on the shore."

As soon as lessons were over the boys set out. Digby was now quite eager for anything of the sort. They had not gone far along the beach when Marshall pounced on a dark-looking mass, which he put into his jar.

"What nasty thing is that?" exclaimed Digby, looking at it with disgust.

"Nasty! no; it is a magnificent Holothuria, or sea-cucumber. Toby would call it a sea-pudding. It will look very different when it is in my vivarium, let me tell you. It now looks like a great bag, but the outside of that bag is covered with numbers of suckers, by which it is able to crawl about at a rapid rate; while in the inside are its head and intestines, and all its fishing apparatus."

"I should like to see it in full action," said Digby. "But I say, Marshall, what are all those lumps of jelly? Are they good to eat? They look as if they would be, boiled a little, perhaps."

Marshall laughed heartily. "I doubt if even the Chinese attempt to eat them. If they do, they must eat them raw, for even in the air they very soon dissolve. Those are Medusae, or jelly-fish, or sea-nettles. The first English name they obtain from their appearance, the second on account of the property they possess of stinging; and that you would soon discover if, when you were bathing, one of them got his long arms round you."

"Arms, surely they have not got arms?" said Digby.

"Indeed they have, and very long arms, too, with which they can catch all sorts of prey. They have mouths and all internal arrangements, and, soft and gelatinous as they appear, they can consume animals of a much higher organisation than themselves. You would not suppose that they could gobble up crabs, yet they can do so without the slightest difficulty. They have also the property of giving forth light. You may see them by thousands floating about near the surface of the water, in shape like small umbrellas, and moving up and down just as if a heart beat beneath. You will find them often in the river when the flood-tide is coming in; and when we go on our trawling expedition we shall see numbers of them."

Digby, notwithstanding what Marshall had told him, had not quite made up his mind about them; and as he had

brought a basket in which to carry curiosities, he put several of them into it.

"Ah, here are some of the things I admire," exclaimed Digby, picking up a star-fish. "They are curious."

"Not more so than many others," answered Marshall. "Yet I agree with you, that they are very curious indeed. You would not suppose that they can crawl along at the bottom of the sea at a considerable rate, and that they are the most voracious of marine animals. They have a big mouth in the centre of the lower side; and those star-like arms supply them with food. They progress by means of suckers, with which the whole of the lower part of their bodies is covered. They are the scavengers of the ocean; and it is wonderful the amount of animal food they can consume, which would otherwise tend to putrefy the ocean itself. Another curious circumstance about them is, that when one or more of their rays are broken off, fresh ones are produced; indeed, I have seen it stated in print that a single ray has produced the mouth and the other rays, and then that the old ray has fallen off, and that a new star-fish, in its perfect proportions, has been thus reformed."

"I dare say what you tell me is all true," said Digby; "but it is very hard to believe."

"I am only telling you what I have heard from others, though I have observed some of the facts myself," answered Marshall. "See, now; what do you call that?" he added, holding up a very perfect Echinus.

"A sea-egg, of course," answered Digby. "But I own that it has always puzzled me how any fish can manage to lay an egg covered with spines."

"It is not an egg at all; it is much more properly called a sea-urchin or a sea-hedgehog. It is allied to the star-fish. By means of these spines it can move about with great ease; they serve also as its protection. The covering is most curious: it is composed of several hundred pentagonal plates. By a process going on continually from the inside, each one of these plates is enlarged by a fresh deposit; and thus, without altering their shape, the animal, as it grows, has its coat of armour growing also."

"Well, Marshall, I must say that you spin wonderful yarns, as Toby Tubb would say, about all these things. I suppose that they are all true; but they do sometimes make me open my eyes."

"Depend on it they are all true. Mr Nugent can tell still more wonderful ones," answered Marshall. "The more we examine the productions of nature the more wonderful things we shall discover. There is no doubt, also, that—"

"I dare say not," said Digby, yawning. "But do you know, Marshall, that, somehow or other, I would rather sometimes hear old Toby spin one of his yarns than listen to my uncle's lectures on natural history. They are all very well in their way when one is in the humour for them, but, just now, I am rather inclined for a brisk walk; and, thinking of Toby, I say, I wish that we could get him to tell us how the ship he was on board of attacked I don't know how many Frenchmen, or some other of our enemies, and took one of them in sight of their own port. He was telling Easton all about it one day. Perhaps he will not feel inclined to tell it again."

Marshall laughed at the idea of an old sailor *not* liking to spin a yarn a second time, when the chances were in favour of his having already spun it many hundred times. He took the hint, also, about the lectures on natural history, and said nothing more to Digby on the subject. He well knew that if he was to attempt to cram it down his throat, Digby would be very likely to take a disgust to it, and obstinately set his face against all branches of natural history. He promised, moreover, to try and get Toby to spin the yarn in which Easton had been so much interested.

The next Saturday half-holiday was very lovely, and all Mr Nugent's pupils agreed to make a boating excursion up the river as far as they could go, and to dine in pic-nic fashion at the end of the voyage.

"We must try and get Toby Tubb to spin his yarn," observed Digby, as they were starting.

Mrs Nugent had supplied them with some cold provisions; and they took potatoes to cook, and tea and sugar; and they hoped to catch some fish, which would be a great addition to their fare. However, they were fortunately independent of the fish, which sometimes obstinately refuse to be caught.

Power, however, who had great confidence in his own success as a fisherman, wanted the rest to leave a cold veal pie behind, assuring them that he would take care that they had an ample supply of salmon-peel, and bass, and flounders, which he promised to catch and cook for them.

"That is all very well," said Marshall; "but I vote that we take the pie, and then we can be eating that while Power is dining on the fish which he has not yet caught."

"Now, do you, Toby, take the helm, and we will row," said Marshall, seating himself ready to pull the stroke oar.

Digby jumped in next him, for he knew that he was about to fulfil his promise, to get Toby to spin a yarn.

All took their seats, up went the oars. "Give way!" sung out Toby. The oars came with a simultaneous flop into the water, and the young crew bending to them, the boat glided swiftly and steadily over the smooth surface. The scenery for some distance was very beautiful: there were high cliffs, broken and fantastic in shape, with here and there openings through which green fields, and woods, and cottages could be seen, and deep bays and inlets, and, further off, downs, or heather land, on which sheep or cattle were feeding. The sky was blue, the air was fresh and pure; all were enjoying themselves, though they could not perhaps tell why.

"Try old Toby now," whispered Digby into Marshall's ear.

Marshall began in a diplomatic way. "Now, Toby," he said, "while we are pulling and cannot talk much, it seems a pity that you should not be telling us something we should like to hear. You have been in a battle or two, I dare say;

perhaps fought with double your numbers, and came off victorious, as I have heard of British seamen doing more than once.”

“I believe you, Master Marshall,” interrupted Toby. “I have been in a battle when we had three to one against us, and still we thrashed them. I’ll tell you how it was. I belonged, in those days, to the *Spartan*, a smart frigate of thirty-eight guns, and a first-rate dashing officer, Captain Jahleel Brenton, commanded her. We were in the Mediterranean in the year 1810. Many were the things we did which we had a right to talk about. It was about the end of April we were cruising in company with the *Success* frigate, Captain Mitford, and the sloop *Espoir*, when, standing in for the Castle of Terrecino, on the Italian coast, we made out a ship, three barques, and several feluccas, at anchor under shelter of the guns of that fort. Our captain, as soon as he saw them, determined to have them; so as he was commodore, do you see, he ordered away the boats of the squadron to cut them out. I was not a little pleased to find myself in one of the *Spartan’s* boats. The whole expedition was commanded by Lieutenant Baumgart, of the *Spartan*; and we had with us another brave officer, Lieutenant George Sartorius, of the *Sirius*.

“We rendezvoused on board the *Spartan*, and soon after noon pulled in for the castle, covered by the fire of the squadron, which opened a brisk cannonade on the town and batteries. The enemy were not idle, and the shot were flying pretty thick about us, but that did not stop our way.

“‘There’s the ship, my boys, and we must have her, and the barques too, if we can,’ sung out our lieutenant; and on we dashed, with a loud cheer, towards her.

“Round-shot and bullets came rattling about our heads, but they didn’t stop our way more than would a shower of hail. Away we pulled, maybe a bit faster, to get through them the quicker. In a quarter less no time we were alongside the ship, which mounted six guns, scrambling up her sides, knocking everybody who opposed us on the head—not that all stopped for that, seeing that many leaped into their boats as soon as we gained the deck, and pulled away for the shore. The rest, however, made a tough fight of it before they knocked under. To cut the cables and to let fall the topsails and sheet home was the work of a few moments only, and we were under weigh almost before the enemy had turned the guns of the castle on us.

“The other boats, meantime, divided the barques among them, and, attacking them altogether, drove their crews into the water, and, cutting their cables, made sail after us. We lost only one man killed and two wounded in the whole affair, and carried all four vessels off in safety.

“That’s what we call a cutting-out expedition. There’s nothing we used to like better. They were generally pretty sharp slap-dash affairs; no shilly-shallying, and counting what was dangerous and what was not; but it was pull in, jump aboard, and we were out again with the prizes before the enemy had time to find out what we were about. But that wasn’t what I was going to tell you about.

“Soon after this, our squadron was cruising off the Bay of Naples—not all, by the by, the *Espoir* had been sent away somewhere, and we had only the *Spartan*, that was our ship, and the *Success*. Well, we made out, under weigh in the Bay, two ships, a brig and a cutter. Not many moments had gone by before we had crowded all sail in chase. It was a French squadron we saw, but they didn’t like our looks, so they put about and stood towards Naples, we following them almost up to the Mole. That was on the first of May. The next morning at daylight we saw our friends at anchor, but they seemed in no way inclined to come out and fight us.

“‘Perhaps if they see one of us alone they may come out and take a taste of our quality,’ says our captain; so he sent off the *Success* to wait for us about eight leagues from the island of Capri, thinking that the Frenchmen would then, without doubt, venture out to attack us.

“In the meantime, the French General who had command at Naples, Prince Murat, had formed a plan to capture us. His French squadron consisted of a 42-gun frigate, the *Céres*; a 28-gun corvette, the *Fama*; an 8-gun brig, the *Sparvière*; and a cutter, mounting 10 guns; but besides these there were seven gunboats at least, each with one long 18-pounder and 40 men. General Murat had also embarked four hundred Swiss troops on board the ships, so that they had altogether 95 guns and 1,400 men, while we had only 38 guns and about 260 men. (Note.) We didn’t mind the odds against us, all we thought of was how we could take the enemy. They made sure, however, it seems, with the great odds in their favour, on the other hand, do ye see, of taking us; but we sung, with some right to sing it, too:

“Hearts of oak are our ships,
Jolly tars are our men;
We always are ready,
Then steady, boys, steady,
We’ll fight, and we’ll conquer again and again.”

“All we were anxious for was the moment to begin. At last, before sunrise, on the third day after we had first made them out, which, do you see, was the 3rd of May, 1810, we got a slant of wind from the South-east, though it was very light, and we, being well to the southward, stood under easy sail into the Bay of Naples.

“Well, we were keeping a bright look-out for the enemy, and just at daybreak we made them out about six miles ahead, standing out from the Mole of Naples, and just between the island of Capri and the mainland. We were on the starboard tack, and they were on the larboard, or what we now call the port tack, remember.”

“What do you mean by the starboard and port tacks?” asked Digby, who was much interested in the details of the account, and wanted to understand it.

“Why, you see, the two lower corners of square sails have ropes to them called tacks and sheets. The tacks haul the corners of the sail down to the fore part of the ship, and the sheets to the after part. If the tack is hauled down on the

starboard side, the sheet is of course on the other side, or to leeward, and the ship is then said to be on the starboard tack. So you'll know if the wind strikes the starboard side, the ship is on the starboard tack, or, if it comes on the other side, she's on the port or larboard tack."

"Thank you," answered Digby; "I know now, I think. But go on; it's very interesting."

"I vote that no one interrupts to ask questions," exclaimed Power. "When the story is done we'll all fire away as much as we like. Won't that be best, Toby?"

Toby seemed to be of Power's opinion, so the motion was agreed to *nem con*.

"Where was we?" began Toby, having been slightly put out, as even the best story-tellers are when interrupted. "Let's see. Oh, I know, standing in towards the Bay of Naples, to meet the French squadron. We were on the starboard tack; they were on the opposite one. There's a picture been done of the fight. It always does my old heart good to look at it; because, do ye see, it's not like some pictures of battles—it's true. An officer, an old shipmate, gave it me, and so I had it put in a frame, with a glass over it, and hung up in my cottage.

"There we were, do ye see, the three French ships and we, drawing nearer and nearer to each other on opposite tacks. The Frenchmen followed each other in line, the *Céres* leading, followed by the *Fama* and *Sparvière*, with the wind abeam. Instead, however, of keeping close together, as they ought to have done, they were some distance from each other. The light wind was thus all in our favour, as I'll make you understand. At last the *Céres* clewed up her courses, and we did the same, and right glad we were to do it.

"Now, remember, that the Frenchman's decks were crowded with troops, poor Swiss fellows, who had no wish naturally to hurt us any more than we had to hurt them.

"Now, lads, all hands lie down at their quarters. We shall be having a pretty hot shower of musketry among us before many minutes are over, and it will be just as well to let it pass over our heads,' sung out our captain. All the time, though, he did not lie down, nor did some of the officers; but of course all the people did as they were ordered, except the men at the helm. It was close upon eight o'clock, when we were within pistol-shot of the *Céres*, that she opened her fire on us. Still we lay quiet. Now, do ye see, all our guns on the main deck were treble shotted.

"Our captain calmly waited, eyeing the enemy till every one of our guns bore on him. 'Up, boys, and fire away!' he shouted. Didn't we just spring to our feet and blaze away like fury. What shrieks and cries rose from the Frenchman's decks. Our shot mowed down the troops like corn-stalks before the sickle, besides killing numbers of the crew. The soldiers were drawn up all ready for boarding, but our captain was too wise to let them do that. As we were going little more than two knots through the water, we had plenty of time to load again, and to give the second Frenchman, the *Fama*, the same taste of our quality. Numbers were killed and wounded aboard her, and then, loading once more, we continued our course and fired into the brig. We had still the gunboats to talk to. They were not to be despised, and, as it proved, they were the worst enemies we had. As we approached them we fired our headmost starboard guns at them, and then, going about, let fly our whole larboard broadside, which we had again got ready for their amusement. They returned it with interest, though, and we lost many men from the shot of their long guns, while most of our masts and spars were likewise wounded. As we went about our starboard broadside was not idle, and we kept peppering away at the brigs and the two ships ahead of us. Well, the French commodore ought to have steered for the gunboats, but instead of that he wore round and stood away for Baia, on the north side of the Bay, where there were some batteries. We wore after him. Our captain had taken his stand on the capstan head, that he might have a clear view of everything, and a fine sight it was to see him standing up there undaunted, while the round-shot and musket-balls were flying thick around his head. 'Ay, he's the right sort of stuff, that skipper of ours,' said my messmate, Bill Simmonds. 'If we don't take one or more of those Frenchmen I'm very much mistaken.' After we had got up to the gunboats, and a large cutter there was among them, and hammered away at them, the breeze fell, and left us surrounded with enemies. The *Céres* lay ahead, with her starboard broadside turned towards us; and we had on our port bow the corvette and brig, while the cutter and gunboats came sweeping up astern, and pounding us pretty severely with their long eighteen-pounders. In spite of our first success, it seemed just then as if matters would go very hard with us. What was our sorrow, too, to see our brave captain knocked off his post badly wounded. He was carried below, for a grape-shot had hit him in the hip. Our first lieutenant, Mr Willes, then took the command. How we did whistle for a wind. Scarcely was our brave captain carried below before a light breeze sprung up: and I can't tell you how our hearts beat with joy when we found ourselves once more drawing near the French frigate. There we soon were, on her starboard quarter, and on the starboard bow of the corvette, so that our guns were able almost to rake them both at the same time. We had, however, the brig peppering away at us on our larboard quarter, while the cutter and gunboats, some of which were astern and others on the starboard quarter, kept up a hot fire at us all the time. The enemy, it seemed, however, had no wish to continue at such close quarters, for as soon as the frigate's sails felt the breeze, away she ran as fast as her legs could carry her, till she got under the shelter of the batteries of Baia. We should have followed her, but our rigging and sails had been so knocked about and riddled with shot that for the best of all reasons we didn't—because we couldn't. We managed to wear, however, and gave the frigate and corvette a parting benefit, raking them fore and aft with our starboard guns, and knocking away the corvette's foretopmast. At the same time we poured our whole larboard broadside into the brig. Hearty was the shout raised aboard us, when down came her main-topmast, and, lowering her colours, she sung out for mercy, lest we should give her a second dose of the same character. Dropping a boat to take possession, we stood after the corvette, and should have taken her, but the gunboats came up with their long sweeps, and, in spite of a pretty severe fire we kept up at them, towed her in a very spirited way out of action. As I was saying, we couldn't then follow, or we'd have had her also, at least. Perhaps we might have had the frigate, too. We hadn't given up all hopes of another prize, and with a hearty good will we set to work to repair damages. We had altogether been rather more than two hours pretty closely engaged with the enemy. We'd lost by this time ten killed and twenty-two wounded. Both our captain and first lieutenant were very severely hurt. When the French frigate saw that we could not get up to her, she sneaked away from Baia and stood back towards Naples. By the time we were put somewhat to rights the sea-breeze set in, and so our captain ordered the prize to be taken in tow, and away we stood, passing just in front of Naples, before which the

rest of the enemy had just dropped their anchors. Whether they thought that we were going to fetch any of them out I don't know. We heard afterwards that the French General, Prince Murat, who called himself King of Naples, was watching all the time, expecting to see his frigate tow us in; and you may be sure that he was in a pretty great rage when he saw us carry off one of his ships instead, as our prize, before his very nose. I've heard since that the French, to excuse themselves, declared that our frigate was a *rasé*, or cut-down ship, and that we carried fifty heavy guns. You may read of many gallant actions, young gentlemen, but I don't believe that you'll ever hear tell of one better-fought battle. It showed the Frenchmen the stuff we were made of, though they'd found that out pretty often before. There's one thing you may depend on,—every victory gained helps to win another. The enemy can't help expecting to be beaten, and you feel that you've a fair prospect of winning the day. It's just the same thing, take an old man's word for it, when you've got to fight with bad habits, or vices, or sin of any sort, evil tempers, and evil propensities. Gain one victory. Learn that you can conquer the foe, and the next time you try you'll find that he gives way more easily than at first; but, if you let him gain the victory, why 'tis you will go to the wall, faster and faster each time, till he knocks you down altogether. But I was telling you how the gallant *Spartan* captured the *Sparvière*; and don't forget to come and see the picture, which 'll show you all about it."

The boys thanked Toby for his story, and all promised that they would go and pay him a visit, and see the prints of the battle. I need not repeat all the questions they asked him about it; how he liked having the shot flying about his head, and seeing his shipmates knocked over near him, and all that sort of thing.

"As to the first, young gentlemen," he answered, "I can't say as how I ever thought much about it; and as to the second, a man before he goes into battle knows that it may be his lot, and so he makes up his mind to it. When a man makes up his mind to a thing it is much easier to bear it, let me tell you. Besides, very few men, when they once begin to fight, think about anything else but the fighting."

The conversation to which Toby's history led lasted the party till they reached the place at which they intended to pic-nic. It had been selected not so much because of its peculiar beauty, as on account of the good fishing which Power expected to get there. He talked of salmon-peel, and basse, and flounders, and plaice, all of which come up salt-water rivers, and often venture into brackish waters. Power at once set off to the spot where he intended to fish: it was on a bank just below a mill-dam. The salt-water flowed in with the flood-tide, and when the ebb made a strong current run out, which always kept open a deep channel. Some shade-giving trees grew about, the turf was soft and green, and, at a little distance, the cliffs turned inland, and formed a ravine, in which stood the mill and the mill pond. Marshall and Easton went off to botanise, and to search in the cliffs for geological specimens and other subjects of natural history; while Digby and two other boys accompanied Power with their rods. Ten minutes passed, and all except Power began to make signs to each other expressive of increasing hunger; but no sign was there of a fish.

"Hurra!" he at last exclaimed; "I have a bite; I knew I should." His float began to bob, and away it went down the stream. He gave his rod a jerk. "I have him fast enough," he exclaimed. High he lifted his rod, and up came a fish—but such a fish—a little, ugly, big-headed, flat-snouted monster.

"A miller's thumb!—a miller's thumb!" shouted the party, laughing heartily. "What a fine dinner he will make for us," cried one. "I hope you'll let us have something else, Power," said Digby.

"Not unless you will all hold your tongues, and let me try again, for I don't think any of you will catch anything," said Power.

Just then Toby arrived, with a stick and line. He held up the poor bull-head with a comical look, and pretended to let it drop down his throat—a proceeding which he would have found very unpleasant as besides its large head its back was armed with a row of sharp spines. "We call this a sea-scorpion, or sea-toad, and some call it a father-lasher, because he is supposed to be so wicked that he would beat even his own father," said Toby, putting back the fish with a pretence of the greatest care into the basket. "Now, young gentlemen, I'll see what I can do for the pot; it's on, and boiling, and only wants something put into it. I'll make you some pebble-soup if we don't catch any fish; but the fish will be best, I think." Toby, on this, went a little lower down the creek, and taking his seat on the bank, let his line drop into the water, throwing in, every now and then, some ground bait. Before long, he pulled out a shining silvery little fish, of most graceful form; another and another followed in rapid succession.

Digby, who had caught nothing, went up to him. "Why, Toby, what are those pretty little fish? I should like to have some of them," he observed. "How do you catch them?"

"I'll show you if you'll sit down and try," answered Toby. "You've caught no fish because you've been wandering about from place to place, and not taking advantage of the experience you have got with your first trials. If one depth won't do, raise or lower your float; if one bait don't do, try another; and the same with your hook, if you find that you get bites and don't catch anything. Perseverance is the thing. I generally can tell how a lad is likely to get on in life by the way I see him fish. You'll excuse my freedom, Master Digby; I like to say what I think will be likely to be useful to you."

Digby thanked Toby, though he did not quite see the drift of his reasoning. He, however, put on a very small hook, and watched how he caught the smelts; and, in a short time, he had pulled up nearly a dozen. He might have captured more, but turning his head up the stream he saw that Power was hauling some big fish out of the water, and he could not resist the temptation of running off to see what it was.

"Help! help! Here, the landing-net, the landing-net," shouted Power. "I've a conger, a conger; there's no doubt about it."

The conger-eel, which occasionally comes up salt-water rivers, is a ferocious fish, with powerful jaws. This was of good size, and struggled so violently, that Digby was afraid of losing hook, and net, and line. The other young fishermen had gone to a little distance, and were busily engaged in hauling in some captives which their skill had

taken. Digby, in his eagerness, leaned over so far with the net that, just as he had got the conger into it, he lost his balance, and in he went heels over head. Power nearly followed. The conger got entangled in the net; and Digby's first impulse, as his head came above water, was to grapple hold of the fish. This he did most effectually, and a tremendous struggle commenced; the conger trying to bite Digby, and Digby determined not to let him go. Power's feelings were divided between his anxiety for Digby's safety and his wish not to lose his captive. His shouts called Marshall and Easton, who were not far off. "Haul him out, haul him out!" he cried, lustily. "He'll make a magnificent dish."

"Which?" asked Marshall, laughing, "Digby or the fish?"

"Digby, Digby," answered Power, really thinking that he was in danger.

"No, no," cried Digby, "I won't be cooked. Get out the fish first. He's half mine, though, for I helped to catch him."

The conger was wriggling about all the time, and Power was making every effort to keep his head away from Digby, whom the fish had apparently a strong wish to bite. Between all parties there was a tremendous amount of laughing, and shouting, and splashing. At last Marshall got hold of Digby's collar, and out he pulled him, still grasping the net and the fish.

"Don't let us go till you have got us well up from the water," exclaimed Digby, panting with his exertions. "If you do, the beast may be getting away, and escape us after all."

His caution was not unnecessary, for, breaking from the hook, no sooner was Digby's grasp off him than away he wriggled at a great rate towards the water. It was no easy matter to catch him, for he turned round with his savage head and made desperate bites at the lads, who were in hot pursuit of him.

"Oh, stop him!" shouted Digby, almost crying in his agitation. "Oh, he'll be off,—he'll be off!"

Nearer and nearer the water he wriggled; with a hook in his mouth, and the mauling he had got, he was not likely to find much pleasure in his future career; still, life is dear even to fish. He was almost at the edge of the bank, when Marshall seizing his geological hammer, which he had thrown down to help Digby, with it dealt the poor conger such a blow on the tail that in an instant it was paralysed, and though its jaws moved a little, it no longer made an attempt to reach its native element.

It was now voted that dinner-time had arrived, or rather that it was time to begin cooking the fish. Altogether a very good supply had been caught: besides the smelt, Toby brought two grey mullets, a foot in length; these, he said, were rarely caught with the hook, as they suck in their food. They do not often eat living creatures, but grub down at the bottom for offal or weeds. It is a very sagacious fish, and, when enclosed by a net, always makes the greatest efforts to escape by leaping over it, or by seeking for some opening. Only a very perfect net will secure them. In some parts the fishermen form an inner line of straw, or corks, and the mullets leaping over it, and finding themselves still enclosed, do not make a second attempt till there is time to draw them to the shore.

Power had done even more than he had promised, for he had caught a salmon-peel and three or four flounders, besides his conger; while the rest of the party, who had gone to another spot, had caught some basse, and some plaice, and other flat fish. The basse is like a freshwater perch in some respects, but it is not so rounded, nor has it the bright colours of the perch. The plaice and flounders were not very large.

"What funny twisted-head fellows they are," observed Digby, as he handed them to Toby to clean. "Well, it never did occur to me before I came here what a vast number of curious animals of all sorts live in the sea."

"I believe, if people would look for them, they'd find as many in the sea as on land," answered Toby. "Some of them are wonderful curious. Just think of a big whale, and then of a little shrimp; and there are thousands of things smaller than shrimps which live in the sea, and quite as curious."

What a frying, and broiling, and boiling of fish took place; everybody was busy. Digby wanted, by the by, to remain in his wet clothes, but Toby would not let him, but made him strip, and then hung them up on the black rock, against which the sun was striking with full force. Here they quickly dried, while he sat near the fire, the butt for his companions' jokes.

"Arrah, now," exclaimed Power, "would Mr and Mrs Heathcote ever mistake you for their own eldest son and heir of all their virtues and estates, if they were to come by and see you sitting for all the world like a little Irish spalpeen or a gipsy boy, before his camp fire, gutting fish?"

"It's hard, Power, after I helped you to save the conger, to laugh at me," said Digby. "He'll stick in your throat, depend on it."

Had Digby seen himself in a glass he might have learnt one important lesson, and discovered how very slight a difference there was between him and the characters Power described.

The cooking part of the pic-nic was very amusing, but the eating the provisions was still pleasanter. Jokes and laughter ran high, and old Toby told them some more of his stories, of which I have no record. Altogether, they all agreed that they never had passed a pleasanter or more amusing day. They had saved a very nice dish of fish for Mrs Nugent; and in the cool of the evening they once more embarked, and pulled back to Osberton.

Note. I have no doubt that old Toby's account is perfectly correct, because it agrees with one just narrated to me by Admiral Saumarez, who was a midshipman on board the *Spartan*. He was showing me some prints of the action—one

of the most spirited on record, and seldom has an account of a sea fight been told me in a more graphic way. Toby's narrative scarcely comes up to it, I fear.

Chapter Six.

The Reappearance of Digby's Evil Genius—A Trawling Expedition—How the Guns of the Old Fort went off.

Digby was to all appearance getting on very well with Mr Nugent; a watchful eye was upon him; he had steady companions, older than himself, who were not inclined to lead him into temptation, while old Toby contributed much to keep him out of harm's way. It may very well be doubted whether this was the best sort of training for a lad of his disposition and the style of life for which he was intended. He would be called upon to mix with the world, to associate with all sorts of people, and to go through the ordeal of a public school and college. One important point was in his favour; his uncle was endeavouring to instil into him good principles, and to make him love, and comprehend, and follow the only light which could guide him on his onward path through life—the Bible. Digby listened oftentimes earnestly, always complaisantly, to what his uncle said to him, and thinking that listening to what was good was of itself a virtuous act, he began to fancy that he had grown into a reformed and very steady character. He might not have found out his mistake, had not a new boy come to his tutor's; his coming was spoken of some time before he made his appearance. Who he could be was the question. At length a carriage drove up to the door, and out of it stepped Julian Langley.

"Ah, Digby, how de ye do, how de ye do?" exclaimed Julian in an affected way, putting out his hand. "Introduce me to your friends. We are to be companions for some time, I'm told, so we may as well become intimate at once."

Digby welcomed his old friend, and mentioned his name, but Easton and the other boys could not resist imitating his affected way of talking.

"How de ye do, how de ye do, Langley?" they exclaimed, laughing; while Marshall turned away, somewhat disgusted with the little jackanapes as he called him.

Julian, however, soon made himself at home. He had never held Digby in very high estimation, simply because he found that he could so easily lead him, and he therefore fancied that he should have a good right to look down upon his new companions. His reasoning was not very sound, and they were in no way inclined to be looked down upon. On the contrary, though they were all well disposed to treat him civilly, they showed no disposition to allow him to become very intimate with them. Marshall, indeed, very soon let him know what he thought of him, but it took a great deal to make Master Julian in any way dissatisfied with himself, or any of his belongings, or anything that he had done. It appeared unfortunate for Digby that Julian Langley should have been sent to Mr Nugent's. Mr Langley finding at last that his son was getting into mischief at home, and hearing that his friend Heathcote had sent his boy to Mr Nugent, wrote to ask if he would take charge of him. Mr Nugent only knew that he was a friend of his brother-in-law, and without making any inquiries as to the character of the boy, at once agreed to receive him under his roof. One afternoon, a few days after Julian's arrival, Mr Nugent announced that he had engaged a vessel for the following morning, and that he hoped the long talked-of trawling expedition would at length take place. The weather was fine, the sea was smooth, and there appeared every prospect of their enjoying a pleasant day.

"I don't think that you have been much on the water, Julian," said Digby. "I wonder how you will like it."

"Very much, as you all seem to do," answered Julian, superciliously. "You don't suppose that I should be afraid of the water?"

"Not afraid of it exactly; but it makes people who are not often on it feel very queer, I know," observed Digby.

"It might such a fellow as you," replied Julian, who never lost an opportunity of showing how superior he thought himself to Digby. "I'll tell you what though, I should take very good care that it doesn't upset me. I'm above that sort of thing."

Had Marshall, or Easton, or Power overheard him, how they would have laughed at the nonsense he was talking. All the evening Mr Nugent and Marshall were preparing the jars, and bottles, and boxes for preserving the specimens of marine zoology which they hoped to dredge up. The next morning proved as bright and beautiful as it had promised to be, and a very merry party embarked on board the *Mermaid*, a cutter of thirty tons, with a crew of six men besides Toby Tubb, who went as master. The fishing ground selected for the day was about four miles off the mouth of the harbour, and they had a fair though a light breeze to take them there.

"It may at first appear strange that one spot of ground should be suitable for trawling and not another," observed Mr Nugent, as they sailed away from the shore. "There are several reasons for this. One is, that the flat fish which are to be caught feed only among certain weeds, to which their prey is attached, or among which they live; then, again, the trawl cannot be used over rough and rocky ground. Trawlers, therefore, generally drag their nets over smooth and shallow spots, where there is little chance of their being lost. They of course also prefer shallow places, where the net has not so far to descend. Besides the trawl-net, I am going to use a dredge, with which I hope to bring up shells and various specimens of marine zoology, which might be spoilt in the net."

Mr Nugent's dredge was a canvas bag, stretched on an oblong iron frame, with iron plates attached to it to serve as scrapers. Drawn along the bottom, as he explained, shells, and crabs, and other slow-moving animals were easily swept into it.

The trawl-net Digby examined with some curiosity. One end was stretched along a stout beam, with small but heavy iron triangles at each end. Just above the beam is a long bag, into which whatever the beam stirs up is forced. Fish,

when touched by the beam, dart into the net, thinking that it is the way out, and soon get entangled in its meshes. Ropes are attached to each end of the beam, and they serve also to keep the well part of the net stretched upwards, and at the same time leaning forwards. Toby showed him exactly how it would work when it got to the bottom.

Julian looked on with a supercilious air, as if such matters were entirely beneath his notice.

“You little think, young gentlemen, of the immense number of vessels engaged in this work. There are some firms which own from a hundred and fifty to two hundred vessels, all more than twice the size of this one. Each vessel carries a hundred men, and they fish in fleets, from twenty to two hundred miles off the coast. Some go to the mouth of the Texel, and they remain out six weeks and two months together, fishing every day. Vessels employed as carriers tiring them provisions, and ice in which to pack their fish and carry them away. Little do you think, when you are eating a piece of turbot, how far it has come, and what trouble it has cost to bring it to you in a fresh state.”

By this time they reached the trawling-ground, and the great beam and its net was cast overboard, and the two ropes which were fastened to it were secured, one to the fore part and one to the after part of the vessel. Her peak was lowered, as also was the throat. The tack was triced up, the foresail hauled down, and a small jib only set. Thus, under easy sail, she slowly dragged on her net.

If there is any swell, a vessel feels it, thus partially anchored, much more than when she is under weigh. This Julian discovered to his cost. At first he was very proud of himself, as he walked about, and talked of going into the navy. Now, however, he became very silent, and grew yellower and yellower.

Slowly and gently the little vessel moved to the heaving wave.

“And that same voice which bade the Romans mark him, and write his sayings in their books, cried, ‘Give me some drink, Titanus,’ like a sick girl—” said Marshall, who had been watching poor Julian with a look in which there was very little commiseration.

Julian said nothing, but he showed more and more of the white of his eyes, and his lips curled in a very peculiar and ominous way.

“Wouldn’t you like to come to sea with me?” asked Easton. “It’s a jolly life fellows lead there. Plenty of fat pork and peas pudding.”

Julian shut his eyes, and would not reply, but his efforts to ward off the evidence of the malady from which he was suffering were perfectly fruitless. He had to rush to the side, and I need not describe what followed. He threw himself down on the deck, looking the picture of woe and wretchedness. Had he not already given himself so many airs, and made himself so disagreeable, he would undoubtedly have obtained the commiseration of his companions. As it was, no one except Digby pitied him, and even he could not feel very sorry for his discomforts. However, he went and sat down by him, and began to speak a few kind words, but Julian received his attentions in so uncourteous a way that he was not sorry to get up and watch the proceedings of the fishermen.

The trawl had not been down an hour, when it was resolved to haul it up. All hands were required for this, and everybody helped except Julian, who declared that he was too ill to move.

By slow degrees the ropes were hauled in, and at last the beam appeared, and a considerable portion of the net.

“Why, where are all the fish?” exclaimed Digby, who expected to see them sticking about in the net.

“Wait till we get the purse aboard, and then we’ll see what we have caught,” remarked old Toby, leaning over to secure the mouth of the said purse, or bag. “I see something big walloping about in it, at all events.”

Now came the most exciting moment—to discover the results of the hour’s trawling.

Fishermen do not always catch fish, but Mr Nugent was sure that numberless living things would be brought up in which he would be interested.

“Now see what we’ve got! see what we’ve got!” shouted Marshall, with all the enthusiasm of a naturalist; nor was Mr Nugent much less excited.

Up came the purse, with a mass of living things floundering and wriggling, and twisting about, with one huge monster in the centre. A part of the deck was sunk for the purpose, and into it the whole living mass was turned.

“Well, it isn’t often I’ve seen such a haul as this,” exclaimed Toby; “but take care, young gentlemen, that big fellow don’t catch hold of any of your fingers. He’d have them off in no time. We’ll haul him up out of that, or he’ll be knocking all Mr Nugent’s curiosities to pieces with his tail.”

“What is it, what is it?” was the question asked by all. Even Mr Nugent could not tell.

The monster at which they were gazing was fully six feet long, almost flat, of a dark brown colour, and a rough shark-like skin, with a huge broad head, and very widely-extended side fins.

Toby replied, “Some calls him an angel, and others a monk-fish, or a flat shark; but to my mind he’s very little of the angel about him, and if he’s a monk he’s a very ugly monk, you’ll all allow. He is very strong. If you were to stand on him, master Digby, he would lift you up.”

Digby did stand on him, and the huge fish gave a heave, and a snap with his jaws which made him jump off at a great rate.

"What, did you think the monk was going to leap overboard with you?" exclaimed Power, laughing.

"Indeed I did," answered Digby, "I'm sure he felt as if he would."

Meantime Mr Nugent was examining the rest of the contents of the purse, while the trawl, having been once more let down, was towing astern.

Two large skates were hauled out, and Digby came aft to look at them. They were perfectly flat, and had long thin tails, with spines on them, their pectoral or side fins being very wide. "It would puzzle any one to cut their heads off," he observed.

"Why, Digby?" asked his uncle.

"Because they have not the slightest approach to a neck," he answered. "If I had to describe one, I should say that it was more like a toy-shop kite than any other thing in shape. But I see there's something else below all the seaweed and crabs, and other things. Stay, I'll get it out."

Mr Nugent was examining some of the living things he had picked out.

Digby stooped down to get hold of what he saw, but very quickly drew back his hand. "Some one has hit me on the arm," he exclaimed, "or I have been stung, or something or other has happened. I cannot make out what, but it's very disagreeable, that I know."

"Let me see," said Mr Nugent, taking the boat-hook and clearing away the weeds and mud. "Ah, we are indeed fortunate. We have caught a fine specimen of a somewhat rare fish. It is the torpedo, or electric ray. See, the body forms an almost circular disc; the tail, too, is much shorter than that possessed by the other skate we have got. You may well say that it has no neck. It gave you, Digby, the shock you complained of. We will examine its galvanic apparatus. We shall find it on either side, consisting of a number of tubes, having much the appearance of a honeycomb. Its peculiar property is given to it that it may benumb its prey, and, perhaps, digest it more easily. Animals killed by lightning more quickly decompose than those destroyed in other ways, and they do not grow stiff. This electric skate can emit the very same substance as lightning, and though a very small quantity entered into your body, it caused you some pain. When in the water, possessed of all its vigour, it may be supposed that it can very easily destroy the smaller fry on which it feeds."

"I am very glad that the brute hadn't its full vigour, for it has hurt me considerably as it is," answered Digby.

Besides the skates, the net had brought up half a dozen good soles and a large supply of crabs of various sizes and descriptions, star-fish, jelly-fish, shrimps, and other crustacea, all of which were examined by Mr Nugent, and the best specimens transferred to his jars, and pots, and bottles. There were some hermit crabs among them, who had taken possession of various shells, but one or two unfortunate fellows had been caught while in the act of changing their homes, and had no covering for their nakedness. The head and shoulders were like those of a lobster, but the lower extremities were perfectly soft.

Mr Nugent explained how they have to look out for an unoccupied shell, or perhaps eat up the occupant, and then wriggle in their own tails.

The hermit crab grows bigger, but the shell does not, so, when he feels his tail pinched, he has to look out for a larger home. It is amusing to watch him crawling along, examining shell after shell, till he has discovered one to his satisfaction. Then, when he has ascertained that it is unoccupied, he whisks his tail out of one and as rapidly pops it into the new one.

Mr Nugent pointed out that one claw was much larger than the other, and he showed how, when the hermit wishes to withdraw itself into its shell, he can perfectly coil himself away by doubling up the little claw and closing the larger one over it.

Digby was really much interested in the number of star-fish, and shells, and sea-weeds, and many other things, about which his uncle did not think it wise to enter on long explanations to him.

With the next haul of the trawl they were not nearly so successful, giving them an idea of the precarious nature of the fisherman's calling; while in the third there was scarcely a fish, but Mr Nugent pronounced it more prolific than any of the former ones to him.

It was now time to return home. The net was thoroughly washed, and then triced up in the rigging, while the beam was lashed alongside.

Julian had begun to recover, but he was very unlike himself, and not at all inclined to talk and boast; indeed, Power remarked that he had never seen him so agreeable since he had come to Osberton.

Digby had been examining the crustacea with grave attention, the lobsters, crabs, and shrimps, when, lifting up one, he exclaimed, "It's very odd; I always thought they were red. How is it, uncle, that these are black?"

A loud laugh from his companions was their reply to the question.

"You are thinking of the lobsters you have seen brought to the table cooked, and ready to be eaten," observed Mr Nugent. "But go on, Digby, never be ashamed of asking questions, although, now and then, they may bring down a laugh upon you. It would fare but ill with the poor crabs and lobsters if they were not black, or rather of the colour of the rocks and weeds among which they live. Their colour thus enables them to escape detection from the sharp-sighted fish, which are constantly swimming rapidly about in search of them, and, in spite of their coats-of-mail,

easily gobble them up. But I was going to show you this little pea-crab, Pinnotheres. He is said to have established a friendship with the inhabitant of a bivalve shell, the Pinna, or Sea-wing. When he wants to go out in search of food, the Pinna opens her shell, and lets him out. He, argus-eyed, watches the approach of their mutual enemy, the Polypus, and instantly rushes back, and by his return giving notice of danger, the shell closes, and both are safe. Otherwise the Polypus might get one of his rays inside the Pinna, and destroy its vitality in a moment, or he might touch the crab, and kill it in the same way. When the pea-crab discovers a supply of food he brings it to his friend, the Pinna, to be divided equally. I will not vouch for the truth of this account; and I am afraid that Master Pinnotheres has some more interested motive in his attachment, and may, in the end, eat up his friend, the Pinna, out of house and home."

This and many other interesting accounts Mr Nugent gave to his pupils on the return trip. Sometimes he even won the attention of Julian, who condescended to smile at his anecdotes. That young gentleman got a good deal better by the time he reached the shore, but he was not himself all the evening, and went fast asleep while Mr Nugent and his fellow-pupils were examining some of the marine insects they had brought home in their jars, through the microscope.

Several days passed away, and, to all appearance, Julian had gained a lesson from which he had profited, not to think so much of himself. He had found out that others could be brisk and sprightly under circumstances which made him dull and wretched, and that they also knew a great deal more about all sorts of things than he did. To his surprise he found that his tutor, and Marshall, and Power, knew even far more about horses, and dogs, and game of all sorts, than he did. His knowledge was confined to the limited range of his father's park, and to such information as the grooms and gamekeepers had given him. They knew where the various races came from, their habits in their wild state when they were introduced into England, and they had read about sporting in all parts of the world. He thus found himself instantly put down, as he called it, when he began to talk in an authoritative way on what he had been taught to consider the most important subjects for the attention of a gentleman.

Bad habits and erroneous notions are not without much difficulty eradicated; and so Julian Langley very soon forgot the lesson he had received, and began to think and act very much in his old way. "I say, Digby, the way we have to go on here is horribly slow work," he observed one day, when he and his old companion were alone. "Don't you think, now, we could put each other up to some fun or other. I want to do something to astonish the natives down here."

Digby said he could not think of anything just then, but that he would try. They were strolling along the beach; it was a fine autumn day, but fresh. "I vote we have a run," said Digby. "It's cold."

They ran on till they reached the old castle, of which I have before spoken. Julian never liked running, so he proposed going in and sitting down in a sunny sheltered spot under the walls. There were six or eight cannon of large size mounted on very rotten honeycombed carriages in the fort. They had not been fired within the memory of man, but they every few years received a coat of paint, which prevented them turning into rust; and a superannuated gunner from the Royal Artillery, with much ceremony, cleaned them out of the stones and rubbish which the children in the neighbourhood had thrown into them. Once upon a time they might have proved very serviceable weapons for defending the entrance to the harbour.

"I say, Digby, what do you say to letting off one of those big fellows one of these days? It would make a great row, and astonish people not a little," exclaimed Julian, after eyeing the guns for some time.

"We should get into a great row if we did, I suspect," answered Digby. "I don't think that it would be worth while to try."

"Oh, nonsense," said Julian. "I mean that no one should find out who did it; that would be the great fun. We should hear people talking of the explosion, and what it was, and how it could have happened, and all that sort of thing, and we should be laughing in our sleeves all the time. Oh, it would be rare fun. Besides, it is not going to do anybody any harm, you know."

It did not occur to either of the boys that it might do them a very great deal of harm, and perhaps kill them.

Digby was very soon won over to agree to Julian's proposal. It suited his taste, and he also thought that it would be rare fun. How to carry out their scheme was the question. Their great difficulty was to procure gunpowder in sufficient quantities to load the gun without leading suspicions on themselves.

When mischief was to be done Julian was very acute, so indeed was Digby. They agreed to buy half a pound at a time at different places; Julian was to go to one place, Digby to another. They were both amply supplied with money; and as Digby did not care very much for cakes, he generally had some to spare. Julian was always ready, by the by, to borrow it of him. Their plans were soon arranged. The event which was to astonish the natives was to be brought about on as early a day as possible. Instead of going home together they separated. Julian went to one shop, Digby to another, to make their first purchase of gunpowder. Fortunately for Digby, the master of the shop was absent, and a shop-boy served him out the powder without asking any questions, merely remarking, "I suppose you young gentlemen want to let off fireworks on the fifth of November? This won't make many, though." Had the master asked him, he would have answered probably, "Give me the powder, and I'll pay you for it;" or he would have held his tongue, and perhaps by his looks betrayed himself.

Julian, meantime, went to the great shop of the place, where groceries, hardware, ironmongery, and even chemical drugs, soaps, and perfumery, were sold; indeed, it would have been difficult to point out what Mr Simson did not sell.

"What do you want all this gunpowder for, young gentleman?" asked Mr Simson.

"To make fireworks, to be sure," answered Julian, in an angry tone. "I wonder you ask."

"No offence, sir, but I like to know when young gentlemen get things of a dangerous character that they will do no harm with them. I should never forgive myself if I hadn't warned you, and you blew yourself up. Remember, a spark falling into that paper of powder would kill any one near, and, perhaps, set the house on fire. You are at Mr Nugent's, I presume?"

"Yes, I am," answered Julian, in an angry tone. "Is there anything else you want to know?"

"Oh, I beg pardon, young gentleman; I did not want to offend you," said the kind-hearted Mr Simson. "You know that I cannot be too cautious about these matters."

"You can be too officious," growled Julian, as he left the shop.

Digby and Julian met at Mr Nugent's door. They had now got a pound of powder between them; but Julian said that was not nearly enough.

The next day they would go again, and each to ask in the other's name for another half pound.

Julian walked boldly into Mr Simson's shop as if nothing had happened, and said that one of his fellow-pupils wanted to manufacture some fireworks, and begged to have another small quantity—half a pound would not be too much. He got it; not, however, without creating some suspicion in Mr Simson's mind that Mr Nugent would not approve of what his pupils were about. This feeling was increased when, a day or two afterwards, Digby appeared, and asked for another half pound. Three half pounds were likewise procured from Mr Jones's small shop. Mr Jones made some remarks, however, to Julian which, at first, rather frightened him.

"I suppose, sir, you wouldn't mind Mr Nugent knowing that you have all that powder now, would you?" said the shopkeeper, eyeing him keenly; "well, I didn't say that I was going to talk about it to him, and I hope that I may have the pleasure of your custom."

Julian assured Mr Jones that he would patronise him, and, with his usual dignified air, strutted out of the shop.

"I'll tell you what, Digby," said he, when the two fellow-pupils next met, "we must not be in too great a hurry to fire the gun. If we do, we shall be found out. Old Simson and that fellow Jones already smell a rat, so we must be cautious; I'll tell you another thing, too, I've been thinking, that it won't do to fire it by daytime, we should be seen by somebody near the place and suspected. It will have much greater effect if we let it off in the middle of the night. We can easily get out of window and be back again in a few minutes. What say you? there will be great fun in it."

The spice of danger in the adventure had especial charms for Digby, and without taking anything else into consideration, he willingly consented to all Julian proposed.

It is extraordinary how quiet and out of mischief this notable scheme of the two young gentlemen kept them. They could think of nothing else. Whenever they thought no one was observing them, they went together to the old castle, and ascertained the best means of entering it and escaping again over the ramparts. There was no great difficulty or danger in doing that, even on a dark night.

Three or four weeks passed away—The Holidays were approaching—They could no longer resist their desire to make the attempt.

"Digby," said Julian, as they were walking out together, "we must do it to-night. It will be dark, but it is perfectly calm and dry. Are you ready to do it?"

Digby answered that he was.

"Then to-night the affair shall come off," exclaimed Julian. "I've got the rope we knotted all ready; I'll get it out of my box, and stow it away under my bed. I wish the time was come; it will be glorious fun."

How very demurely the two young gentlemen sat up that evening in the drawing-room, and pretended to be busily reading, though their thoughts were certainly not on their books; indeed, had Mr Nugent asked them what they were reading about, they would have been puzzled to give a satisfactory reply.

At last bed-time came, and the whole family retired to their rooms.

Mr Nugent made a practice of getting up early and never sat up late, except in a case of necessity, when he had some work of importance to finish. The boys, therefore, calculated that he would be asleep soon after eleven. The house was a large one, the elder boys had, therefore, rooms to themselves; but Julian and Digby slept in the same room on the first floor, and their window looked into the garden. All these circumstances were favourable to their design. Finding that there was a bolt on the door, they secured it. They did not undress, but, having put out their light, sat upon the foot of their beds whispering to each other till they thought everybody would be asleep. They then relighted their candle, and Julian, wetting some of their gunpowder, made a compound well known by the name of a Vesuvius; this he did up in a piece of paper. They then poured most of their powder into a pocket-handkerchief. It was a mercy that they did not blow themselves and indeed the house up. They stuffed their pockets full of paper, the rest of the powder, and some old handkerchiefs. Julian had not forgotten to provide a thick stick to serve as a rammer. The next thing they did was to fasten one end of their knotted rope to a bar across their window.

"Now all's ready. Come along, Digby," exclaimed Julian.

Digby descended first at the request of his companion, who wanted to ascertain whether the rope was properly secured before he trusted himself on it; finding it was safe, he followed. They looked about them as if they had been young thieves, to ascertain that they were not watched, and then crossing the lawn, they scrambled over a high wall,

and ran on as hard as they could go towards the old fort.

It was close upon midnight when they reached the walls. They clambered in, and having selected a gun which pointed down directly on the harbour, they commenced the operation of loading.

"We must put in the handkerchief and all," whispered Julian.

This was done, taking care to allow the powder to escape sufficiently at the upper side to communicate with the touch-hole. Then they rammed in a quantity of paper.

"Now let's have some shot," said Julian, "saw yesterday a pile of large gravel-stones, they will do famously."

Some gravel-stones, or rather some large lumps of flint were found and rammed in, and the remainder of their paper was rammed in after them. Never before, probably, had the old gun been so fully charged. The nervous time was approaching. They filled the touch-hole with gunpowder, and on the top of it Julian placed his Vesuvius.

"We've got powder enough for another gun," said he, feeling in his pockets; "haven't you more?"

"Yes," answered Digby, "I've got enough to load a gun almost."

So they poured nearly all that they had remaining into Julian's silk pocket-handkerchief, and rammed it into another gun. They filled it up with stones, and then rammed in what little paper they could collect, and as that was not enough, Julian insisted on Digby's sacrificing his pocket-handkerchief also. Digby did so without a murmur, though I do not know what Mrs Barker or Mrs Carter would have said to the proceeding. He filled up the touch-hole of that gun also, and placed a Vesuvius over it.

"Now's the time," whispered Julian.

The church-clock began to toll forth slowly the hour of midnight. He lighted a lucifer match, and in another moment had ignited the Vesuvius of the gun they first loaded, while Digby taking a match lighted the other. The damp gunpowder fizzed, and spluttered, and flamed up, occasionally throwing a lurid glare over the interior of the fort, as well as on their countenances. Julian's face looked very pale and ghastly, for he already began to tremble for the consequences of what he had done. Little did he suspect what those consequences were to prove.

"We shall be seen if we stand here," he exclaimed, "let's get away, Digby, as soon as we can."

Digby thought the advice too good not to follow it, so they both scampered off to one of the embrasures, and having just got within it were about to jump down into the ditch, when a loud roar was heard, the whole fort shook, a bright light burst forth, followed by a crashing and clashing noise, as if heavy bits of metal were falling on the ground.

"Oh, oh, oh!" cried Julian, in an agony of terror, "what shall we do?"

"The cannon has burst," said Digby, calmly; "there's another to come, though."

It did not occur to either of them that they had just been mercifully preserved from a most terrific danger. Digby looked out; the Vesuvius on the other gun being somewhat wetter than the first was still fizzing away.



How the Guns went off.—p. 167

“Oh, come along,” cried Julian, recovering somewhat from his fright; “we must get home as fast as we can, or we shall be discovered to a certainty. The coastguard men will be up here directly to see what is the matter. Oh come along! come along!”

Even then they thought that they heard footsteps approaching the fort. They sprang out of the embrasure, and slid down the bank into the ditch. Just as they were sliding down, off went the gun with as loud a noise as the first, while the effects were no less disastrous; a lump of iron flew directly through the embrasure where they had been sitting, and just clearing their heads, fell at some distance beyond the ditch. Digby remembered the circumstance many years afterwards, but it made but a slight impression at the time.

“We had a narrow escape,” said Julian, as they reached the bottom of the ditch; “it is lucky we were out of that hole, or we should have been made to squeak out I suspect.”

They quickly clambered out of the ditch, and looking about to ascertain that no one was observing them, ran on as fast as they could move. They had already marked out the path they were to take, so they lost no time in having to stop and consider which way they were to go.

On they ran. Digby found no difficulty in keeping up the speed, but Julian had never ran so fast in his life. They had to scramble through several hedges and across several stubble fields. Julian’s foot caught in a trailing weed, and down he came on his nose. He cried out with pain, but Digby helped him up again.

“You can’t be much hurt, I hope,” said Digby; “let me help you along; we must make haste, you know, or we shall be caught.”

“But I am very much hurt; my nose feels as if it was smashed in,” answered Julian, sulkily. “You don’t care for that though, I suppose. However, help me along; we must make haste I know.”

With Digby’s aid he was once more in motion. Their great fear was that they might be met by some one on his way to the fort to learn what had occurred. They had nearly reached Mr Nugent’s garden-wall, when they thought they saw some one coming along. A deep ditch was near; Julian jumped into it, dragging Digby after him. They were only just in time to escape a person whose footsteps they heard passing by. Then up they jumped again, and ran on till they reached the wall for which they were aiming. They scrambled over it, and breathed more freely when they found themselves concealed in the shrubbery. Great caution was required, however, to get back into their room.

"Suppose," whispered Digby, "some one should have come to our room, and tried to awaken us, or found the rope hanging out of the window?"

"Oh, don't let us think of such things," answered Julian, who had the greatest dread of being found out in any of his tricks, though he had not the slightest objection to doing what was wrong.

There are, unfortunately, a great number of people in the world like Julian Langley. They do not comprehend the awful fact that the Almighty God sees and knows all they do and think, even to their most trivial acts and thoughts, and that at the great Day of Judgment they will have to answer for all the evil they have committed, all the evil thoughts in which they have willingly indulged. Not understanding, or forgetting this great truth, their only dread is lest their sins should be discovered by their fellow-men, or should in any way disturb the equanimity of their own consciences. No greater offence, therefore, can be committed against them than to speak to them of their vices, or to try to prove to them that they have done wrong. Ostriches, when chased, are said to run their heads into a bush, and to fancy that because they cannot see they are free from pursuit; so men try to shut out their sins and faults from their own sight, and, as foolishly as the ostrich, to fancy that they are not perceived by others, or, still more foolishly and madly, that a due and just punishment, which an all-righteous God has said he will inflict on evildoers, will not ultimately overtake them. Unhappy Julian, I would rather not have had to narrate his career.

"Come on, Julian," said Digby, at last. "I hear no one about; we must make a push for our window and get in. If we are caught, patience! The thing is done, and can't be undone."

Digby was, in reality, by far the most daring of the two, in cases of real danger. Off he set across the lawn, Julian following. They reached the window. The rope was there. Up he climbed.

Julian fancied that he heard some one speak, and then that footsteps were coming along the gravel walk. He was in an agony of terror. He could scarcely climb up the rope, and was almost letting go, but Digby caught his arm, and helped to drag him in. They hauled up the rope, and Julian stowed it away again in his box. They then shut their window and unlocked their door.

When they came to undress, they found that their clothes were very muddy, and that they had got their shoes very wet and dirty in the ditch into which they had jumped. Even Julian's fertile brain was puzzled as to how they should account for this, should they be questioned on the subject. He lay cold and trembling, and very uncomfortable. He was paying somewhat dear for his lark; people generally do for such like proceedings.

There is an old French proverb, "The game is not worth the candle," meaning, which is burnt while it is played. In a true and Christian point of view, sin, however delicious, however attractive it may appear, never is worth a hundredth part of the consequences it is sure to entail.

Digby was not much less unhappy than Julian. Still, as he was prepared, with sturdy independence, to undergo whatever consequences his prank might bring upon him—for a prank only it was, though an unwise one—he did not trouble himself much more about the matter, but coiled himself up in his bed to try and get warm, and prepared to go to sleep. He was just dozing off, when he heard the voices of his uncle, and Marshall, and Power, passing the door.

"Some people can sleep through a thunder-storm, or a battle at sea; and so, I suppose, those youngsters were not awoken by all that tremendous noise," observed Marshall.

"More likely that they were awake, and that fellow Julian Langley is lying quaking in his bed, and wondering what all the noise was about," answered Power.

"Do not call them now, at all events," said Mr Nugent. "We will ask them to-morrow what they thought about the matter. What could have exploded those old guns?"

Julian and Digby would have been fully satisfied had they witnessed the commotion the explosion of the guns created in the quiet old town. Half the male population, and even some of the women, turned out of their beds and ran to the fort. Some thought the Russians or the French, or some other enemies of England, had come, and were firing away at the fort—a very useless proceeding it would have been, considering that the poor old fort could not fire at them. Others, not aware of this latter fact, thought that a body of artillery had suddenly been transported there, and that they were defending the place in the most desperate manner. The braver men who thought this ran to assist them; and others, and some of the women, ran out of the town to be further from danger.

However, a very large number of people collected in the fort, everybody asking questions, and nobody being able to give a satisfactory reply.

Some asserted that a dozen guns had been fired off; others even a greater number. One thing only was evident, when lanterns were brought to make an examination—that two of the old guns had burst, and had scattered their fragments far and wide around.

"Some malicious people must have done it," observed the worthy mayor, who did not at all like being thus rudely summoned out of his bed, as he had been by the explosion. "High treason, rebellion, and—and—" (he could not find a third word of sufficient force to express his feelings) "has been committed in this loyal, respectable, quiet town, and the villainous perpetrators of the atrocious deed must be brought to condign punishment."

It was a pity Julian and Digby could not hear these expressions.

Some people in the crowd had their own opinions on the subject. Mr Simson was there, and he picked up a thick stick, with a thicker head, and kept it.

The coastguard men thought the smugglers had done it, but with what object they could not divine. Some wisecracks thought that the guns had gone off of themselves; others, that Dame Marlow, whose fame had long been great at Osberton, had had a hand in the work. However, though everybody looked about and talked, they were not much the wiser, and at length they retired to their homes, and the old fort was allowed to sleep on with its usual tranquillity.

Chapter Seven.

Digby finds that a Bad Adviser is the worst of Friends—More Mischief and its Inconveniences—Serious Consequences Threatened.

Julian and Digby would very much have liked to have been sent to Coventry, the morning after their cannon-firing, so that no disagreeable questions might have been asked them. They dressed slowly and tried to look over their lessons in their room, but got very little information out of their books. They felt very foolish when the bell rang, and they had to make their appearance in the breakfast-room. Morning prayers were over, and they took their seats round the breakfast-table.

“Well, Julian, did you not hear the noise last night?” were the first words Marshall spoke.

“What noise?” asked Julian; “I sleep very soundly; it must have been a row to awake me.”

“Why, the guns of the old castle going off by themselves,” said Power.

“Not a sound,” said Julian, hoarsely.

Digby looked at him, and wondered if his friend had any conscience. What should he say? there was the difficulty. He had always scorned a lie; if so point blank a question were put to him, how could he answer and not betray their secret?

“And did you sleep through it too, Digby?” said his uncle.

“No, I heard the noise very clearly,” answered Digby, and he felt happier after he had said this, though Julian gave him a tremendous kick on the shins under the table.

“How could you remain quietly in bed after it?” asked Marshall.

“I was out,” answered Digby firmly, “but I got back before you, since you must know all about it. I don’t think that you have a right to be asking me questions, which I may not wish to answer. If I speak at all, I wish to speak the truth. More I do not wish to say; and now, if you like, tell me what you thought about it.”

Mr Nugent looked surprised at Digby’s firmness and unusual vehemence, but suspecting that Julian had not spoken the truth, and that Digby wished not to betray him, forbore to press the matter further.

Of course, both the boys were on tenter-hooks during the whole of breakfast. Digby applied himself sturdily to his food and eat on without speaking, as if he was in a very sulky mood. All day, too, while they were at their lessons, every time there was a ring at the door, they fancied that some one was coming to accuse them of their misdemeanor. Digby thought much less about it than Julian, and it also troubled him much less, because he had made up his mind, if directly accused of the deed, to acknowledge it at once, without the slightest attempt at evasion. His conscience told him, that this was the only right course to pursue; any other would plunge him into a sea of falsehood, from which he shrunk with dread. He intended, if he could avoid so doing, not to inculcate Julian, but to take all the blame on his own shoulders.

“Julian says he was not out of bed that night; he is very wrong, but I don’t want to get him into a scrape if he wishes to avoid it,” he thought to himself.

Unfortunately, he did not see Julian’s conduct in its true light. That young gentleman was all the time thinking, and plotting, and contriving, how he should himself get out of the scrape. He had already told one falsehood, he must invent others to avoid being found out after all. He could not fix his attention on his lessons, and, of course, he did them very badly.

“You must stay in and learn these twelve lines of your Delectus by heart,” said Mr Nugent, who was much displeased with him.

Digby, who had done his lessons much in his usual way, which was seldom very first-rate by-the-by, was allowed to go out. Of course all the rest were eager to go to the fort, and Digby was compelled to go with them. This was doubly annoying to Julian, who wanted to have a few minutes’ conversation with him to get him to promise not to betray him, and to induce him, if possible, to tell a long story which he had concocted, to account for his not hearing the noise, and for his not accompanying Digby afterwards to the fort.

When Digby and his companions reached the fort, he was astonished at the mischief which had been committed. The old guns lay on the ground with large pieces torn out of them, and their carriages knocked to atoms, while a portion of the parapet round the embrasures had been crumbled into powder.

While they were running about, who should walk into the fort but worthy Mr Simson, the grocer. He watched his opportunity when Digby was separated from his companions, and drew him aside.

“I hope the other gentleman isn’t hurt,” he said.

"No, he hasn't done his lessons, so he is not allowed to go out," answered Digby.

"I was afraid he might be hurt. Well, you two had a fortunate escape," observed Mr Simson; "I know all about it; I don't want to betray you, though; I have boys of my own: but you mustn't do the same thing again, that is all."

"Thank you," answered Digby, "I am very much obliged to you, indeed I am."

"That's what I like, young gentleman, that's manly and right-spirited," said Mr Simson, taking his hand and pressing it warmly. "I wouldn't betray you on any account, that I wouldn't. Trust to me."

Digby was much happier after this. He felt, however, that he had escaped a great danger of the whole matter being known, and though he couldn't exactly divine what punishment he might have inflicted on him, he knew that he should at all events have been made to look very foolish.

"They wouldn't hang a fellow for such a thing, and I don't suppose they would send me to prison. Still, I am really very grateful to kind Mr Simson for not peaching. I'll always deal with him in future. How did he find out all about it, I wonder?"

He heard with much more indifference than at first, the various remarks and conjectures made on the subject, and the feeling that he had acted a manly part about it enabled him to look people boldly in the face, and thus he escaped the suspicion which would otherwise have fallen on him. When he got home he found Julian very dull and sorry for himself. He told him what Mr Simson had said.

"Oh, then, he will go and peach upon us, and it will all be found out," exclaimed Julian, half-crying.

"But he promised that he would say nothing about the matter," urged Digby.

"So he might, but one can't trust to a shopkeeper," answered Julian, with a scornful turn of his lip.

"I don't see that," replied Digby; "if he is an honourable man and has good feelings, I think that one may trust to a shopkeeper as well as to the first noble in the land; I know that my uncle often says that one man's word is as good as that of another, provided both are equally honest and upright."

"All I know is, that old Simson was very impertinent to me when I went to buy the gunpowder," said Julian; "if I hadn't wanted more I wouldn't have gone to him again."

"He cautioned me about it, and not without some reason," said Digby; "So I'll maintain that old Simson is a very good fellow, and, what's more, I'm sure he looks like a gentleman in every way."

Several days passed by, and though inquiries were made and numbers of people were examined, no clue was discovered to the originators of what the county papers called that mysterious circumstance at Osberton. Digby couldn't help cutting out the paragraph, and sending it to Kate, darkly hinting that he might, perhaps, some day enlighten her about the matter. He was afraid of committing the account to paper, but her very acute perception at once divined that he had taken a prominent part in the affair. How she did long to hear all about it, and how he did long for the holidays that he might tell her. He had an idea that his uncle knew something about it, because after this neither he nor Julian were allowed to go out, except in company with Marshall or Power, or Toby Tubb. One day, however, all the boys had gone together to the beach, and by some means or other, unintentionally, while some were climbing up over the cliffs, Digby got separated from the rest. As he knew his way home, however, perfectly well, he did not care about it, even though it was growing dark. He had not gone far when two men overtook him; they were rough-looking fellows and dressed as seamen; he did not altogether like their appearance. They went on some little way, and then turning back, they looked him in the face, and one of them said—

"Are you Squire Heathcote's son, master?"

"Yes," answered Digby, "I am. Why do you want to know?"

"I've asked a civil question, and you've given a civil answer, master. Good-night," replied the man who had before spoken; and then they both walked rapidly on.

Digby thought it rather odd that men of that sort should wish to know who he was, but troubled himself very little more about the matter.

When he got home, his uncle inquired how he came to be later than the rest; and knowing he always spoke the truth, was perfectly satisfied with his explanation.

"Your uncle seems to think that he can trust you much more than he can me," observed Julian one day. "It is very hard upon me, as I am older. He favours you as a relation, that's it, I've no doubt."

Digby made no reply, but he felt indignant, as he could not bear to have his uncle, whom he respected, spoken ill of.

By degrees Julian recovered his usual state of mind, and, as he did so, his fertile brain began to devise fresh schemes of mischief. Since his liberty had been curtailed he found them, however, much more difficult to carry out. It may seem strange that, after all the anxiety and inconvenience he had suffered in consequence of his last achievement, he should be eager to do something which was likely to produce the same results; but such is unfortunately too generally the case with evildoers. Unless some severe punishment follows they go on and on, committing the same evil again and again. Indeed, even punishment will not always deter people who have given themselves up to evil ways from continuing in them; and men have frequently been known, the very day after they have been released from prison, to have committed the very crime for which they have been confined. Reformation of heart and

character is what is required, and this had not taken place with regard to Julian Langley.

"I've hit upon a capital idea, Digby," said he one day when the two were alone; "help me out with it."

"What is it?" asked his companion.

"I've been thinking what fun it would be to set all the fishing-boats out in the river adrift. How they would knock about each other, and how angry the boatmen would be."

"I should think they would be angry, indeed," answered Digby, stoutly. "Fun is fun, but it seems to me that a great deal of harm might be done by what you propose. I'd advise you to give up the idea; I'll have nothing to do with it."

"I thought you were a fellow of spirit, Digby," sneered Julian. "What great harm can there be in letting a few old fishermen's boats knock together?"

"Why, they might get carried out to sea, and be lost altogether, and have their sides stove in, or holes made in their bottoms, or be sunk, and lose their oars and sails; indeed, I can fancy a great deal of damage might be done," said Digby. "I think that it would be very wrong and cruel to the poor fishermen."

"Oh, now I see you are going to take a leaf out of your uncle's book, and to turn saint," sneered Julian. This was one of his most powerful expressions. He knew that Digby especially disliked being called a saint, and that he often confessed, as do many older people with equal thoughtlessness, that he did not set up for a saint. People seem not to consider, if they do not wish to become saints, what they really do desire to become. Certainly none but saints can inherit the glories of eternity; and unless they trust in the merits of One who can cleanse them from their sins, and make them saints, so that they may be presented spotless to the Father Almighty, from those glories they will be shut out.

Poor Digby winced under Julian's sneer. "A saint; no, I am no saint, I hope, but I don't want to injure the poor fishermen," he answered, firmly.

"Injure them! Who's going to injure them?" exclaimed Julian, petulantly. "I've made up my mind to have my lark, and have it I will. If any great harm comes I'm ready to bear it. You won't peach upon me, I suppose?"

"No," answered Digby, indignantly. "I like fun as much as you; and if I saw the fun I'd do it willingly."

Julian thought that Digby was relenting, and still pressed the matter, but in vain. "Well, if you won't go I must get somebody else. I know a fellow who will help, though none of the sneaks here will join me," said Julian, walking away.

Digby felt satisfied that he had done right, still he did not like to let Julian go away, and have his fun by himself.

The latter young gentleman went into the garden, and disappeared in the shrubbery. In spite of the prohibition still existing against his going out alone, he jumped over the wall, and betook himself to the river side. He had scraped acquaintance with a lad of his own age, the son of a small innkeeper, who had been a smuggler, and was still, it was suspected, intimately connected with smugglers.

Dick Owlett was certainly not a fit associate for the son of the Honorable Mr Langley; but vice more than anything else creates incongruous companionships. Young Owlett was ready to do anything Julian proposed, because he fancied that he might easily throw all the blame on Julian's shoulders, or else that, through Julian's influence, they both might escape punishment. Dick had none of Digby's scruples, so the whole plan was soon arranged. Both had thoroughly ill-regulated minds, and rejoiced in mischief for mischief's sake.

Julian came back unperceived, and, in high spirits, told Digby that he was going to have his fun in spite of him.

The following night Julian awoke Digby about eleven o'clock, and told him that he must help him to get out of the window, and wait his return to let him in again.

Digby expostulated, but in vain; he had not yet learned that the only sure way for the young to avoid the contamination of evildoers is to keep out of their society altogether. So Digby agreed to sit up till Julian's return.

The rope was secured, Julian descended by it, and off he ran across the lawn towards the wall, over which he had so often before made his escape from the premises.

Digby waited and waited; Julian did not return. He became very anxious about him. He wished that he had taken stronger measures to prevent his carrying out his foolish and mischievous prank. The only effectual way to have prevented him would have been to have told Marshall or his uncle, but such a proceeding was so contrary to all his notions of what ought to be done, that it did not even occur to him. He could not exactly tell how time passed, but he thought that Julian must have been away a very long time. He could bear the suspense no longer. Some boys of his age would have gone to bed, and cried, or sat quaking with fear. To do this was not at all in Digby's nature. He loved action; he must be up and doing. He knew the road Julian would have taken, and he resolved to go and look for him. It did not occur to him that he should thus run a great risk of being implicated in whatever his companion had done; had he, I do not believe that the fear of that would have weighed with him a moment. He put on all his clothes and his shoes, and, without further consideration, slipped down the rope, gained the wall, and ran on as fast as his legs could carry him towards the river. He got very nearly to the spot where he thought Julian would have embarked, when he met two boys running. "Who's there?—Julian, is that you?" he exclaimed.

"Oh, Digby, how you startled me," exclaimed one of the boys. It was Julian who spoke.

"All right," cried Digby. "I became very anxious. I was afraid some harm had happened, and so I set off to look for

you; but why are you running so fast?"

"Because we are afraid somebody is after us," answered Julian, almost breathless. "We've done it, though, and rare fun there will be to-morrow to see what has become of all the boats."

It was not necessary for Julian to tell Digby to turn back; he had at once done so, and they were running on together. They turned their heads for a moment, and Dick Owlett had disappeared. His reason for so doing was very evident. Digby thus, very unintentionally, slipped into his shoes. They soon had to cross a meadow; their own footsteps now making but a slight noise, they were able to hear the sound of another person fast approaching them.

"It may be Dick Owlett," said Julian, in a low voice. "Still, if it is one of the coastguard men we shall catch it. Run, Digby, run."

Digby could have run a great deal faster than he was running, but had he done so he would have left Julian behind. Their pursuer, whoever he was, came on very rapidly. They had scarcely crossed the field when, looking back, they saw him at the other end of it. He must have seen them. It seemed very useless, therefore, to attempt to escape, but their natural impulse was to run on till he put his hand on their shoulder to stop them. Julian wanted to jump into a ditch and hide, as they had before done, but Digby protested against this, and insisted on running on. Across the fields they went—now they thought that they had escaped their pursuer—now they saw him again. Sometimes he got very close to them, and then they distanced him. At last they got up to the garden-wall. The footsteps sounded terribly loud close behind them. They rushed on. Julian, always most anxious to escape from danger, had first sprung to the top of the wall, and Digby was helping him over, when a person leaped forward, and seizing Julian by the leg, and Digby by the shoulder, exclaimed—

"Hillo, young gentlemen, is it you, then, who have been about this pretty piece of mischief? What will your master say to you, I should like to know? It's lucky we found it out, or there's no saying what damage might have been done; however, that's no excuse for you—so come along with me to the front door, and I'll hand you over to Mr Nugent, or I'll take you to the lock-up house, and let you stay there till the morning."

Julian nudged Digby, to induce him to speak. He took the hint.

"I have nothing to do with the mischief of which you are talking," he exclaimed, boldly. "I don't know by what right you venture to detain me. I had a good reason for being out, which will, I believe, satisfy Mr Nugent, but I do not see that you, whoever you are, or any other man, has a right to call on me to explain it."

"Tell that to the marines, youngster; you are not going to impose on an old salt," answered the revenue man, for such he appeared. "Why, I traced you from the time you jumped on shore every inch of the way to this place."

"That you could not," answered Digby; "I have not been on the water to-night."

"Well, you are a bold young ruffian," exclaimed the man, fairly exasperated at Digby's coolness. "I never have heard anybody, man or boy, tell a lie and stick to it as you can do."

"You are very impertinent," said Digby, who, knowing that he really was speaking the truth, forgot that it was not possible for the man to believe him. It did not occur to him that he very naturally was mistaken for Dick Owlett.

"Well, if it comes to that," said the man, "the sooner we go and talk to Mr Nugent the better. I don't suppose that he allows his young gentlemen to be running about at nights for their own amusement." Saying this their captor, who was a strong stout man, carried them off in spite of their struggles to the front door of the house. He rang and knocked for some time without succeeding in awaking any one.

The feelings of Digby and Julian may more easily be conceived than described, though, as may be supposed from what I have already mentioned of their characters, they were very different. They did not dare to communicate with each other, and so all they could do was to hold their tongues. At last Mr Nugent was aroused, and supposing that some sick parishioner wanted his attendance, he got up, dressed, and came down stairs. What was his astonishment at seeing two of his pupils in the hands of a revenue officer.

"Please, sir, I've brought you these two young gentlemen, to tell you that they have been playing no end of mischief down in the harbour, there, to-night—cutting the fishing-boats adrift, and letting them run foul of each other. If you like to take charge of them and have them ready when they are wanted, I'll leave them; if not, I'll take them off to the lock-up house, to pass the rest of the night."

Poor Mr Nugent could not believe his senses. He stood staring first at one and then at the other, fully believing that he was dreaming. Then he rubbed his eyes and felt his clothes, to assure himself that he had got up and dressed. "What is it all about?" he at last exclaimed. "Out on the river—in the middle of the night—you, Digby—you, Julian Langley. I cannot comprehend it. Come in, though, I am very much grieved; I beg that you, James Sutton, will explain matters more fully." Without saying more, Mr Nugent led the way to his study, when lighting the candles he sat down, while the accuser and the two culprits stood before him. "Now, James Sutton, tell me your story, if you please," he said, calmly.

"Why, sir, these young gentlemen have been having what I suppose they call a lark. They went down to the river, shoved off in a boat, and went round, and with their knives cut the cables of a number of the fishermen's boats and other small craft lying in the harbour. The ebb was just making, and the boats drove one against another; some went on shore, and others would have gone out to sea and been lost, but our boat was just coming in. Of course we boarded them, and finding no one in them, suspected that something was wrong. As our boat is white, and we pulled with muffled oars, and our young gentlemen were very busy, they did not see us. We should have caught them in the act, but that we had to look after some of the boats. We saw them just landing, so our chief boatman put me on

shore, and told me to follow them up and see where they went to. I didn't think, you may be sure, that they were your young gentlemen."

"You acted in every way rightly," said Mr Nugent. "And now, Julian, what have you to say to this?"

"That it is a base fabrication," answered Julian. "I had no right to be out at night, that I know. I went out for a lark, because I couldn't sleep, and meeting Digby we came back together; but that I did anything else I defy anybody to prove."

"Oh," said Mr Nugent. "What do you say to this, Digby?"

"That I had not been out of the house twenty minutes when this man caught hold of me," answered Digby, quietly. "I certainly was not doing any harm, though I ought not to have left the house without leave. I, however, am ready to stand the consequences of doing so."

"Well!" exclaimed Sutton, "he is the lad to swear that black is white, and make another believe it."

"I never knew him tell an untruth, Sutton," observed Mr Nugent. "There is a mystery about the matter which I cannot yet fathom."

"Well, sir, I will leave the young gentlemen with you, and you will be answerable for their appearance when they are wanted," said Sutton, laying a strong emphasis on that word wanted, which has so much significance to thieves and vagabonds.

Julian and Digby did not quite comprehend it in the way Sutton wished, but they guessed that there was something unpleasant connected with it.

"Of course, Sutton, I will take care that they are forthcoming when required to answer for what has occurred," replied Mr Nugent, in a tone which showed how grieved and annoyed he was. "Come to me, however, at nine o'clock in the morning, and I will inquire further into it."

When Sutton had taken his departure, Mr Nugent, desiring Digby to stay where he was, led Julian upstairs to his bedroom. The window was open, and the knotted rope hung to it. Mr Nugent stood aghast. "Have you often made use of this, young gentleman?" he asked.

Julian was really frightened, and burst out crying, in dread that his various misdemeanors would at length be brought to light. "Only once or twice, and merely for a lark, without any harm in it," he answered, as soon as he could bring out his words. "If you will overlook it this time, sir, Digby and I won't do it again—that I promise; indeed we won't, sir."

"I conclude that you will not," said Mr Nugent, drily. "However, I do not consider it at all a slight thing to have my young gentlemen running about the country at midnight, and laying themselves open to such accusations as have been brought against you to-night. You ran as great a risk of having an accusation brought against you of being concerned in a burglary, or in the robbery of a hen-roost. And listen to me, Julian Langley, I deeply regret that I cannot trust your word, and I am not at all satisfied that you will be proved innocent of the crime of which Sutton says you are guilty. Now, go to bed, and pray that you may have a new heart put into you."

"But Digby, sir, you'll forgive him, may he not come up and go to bed," said Julian, making a mighty effort to speak, for he thought that everything would depend on his being able to put Digby up to what he should say.

"Certainly not," answered Mr Nugent, who divined his motive. "I cannot allow you and Digby again to associate till this mystery is cleared up. Pull off your clothes and jump into bed."

Mr Nugent having taken possession of the rope, and shut the window, took the candle, and walked away, leaving Julian to his meditations, or to sleep if he could. His meditations could not have been of a pleasant character, though it was not so much the folly of his conduct as the fear of the consequences which annoyed him. At last he fell asleep. Meantime Mr Nugent went back to his nephew.

"Digby," he said, looking gravely at him, "you have often been thoughtless and idle, but I have ever found you truthful; I trust that you will be so on this occasion. Tell me what you know about this matter."

"I will tell you about my share in it, uncle, but I hope you will let Julian answer for himself. All the fellows say that there is nothing so bad as one fellow peaching against another, and I don't want to do it," answered Digby, firmly.

Mr Nugent was too well acquainted with schoolboy notions of honour and morality to be surprised at this speech.

"But it is also very bad to shield the guilty, as in that way vice is encouraged and crime escapes its proper punishment," he remarked. "However, let me hear what you have got to say. One thing is very certain, both you and he were doing what you should not have done, in leaving the house at night. Go on."

"Then, uncle, all I have to say is, that Julian went out and asked me to sit up for him and let him in. I did, but he was longer absent than I expected, and so I got out of the window and took the road I thought he had gone to try and find him, fearing that some accident might have happened to him. I met him coming back, and just as we got near the house that man Sutton caught hold of us."

"I believe you, entirely," said Mr Nugent. "But I wish to know if you can guess what Julian Langley was about during his absence."

"That is the very point about which I don't want to say any thing," said Digby. "Let Julian tell his own story."

"But he does not seem inclined to exculpate you; he leads me to suppose that whatever he was about you were helping him to do. You will have to prove the contrary, or you will be considered as guilty as he is," observed Mr Nugent.

"I cannot help that," answered Digby, after a little thought. "I have stated the truth; I am ready to be punished for leaving the house, and, as things turned out, I am sorry I did it, but I should have been very miserable if any harm had come to Julian which I could have prevented."

"Then since you refuse to enlighten me, I will not press the matter now," said his uncle. "I will consider to-morrow what punishment I shall inflict on you. Take this cloak and go to sleep on the sofa. Remember that you are not to communicate by word or writing, or in any way with Julian. Promise me that you in this will obey me."

"I do promise," said Digby.

"Good-night," said his uncle, not altogether displeased with the boy.

Oh, what a blessed thing it is to be able to confide thoroughly in the word of a person, to know that he always, and under all circumstances, speaks the truth—not only that he scorns a falsehood, but that he deeply feels how odious it is in the sight of God, a pure God who is truth itself. In what different estimation are two boys held, who are perhaps in most respects equal. They have equal talents, can play equally well at games, of the same strength, and appearance, and manners, are equally good-natured, and are equally well supplied with pocket-money, and the means of treating their companions. One has been proved never to deviate from the truth, either through fear, or for the sake of telling a good story, or on any other account; the other it is known never scruples to tell a falsehood, if it suits his convenience, or it can afford amusement to himself or others, while if he thinks he can by it avoid detection from any fault he may have committed, he invariably does so. One is looked up to, honoured, and loved, both by boys and masters; the other may find plenty of associates, but no one trusts him, and all in their hearts despise him, and what is strange, even those who will at times prevaricate and deviate as widely from the truth as he does, have a feeling of contempt for him. Remember, that it is not the only sin, vile as it is, which a boy can commit, but it is one with others which should be watchfully guarded against, and earnestly prayed against, and certainly none, even in the eyes of worldly people, is considered more unworthy of the character of an English country gentleman.

Sutton, the revenue man, made his appearance the next morning; he said some of the fishermen were so furious at the mischief which had been intended them, that unless they could be appeased the matter must go before a bench of magistrates. If so, Mr Heathcote and Mr Langley would have to try their own sons, and the whole affair would be very disagreeable and painful. Poor Mr Nugent was very much annoyed. He went to Julian's room; that young gentleman was still asleep. He roused him up, made him put on his clothes rapidly, without allowing him time to reflect. He had previously sent Digby out of the study; he now took Julian to it.

"How do you account for yourself from the time you left the house till Digby found you?" he asked.

"Another fellow and I were taking a row on the water, and trying to catch some fish," answered Julian, doggedly.

"Who was the other fellow?" asked Mr Nugent.

"He's called Dick Owlett, I believe; he gets bait for us sometimes."

"Then I can fancy how it happened," said Sutton. "I'll now get hold of Master Owlett, who is the wildest young scamp in the place; he'll lie through thick and thin, there's no doubt of that, but I'll squeeze the truth out of him before I've done with him, depend on that."

Julian when he heard this felt very sure that Dick Owlett, to escape punishment, would throw the entire blame upon his shoulders. Could he have communicated with Dick he thought that he might have bribed him to be silent, but as he had no hopes of so doing he was excessively puzzled to know how to act. He had already denied having had anything to do with the matter. He doubted even whether further falsehoods would assist him; still he could not bring himself to speak the truth, confess his folly, and take the whole blame on himself. However, Sutton had learned quite enough for his purpose. His style of proceeding with Owlett was likely to be very different to that of Mr Nugent's with his pupils. Julian was sent back to his room to finish his toilet, Mr Nugent telling him that he must breakfast there, and not leave it without his permission. He consequently had to spend a very miserable and solitary day in a cold room; but he did not escape having to do his lessons, which he might possibly have considered a counterbalancing advantage, as Mr Nugent took him his books and went there to hear him. He was left in doubt all the time what steps Sutton had taken with Owlett, and also as to what Digby had said.

As may be supposed, Sutton had no great difficulty in getting the whole truth, and perhaps something more even, out of Dick Owlett, who, in the hope of escaping punishment, was ready enough to throw all the blame on his young gentleman companion.

Mr Nugent bethought him of calling in the aid of Toby Tubb. The affair had become the conversation of all the seafaring population of the place.

Toby was very unhappy to think that Digby was implicated, but, when he heard that he had nothing to do with it, he undertook to arrange matters, observing that somebody would have to pay pretty smartly for the lark, if lark it was, though he thought it a very bad one.

Neither Julian nor Digby had an idea that any such negotiations were going forward, and they were left with the impression that they should have to present themselves before a bench of magistrates, and perhaps be sent to the

house of correction and receive a sound flogging, or be set to work at the treadmill, or some other dreadful thing to which they had read in the newspapers that juvenile delinquents were subjected.

Mr Nugent, of course, was compelled to write to Mr Langley, to explain the whole matter, and, from the tone of that gentleman's reply, he saw that the only satisfactory course he could pursue was to request him to remove his son to another place of instruction. He from the first, when he discovered how his young gentlemen contrived to leave the house, had suspected that they had been engaged in the cannon-firing affair.

Though Mr Simson did not forfeit his word by saying anything, he ascertained enough to satisfy him on the matter from the less scrupulous Mr Jones, whose only bond to keep silence was the hope of getting more out of them.

Miserably always are those mistaken who put confidence in dishonest persons. Such are influenced only by interested motives, and invariably betray their dupes if it suits their convenience.

The holidays at length arrived. The last few weeks at Osberton, Julian Langley had found very disagreeable. His lather wrote him a scolding letter, for having put him to so much expense, as he had thought it wiser to pay the fishermen their demand for the damage done their boats rather than allow the transaction, so disgraceful to his son, to become public.

Mr Nugent kept a strict watch over him. He was not allowed to associate with Digby, while the rest of his fellow-pupils treated him with marked contempt, not so much on account of what he had done, as because he had denied having done it, and because they believed that he would have drawn Digby into the scrape, and, if he could, have thrown the blame on him.

Digby did not remain very long out of spirits. His conscience was tolerably at ease. He thought that his uncle had treated him very kindly, and as he wished, therefore, to please him, he set diligently to work to do his lessons each day as well as he could. He had not yet learned to study for the sake of the knowledge he should thus acquire. He did not appreciate the value of knowledge, the use it is of in every way, the delight it affords, the satisfaction it brings. He did his lessons because he knew that all boys were made to do lessons, and he did not expect to avoid the general fate of boyhood. He had a sort of indefinite idea that boys were compelled to do lessons from some tyrannical motive of grown-up people; probably because they, when children, had been made to do them, now, when they were grown up, they retaliated on the next generation for the annoyance they themselves had suffered; much in the same way that boys who have been most bullied and fagged when, they were little fellows, frequently bully most, and make the severest masters, when they get into the upper forms—not always, but frequently, that is the case. Digby now and then wished for the society of his former companion, and thought it rather hard that they were not allowed to speak to each other except at meal-times.

Mr Nugent or Marshall used to take Julian out to walk, never allowing him to go out of their sight. This was more galling to him as Digby now enjoyed the same unrestricted liberty as at first. He seldom, however, went out by himself, except, perhaps, to run to the post-office, or to carry a message to some neighbour.

Dick Owlett did not escape the consequences of his lark, for the fishermen did not overlook the mischief he had wished to do them, and many a kick and a cuff he got from their hands which he might otherwise have avoided. Soon afterwards, he was taken up before the magistrates for another misdemeanor, and Mr Langley, hearing who he was, told his father that he would receive the most severe punishment which could be inflicted if he did not at once send him off to sea. To sea, therefore, went master Owlett, not at all to his own satisfaction, and very much to his father's rage, who vowed that he would be revenged on some of the aristocracy for what had happened.

The magistrates had lately got the character of being unusually severe. A gang of smugglers had some time before been captured, and a revenue officer having been killed in the affray, two were transported, and others sent for a year or more to gaol—a punishment which, to men of the habits of that class, is peculiarly galling. Although some of the band were taken, others escaped, and the latter, furious at the punishment inflicted on their friends, had sworn, it was said, to take vengeance on the magistrates who had procured their conviction by sending them up for trial, and on Squire Heathcote especially, through whose means they had been captured.

One of the transported men was a grandson of old Dame Marlow, and though it was supposed that she loved nothing human, she had certainly always shown an affection for the ill-conditioned youth in question. Ever since, she had been heard, it was said, muttering threats of dire vengeance against those who had caused it. Time, however, passed on, and nothing occurred, and even those who fully believed in the old woman's power, as well as in the means at the disposal of the smugglers, thought that nothing would come of the threats of one or the other.

Mr Heathcote, when told of what was said, laughed the matter to scorn. "Dame Marlow has done nothing else but mutter foolish threats against all the human race for the last twenty years," he observed; "and as for the smugglers, they know too well to come and burn down my ricks, or anything of that sort; and as to personal violence, they are pretty well aware that they would get as much or more than they gave. The man who is afraid of poachers, smugglers, gipsies, or vagabonds of any sort, had better not attempt to act the part of an English country gentleman; he isn't fit for his place."

To return to Osberton. Mr Nugent's pupils took their departure for their different homes. Julian Langley, it was understood, was not to return there again. That Digby would come back was very uncertain. Mr Nugent had heard of a school which he thought might suit him. The head-master was an old college friend of his, a good scholar, and a very excellent as well as gentlemanly man.

"He is conscientious and gentle-hearted," he observed to his sister, to whom he was writing on the subject; "I am therefore certain that he will do his best to instruct his pupils, and will treat them with the greatest kindness. Of course, after the lapse of so many years, I might find the character of my old friend Henry Sanford somewhat changed, but I cannot for a moment suppose that the change will be in any material point for the worse."

"Oh, Mr Sanford's is exactly the school to which I should wish Digby to go," exclaimed Mrs Heathcote, after reading her brother's letter; "he will be well taken care of, and well taught. What more can we wish?"

"I would rather send him at once to Eton or Winchester, and he would soon learn to take care of himself," observed the Squire. "As for the learning, he'll pick up enough of that, somehow or other, to roll along with, and to enable him to look after his property by and by. Really, I think we had better send him at once to Eton."

Mrs Heathcote pleaded so hard against this, that at last it was settled that Digby should go to Mr Sanford's for a couple of years, and afterwards be sent to one of the above-mentioned public schools.

Chapter Eight.

Return Home—Christmas Festivities—How they were interrupted—The Heir of Bloxholme missing—Dame Marlow's Revenge—Arthur Haviland goes in Search of his Friend.

There were great rejoicings when just before Christmas time Digby's jovial, smiling, and sunburnt countenance beamed forth in the hall of Bloxholme. How pleased were his father and mother to see him—how delighted Kate was—how fondly she kissed him, and how eagerly she asked him, as soon as he could, to come and tell her about everything. Gusty shouted and cheered as if some great event had occurred—so it had to him—for one of the most important personages he had ever known, had just returned, after a long absence, to the home of his ancestors. John Pratt came to the door, hat in hand, grinning all over with glee, and eagerly helped the coachman to unstrap Digby's trunk and play-box. Alesbury, the butler, looked benignly at him—"Glad to see you, Master Digby, very glad, that I am," he exclaimed, in his usual well-bred undertone; "so grown too, you are. Well, we've all sorts of things ready for the holidays—very glad to see you, very." Mrs Carter hurried out of the housekeeper's room to welcome him, and after shaking hands and looking at him proudly for a minute, she gave way to the feelings of her heart, and seizing him in her arms, covered his cheeks with kisses. Nurse treated him much in the same way. He was too happy to resent the indignity, though he did rub his cheeks pretty hard afterwards with his handkerchief, when they were not looking. His two elder sisters were out riding when he arrived. When they came back they gave him as hearty a welcome as the rest of the family. Miss Apsley, too, in her quiet ladylike way, expressed her pleasure at seeing him. Her discernment enabled her to discover that he possessed many qualities which, if properly directed, would make him both generally liked, and a useful member of society. She liked him because she thought that he was an honest true-hearted, English boy.

Digby had good reason, therefore, to be satisfied with the reception he met with from every member of the family after this his first absence from home. So he was, and he felt that he was a very happy fellow. Still more full of glee was he, when he at length having been sufficiently looked at, and talked to, and cross questioned, and kissed, and hugged, and fed, found himself running through the grounds, with Kate by his side, towards their favourite resort, the summer-house on the mound.

It was a bright clear day, and though the air was cold, the sun striking through the glass windows for several hours made the room warm and pleasant. Then looking out together at the view, which, even in winter, was beautiful, Digby told Kate of all that had happened him at Mr Nugent's. How she did laugh at the idea of firing off the old guns at the Castle, though she very nearly cried with horror when he described how they had burst, and how narrowly he and Julian had escaped being killed.

Digby touched very lightly on Julian's behaviour, but he could not help saying enough to make Kate exclaim—

"Oh, I hate him!—mean-spirited, disagreeable boy. I hope papa will not ask him here again. I never liked him—I did not know why—now I guess the reason."

Kate then told Digby that all sorts of preparations had been made for his amusement during the holidays, and that several people, young and old, had been invited to come to the house.

"And who do you think is among them?" she asked. "Somebody you will be very glad to see, and whom I never saw. I begged that I might be the first to tell you, because I know that it will give you so much pleasure."

Digby guessed all sorts of people, but gave it up at last. Perhaps he knew how much Kate would like to tell him.

"Then I won't leave you longer in doubt," she exclaimed, eagerly. "Arthur Haviland is coming."

"You don't say so," said Digby, clapping his hands. "How very jolly."

"Yes, he is, though," cried Kate. "Papa, it seems, knew Mr Haviland, who wrote to him about your having helped to pull Arthur out of the sea, and then they found that they were old friends, and so it was arranged that Arthur should come here for your holidays. Who else do you suppose is coming? I'll tell you, as you are not in a guessing mood to-day. Cousin Giles. We could not get on this Christmas without him, I'm sure. He'll manage everything. He'll direct all our games in the evening, and settle about all the sports in the morning for you boys. We were quite anxious till we knew that he would come; now I am certain that everything will go smoothly."

"Capital! how jolly!" exclaimed Digby.

Everything which promised to be pleasant was jolly with him. If he had been asked what was the most jolly thing in existence, he would have answered—his sister Kate.

Cousin Giles and Arthur Haviland were to arrive the very next day, and several other people who had sons with them were coming before New-year's-day, so that the house would be full from the top to the bottom.

Kate had another surprise for Digby. After they had had their confabulation, and the sinking sun warned them that it was time to return home, she led him round the back way, under pretence of showing him the dogs and some young pups Juno had produced. By chance, it appeared, as she passed the stables, she threw open the door, and there stood John Pratt, grinning with pleasure, and holding by the head a beautiful little pony, with a new bridle and saddle on.

"Oh Kate, how kind, how delightful, how jolly!" exclaimed Digby. "Is that really for me? What a beauty. What grand gallops I'll have on him, and go out with you on your Tiny. It is of all things just what I should have liked the best, if I had been asked. What is his name? I hope that it is a pretty one."

"Guess," said Kate, who, although Digby never had guessed anything in his life, always persisted in making him try and do so.

"Oh, I can't! Angel, or Fairy, or Beauty, or something of that sort," he answered.

"You burn, you burn—something very nice," cried Kate. "Well, then, if you give it up I'll tell you—Sweetlips. We didn't give him the name. It was what he was called by the person from whom papa bought him, but as he knows it, and will follow like a dog when he is called, we did not like to change it."

"It's a funny name for a pony, but as he has got it, we will still call him by it, and I shall like it very much," answered Digby. "But I say, John Pratt, can't I have a gallop on him at once across the park? I won't be ten minutes away, and it would be so delightful."

"I sees no reason again it, Master Digby," replied John; "I thought as how you'd be liking it, and so I put the new saddle on him, which the Squire sent and made me buy for you."

"Says he, 'John, our Digby will be coming to cover with me, to see the hounds throw off, and he'll be by my side I hope when I go a coursing; and I wish him to appear as my son should appear, John.' This was afore we bought the pony. I heard of it, and I was certain that it would just do, so the Squire told me to go and settle for it at once, and not to stand on price, and right glad I was when I brought back Master Sweetlips; and says the Squire, 'I never saw a greater beauty in my life, John. He'll just do for our boy. Now go and buy a new saddle and bridle to fit him. You can judge of what it ought to be just as well as I can.' Wasn't I proud; and so, Master Digby, here he is, all your own. And here's a new whip I bought at the same time. The Squire didn't tell me to get that, but if you'll accept it from an old man, you'll make his heart right glad."

"Oh, thank you, John—thank you, John Pratt," exclaimed Digby, his heart so swelling with kindly and grateful feelings that the tears almost came into his eyes. "You run in, Kate, and say I'll be back directly, but I must have a gallop on Sweetlips."

John had been assisting him to mount, and adjusting his stirrups all the time. Away trotted the young heir of Bloxholme, and truly he looked the worthy scion of a sturdy race. John Pratt stood outside the yard gate, watching him with admiration, and Kate remained on the upper step of the hall-door, gazing at him with affectionate interest, till he was lost to sight among the trees, and the sound of his pony's hoofs died away in the distance.

"He is a dear fellow!" she exclaimed, as at length she entered the house, and ran up stairs to prepare for dinner. She was to dine late that day in honour of Digby's arrival. She anticipated a delightful evening. He would have so much to tell her, so much to talk about—she felt so proud of him. He looked so well—so manly, she thought, and was so much improved in every way. Kate dressed and came down to the drawing-room long before dinner-time, that she might have another talk with Digby. He had not made his appearance, so she sat down and took up a book, thinking that he would come soon. Miss Apsley appeared next. Kate remarked that she thought Digby was a long time dressing for dinner. She ran up to his room, but he was not there. When she came back, expecting to find that he had in the mean time come to the drawing-room, she felt blank at not seeing him.

"He probably is with your papa or mamma, dear," observed the governess; "it is scarcely fair to wish to monopolise his society."

"No, I will not; of course everybody will wish to speak to him," said Kate, and she resumed her book.

In a few minutes, however, she laid it down again.

"It is very odd that he does not come," exclaimed Kate; "I must go and find him."

She ran again to his room. His evening clothes and shoes were put out, the hot-water jug was on his wash-hand stand untouched, and his hair-brushes were in order on the dressing-table. He evidently had not been there to dress. She ran to her father's room, and then to her mother's and sisters', but he was not with them.

"Then he must be with Mrs Carter," she said to herself, and away she ran to the housekeeper's room, but Mrs Carter had not seen him nor was he in the nursery.

She was in hopes that he might have gone to play with Gusty before he went to bed. Coming back she met Alesbury, and begged him to send to the stables to ascertain if Digby was still there. Hoping that her brother might have gone into the drawing-room during her absence, she returned there. Her father was standing before the fire, her mother and sisters were sitting down on sofas and comfortable chairs, attempting to snatch a few minutes light reading in that generally very idle portion of the day.

"Kate, where is Digby?" asked her father, as she entered.

"I have been looking for him, papa, but I cannot find him," she answered.

"He has forgotten the dinner-hour, and is still renewing his acquaintance with the horses and dogs," said the Squire, adjusting his cravat.

He poked the fire, turned himself about before it once or twice, and then took up the newspaper. While thus occupied, the footman abruptly entered the room with a startled expression:—

"Mr Alesbury sent me out to the stable to bring in Master Digby, sir," he exclaimed in a hurried tone; "I went, sir, but neither John Pratt nor any of the men could I see; and while I was there the new pony came trotting in by himself with the reins hanging over his head."

"What is this, what is this I hear?" cried Mr Heathcote, in a state of great agitation, running to the hall-door.

He was going out, he scarcely knew where, when Alesbury came into the hall, and handed him his hat.

"You will put on your coat, sir; the evening is cold. We don't know where Master Digby is," he said in a tone which showed that he also was much agitated.

Meantime Mrs Heathcote, who had not exactly understood the footman's announcement, was very much alarmed.

"Has Digby been thrown? is he hurt? where is he?" she asked, hurriedly, trying to go out into the hall, but her elder daughters and Miss Apsley held her back, thinking that it was much better to keep her quiet till they could ascertain what had really happened.

Kate had followed her father out of the room; she thought that she would at once set off to find Digby; she flew up into her room to put on her walking things.

Into the hall speedily hurried Mrs Carter, and nurse, and all the servants. Everybody was asking questions which no one was able to answer. Neither John Pratt nor any of the other men had yet come back.

Mr Heathcote, telling Thomas the footman to attend on him, seized a thick stick, and set out in the direction he understood Digby had gone with the pony. He had no definite plan; he forgot that it would have been wiser had he remained at home to have directed the search, and heard the reports of those sent to look for his son.

Kate came down prepared for her expedition soon after her father had gone out and disappeared in the darkness. She wanted to follow, but she did not know which way he had gone, and Alesbury, who thought that she ought not to go out, would not tell her.

"I will go," she exclaimed vehemently; "I have as good eyes as anybody, and I am as likely to see him."

Eleanor and Mary came out several times to make inquiries, and then Alesbury and Mrs Carter were summoned into the drawing-room to state all they knew and had heard. All anybody could say was, that Master Digby galloped off on his new pony, and that when John Pratt and the other men found that he did not come back, they set off to look for him. They must have missed his pony, because the pony came back by itself.

As soon as Kate saw that she was not watched, she opened the hall-door, and slipping out, closed it behind her unperceived. Then down the steps she went, and away she ran as fast as her light feet could carry her along the path she had seen Digby go. She could not bear to think that any very serious injury had happened to him, but she fancied that he had been thrown from his pony and stunned; or, perhaps, that his ankle might have been sprained or broken, and that he was, in consequence, unable to walk home.

The sky had become overcast and the night was very dark. Poor little Kate ran on, looking anxiously on every side and calling out Digby's name.—Snow, too, began to fall, and came down in large flakes on her face. For herself she did not care, she did not feel the cold, but she thought of dear Digby, lying on the bare ground; and, perhaps, unable to move or to call out. Perhaps he might have attempted to leap, and got thrown, or his pony might have stumbled. Still it appeared so sure-footed and sagacious a beast, that that could scarcely have happened.

"Oh Digby, Digby, where are you?" she every now and then cried out in a piteous tone.

Not a ditch nor a recess in the road of any sort, escaped her scrutinising glance. But no Digby replied, no sign of him could she discover. On she went, it appeared that she had got a long way from home. The road, and the country seemed strange to her; she had scarcely ever been out at night during her life; she did not like to turn back, but she began to fear that she might be looking for him in one direction, while he might have gone another. She had just begun to think this, when a snow-flake fell on something shining on the ground, she stooped down, and she found that it was Digby's whip. She had no doubt about it.

"He must be near! he must be near!" she exclaimed. "Digby, Digby, answer, where are you? it is Kate calls you. Digby, dear. Brother, brother, speak to me. Oh do! do speak, Digby, just one word that I may know where to look for you. It is so dark that I cannot see you. Digby, Digby, brother, brother, speak!" she screamed out almost frantically.

No answer came to her repeated calls.

"He must have dropped his whip as the pony was galloping on," she thought; "he may have gone further than this before he fell; and yet Digby was not likely to be thrown off; no boy of his age rides better."

So again the brave little girl ran on, crying out his name as before. Oh, what a loving affectionate sister was Kate, well worthy to be cherished. I fully believe that there are many such who would do the same, if occasion required, for their brothers' sakes. She did not feel faint, or fatigued, or cold; she did not think of herself, all her thoughts were for Digby, as she pictured him lying maimed on the cold ground. The snow fell thickly, the north wind blew keenly, she

did not feel it herself, but she thought he did. She would have run on crying out Digby's name till daylight, or till nature had given way and she had sunk on the ground. She heard footsteps coming along the road.

"Oh, can you tell me anything of my brother Digby?" she cried out, "Mr Heathcote's son, he is lost. He rode away and has not come back."

"Mercy on me, my sweet Miss Kate, is this you?" exclaimed a voice near her. It was that of John Pratt.

"Dear, oh dear, we mustn't be a losing two on you in one day. We cannot find him, Miss Kate; but bear up, dear. It will break my heart, that it will; but that's no matter. We be a going back to get lanterns and torches, and more people, to help in the search. The Squire will be for sending out all the men and boys from the village to look for him. He must be somewhere, and not far off, that's my opinion. But come along back, Miss Kate; you'll be catching your death of cold, and they'll be wondering what has become of you next at the Hall."

John Pratt spoke so rapidly that Kate had not been able to put in a word. She at last told him that she had found Digby's whip not far from where they were, and that she should know the spot by some high trees of peculiar form, which were near it. Many people would have picked up the whip, and afterwards would have been unable to tell where they had found it, but her natural sagacity at once showed her the importance of being able to return to the exact spot. John wanted to carry Kate, but she would not hear of it; she consented only to hang on his arm as he hurried along. He tried to keep up her spirits in his somewhat uncouth, though not rough way.

"He'll come back, Miss Kate, no fear. It's not likely any great harm could have happened to him. Mayhap he has got into some cottage, and the pony ran away. When we gets lights we'll find him. He'll be late for dinner. It can't be that any great harm can have happened to the heir of Bloxholme; it's impossible, Miss Kate, I am sure it is."

Thus rambling on in his talk, John, with poor Kate, reached the Hall. Everybody there was in a state of consternation. In the first place, Kate had been missed, and it was supposed that she had been spirited away, as had been Digby. Then, not far from the Hall, the Squire and Thomas had been set upon by half a dozen men or more, whose aim seemed to be to inflict a severe injury on them. The Squire cried out who he was, but they only seemed the more eager to conquer him. Fortunately his thick stick stood him in good stead; and Thomas being armed in a similar manner, they had for some time kept their assailants at bay; but the Squire was at length brought on his knees, being very severely handled, and almost overpowered, when some of the men who had gone out to look for Digby, came up, and his assailants fled. He called on his people to pursue, but, much injured as he was, he stumbled and fell before he got far, and the ruffians escaped. His condition was deplorable. He was brought back to the Hall, his mind racked with anxiety at the disappearance of his son, and indignant at the way he himself had been treated. He was puzzled to ascertain whether the two circumstances were in any way connected. As soon as he was a little recovered, and had been able to collect his thoughts, he sent off to the village to demand the services of most of the male population, as John Pratt had suspected he would do. He also sent off in every direction to borrow lanterns, and anything that would serve as torches.

John Pratt, on his return with poor little Kate, was heartily welcomed. The Square was too ill to direct the search, so he desired John to make all the arrangements he thought necessary, and to carry them out without delay. He wished to go out again himself, and would have done so had not Mrs Heathcote and his daughters entreated him to remain within.

The attack on the Squire had naturally created a new cause for alarm about Digby. It seemed more than probable that the same ruffians who had attacked him had got hold of his son. Still it was not supposed that they had killed him; the very idea was too dreadful.

Through the active measures taken by John Pratt, the inhabitants of every cottage and house for miles round were aware of what had occurred; but John's hopes that he might have got into some cottage were disappointed; not a trace of him could be found.

A sleepless night was passed by all the inmates of the Hall; no one thought even of going to bed. Everybody sat up expecting to receive information about Digby; but though people continued constantly to return, no satisfactory information was brought. The place where Kate had found her brother's whip was carefully searched by men with torches and lanterns, but nothing else belonging to him could be discovered in the neighbourhood. It became evident, at last, that they must wait for daylight to make a more satisfactory search.

Never had the inmates of Bloxholme Hall passed a more anxious and miserable night. The morning brought no news of the lost one; not a trace of him could be discovered. The snow lay thickly on the ground, and must completely have covered up all marks of every description, if any had been left.

Poor Kate wandered about the house more like a ghost than a thing of this world, watching anxiously for every person who came in, and trembling at every footstep she heard.

Early in the day, cousin Giles—or rather Mr Woodcock, for that was his proper designation—arrived with Arthur Haviland. They, of course, were very much shocked at what had occurred. Arthur was eager to go out at once to assist in the search.

Mr Giles Woodcock had seen a great deal of the world, and had profited by what he had seen. He was an acute, sensible, energetic man, full of life and spirits, and fun too, which he was always ready to exercise in its proper time and place. He was more, also, than all that—he was a devout, serious-minded Christian, and never ashamed of acknowledging the motives of his conduct. His arrival at the moment was most opportune.

The Squire, although up and dressed, was, both in mind and body, so prostrate that he could not take that active superintendence of all the arrangements which were necessary.

Cousin Giles saw the state of things, and at once set to work. He called everybody in, and made them give their reports, of which he made notes. He called for a map of the district; he inquired whether anybody in the neighbourhood could have a motive for attacking Digby and the Squire. He strongly suspected that the men who had assaulted Mr Heathcote were in some way concerned in the disappearance of his son. How to find out who they were, and to get hold of them, was the difficulty. Although, however, he suspected one thing, he did not, as is often the case, exert himself to prove his suspicions correct to the neglect of all other points, but he directed the search to be continued and inquiries to be made in every possible direction and way.

At last John Pratt returned after another prolonged search over the country.

"Well, John," said cousin Giles, "this is a sad matter. We won't waste words, though. Have you a suspicion who has got hold of the lad? Had anybody any reason for attacking the Squire? Can you suggest any means of finding this out?"

John thought a little. "Old Dame Marlow may tell us something about it, zur," he said, after scratching his head vehemently. "She knows something of everything; and if she don't know, nobody does."

Cousin Giles, having made further inquiries as to the dame's character, was about to dispatch John to bring her to the Hall, when Mr Bowdler arrived.

He had been absent from home, and immediately on his return, hearing what had occurred, set off for the Hall.

Cousin Giles told him what he was about to do.

"She may know something about the matter, but not by supernatural means, as these poor ignorant people suppose," he remarked. "A magistrate's warrant, in the hands of a constable, will have the best effect in eliciting the truth from her. The Squire can issue it; a constable is in attendance; we will send it off at once. A grandson of her's was lately apprehended and transported through the Squire's means, and it is probable that she has instigated some of her friends to this act, to revenge herself."

In less than an hour the wretched old woman was brought up to the Hall.

Mr Bowdler first endeavoured by gentle persuasion to induce her to confess all she knew; but she was deaf to all his exhortations. Though she put on a stolid, dull look, and answered only in monosyllables, there was a cunning twinkle in her eye, which showed that she fully understood what was said to her, and was evidently not ignorant of the matter.

Cousin Giles next tried to draw some information out of her by threats. She looked up several times with an inquiring look to ascertain whether he had the power of doing what he threatened. When brought before the Squire, she scowled fiercely at him, and not a word could be drawn from her. She was sent under charge of the constable to remain in the servants' hall.

"Give her food and treat her kindly," said the Squire; "she is an old woman, and feels the loss of her grandson."

The old woman heard what was said, but made no remark.

"At all events I am convinced she can, if she will, give us some of the information we require," remarked cousin Giles; "she completely betrayed herself by her looks and gestures. I remarked particularly her fear of me, not knowing who I was, and her hatred of the Squire, while she had made up her mind to turn a deaf ear to your exhortations, Mr Bowdler."

"What do you advise, then?" asked the clergyman.

"Keep her here, and work upon her fears. Then show her that it is her interest to tell us what we want to know," answered cousin Giles; "force will not do. I doubt if even the judges of the Inquisition would get much out of her."

The whole day passed by and no clue as to what had become of Digby was obtained. Even John Pratt was knocked up, and was obliged to go to bed to recover strength, that he might continue the search.

When it was known that Dame Marlow was had up to the Hall, two men came in and stated that they had heard her threaten both the Squire and his heir with her vengeance, though they supposed that she intended to carry it out by means of her incantations. Their evidence, however, was sufficient to enable the Squire to detain her at the Hall. A bed was made up for her in a little room where people, who came to speak to him on magisterial business, were put till their turn arrived to see him. She much wanted to be left alone.

"No, no, old lady," answered the constable, laughing; "you'd be flying up the chimney, or burning the house down, or playing some prank or other. That would never do."

Arthur Haviland felt very sorry. He was very anxious to be doing something, but did not know what to do. Kate very naturally took him into her confidence.

"Oh, I wish that I was a boy," she exclaimed. "I would roam the country round till I found Digby, or cross the seas, and search for him through every land, if I thought he had been carried there. But they will not let me go. Mamma says I must not, and Miss Apsley made me promise to obey, and so I must submit; but it is very cruel."

"Fortunately I am a boy, and I will go," cried Arthur, enthusiastically. "He saved my life, and I am sure that my father would not disapprove of my going."

"Thank you, Arthur, thank you," she answered. "I am sure that he is alive. I should have felt very differently had he been dead. I could not have borne that thought. You will find him; I feel that you must find him, remember that. Poor mamma and my sisters think that he has been killed by those dreadful men who attacked papa."

This sad event made Arthur at once feel himself at home, and one of the family. He was prompt in all he did. He went at once to Mr Woodcock, and asked him to obtain a man to accompany him, saying that he would set off the next morning at daybreak, and prosecute his inquiries through the neighbouring districts.

"Perhaps I may find out something which has escaped the notice of the people here," he remarked.

"I like your zeal and spirit, and will gladly aid your plan," answered cousin Giles.

Arthur was ready at the hour he had arranged; and he found a lad of about eighteen prepared to be his companion. Adam Hodder seemed a very intelligent fellow; and Arthur felt that he would rather have him than an older person.

Both Arthur and his companion were warmly clad and well prepared to brave the cold. Arthur had put on his roughest clothing, but still he looked the gentleman. They carried some provisions in a bag that they might not have to go out of their way to obtain them: but they had taken a good breakfast in the dark, that no time might be lost of the short day of that season. The air smelt pure and fresh as they stepped out in the grey light of the early dawn; and as they walked on briskly Arthur found his spirits rising, and he felt sure that he should again see his friend.

"Well, Adam Hodder, what do you think can have become of Master Heathcote?" he asked.

"That's more than I can say, sir," answered Adam. "But I don't think with some of the people about here, that old Dame Marlow has spirited him away. It's more than likely that some of her people may have got hold of him, and will either carry him away out of the country, or make the Squire pay pretty largely before they give him back."

This was a new idea to Arthur, and it served to help him in his inquiries. He told Adam also to make his own observations, and to gain certain information at every cottage they visited. He learned that some men in the dress of seamen had been seen in the parish. They had not spoken to any one, and no one knew where they were going. Then, again, these were the men probably who had attacked the Squire, and they might possibly have had nothing to do with Digby's disappearance. Still, from their being dressed as seamen, Arthur resolved to prosecute his inquiries towards the coast. He accordingly sent a messenger back to the Hall to say what he had heard, and what he proposed doing. He hoped to get as far as Osberton that night. He had gone some way when he heard some horses' hoofs clattering along the hard road. He looked round, and, as the riders approached, he saw that it was John Pratt and another man.

"I've come after you, sir, to tell you that we've got hold of some information that may lead us on the right scent," said John, jumping from his horse. "I am to go along with you, sir. If you like to ride there's a horse, if not, I'll send him back."

"I infinitely prefer walking such weather as this," answered Arthur. "Send the horse back, and now tell me the news."

"Why, sir, first, Mr Woodcock sent off to London for what they call a detective, a sort of ferrety-like fellow, who pokes his head in everywhere, and finds out everything. When Dame Marlow heard of it she was in a great taking, and asked what reward she would have if she tried to find out where the young Squire is?"

"'I'll tell ye what, Dame,' says Mr Woodcock to her, 'if he isn't soon found, you'll have very much the contrary to a reward, let me tell you. When the detective comes down, you'll find that tricks like these can't be played, and you go unpunished. However, I'll tell you what, Dame, we don't want to be hard upon you, and if you help in any way to find the young master, depend on it the Squire will be liberal to you, and you'll be a richer woman than you have been for many a day.'

"She made no answer, but sat smoking a pipe they had given her over the fire, for a long time; she smoked and smoked away. At last, says she, 'I want to speak to that strange gentleman. He can see better with half an eye than all you people can with two; and I have a respect for him.'

"When Mr Woodcock went to her, says she—

"'I may put you in the way of finding the young Squire, but send at once; there's no time to be lost. Look out an honest man, if you can find such. It won't do to be sending a beak, remember that. Send a lad with him; he may want somebody to help him.'

"Mr Woodcock at once thought of me, as he knows that no one loves the young Squire better; and so he sent for me, and told the old dame that I was the man he would send, and that he was sure you, Master Haviland, would wish to go also. She seemed well satisfied at this, and then went on to tell me what to do.

"'A mile to the west of Osberton, in Luccombe Cove, there's a fisherman's cottage, close down to the beach,' said she; 'there's no other near. You'll find an old man there. Ask for Jem the Spotsman. Say that I sent you to him. Tell him that if he shows you where the young Squire is you'll give him five golden guineas. He'll not do it for less. If he says he knows nothing about the matter, tell him that the beaks will be on him, and that he'd better do as I bid him. If you can get another fearless man to go with you it may be better. Jem will lead you to a strange place, where you'll meet strange people. Speak them fair; you'll not do much by force. Tell them that you've plenty of friends at your back, who know where you are, and will come and look for you if you don't soon return to them. I tell you this because I don't want any more mischief to come out of the matter. Again I say, you mustn't lose time. It's just possible that, even now, you may be too late, and that the lad is on his way to far distant lands. That's no fault of mine, remember. Those who have got him may be thinking of taking him, or they may not. It is not very likely that

they will be wishing to send him back after they have shown him their hiding-place, and let him into other of their secrets.'

"I didn't stop to hear more, but I just got a couple of brace of pistols, and came away at once to overtake you. We might have ridden all the way into Osberton, but Mr Woodcock cautioned me to go in quietly, lest the smugglers or the people, whoever they are, who have got Master Digby, should hear of our coming, and suspecting treachery, should carry him off elsewhere."

"I am rejoiced to hear what you tell me," exclaimed Arthur, when John Pratt had finished his account. It is impossible, by the by, to do justice to the quaint and thoroughly provincial way in which he expressed himself; so that Arthur at times could scarcely understand him. "There can be but little doubt, from what you tell me, that he is alive, and that we are in a fair way of recovering him. We must proceed, I see, with caution and courage; and as we may employ another man, I know one who will gladly aid us. He is a friend, too, of Digby's—Toby Tubb is his name. If we want help, he can help us better than anybody."

"He may be a friend of Master Digby's, and I hope he has many friends, but he can't be a greater, nor one who would give every day he has to live for him," exclaimed John, with a very natural burst of feeling.

They were walking on all this time rapidly towards Osberton. On arriving there, they first went to Mr Nugent's house. He had been made aware of what had occurred, and had already consulted with Toby Tubb on the subject. While Arthur took some tea, and rested, he sent off for Toby.

When Toby, who had been thinking the matter over, as he said, arrived, and was told Arthur's errand, he slapped his thigh, and exclaimed, "I thought it was so. I know the gang; a set of daring ruffians as ever lived. Poor Master Digby; it was hard for him to fall into their power. But we will get him out again as soon as we can, if they haven't spirited him away." Toby had come prepared for an expedition. He begged Mr Nugent to lend him a brace of pistols. Arthur and John Pratt were already armed. Adam Hodder had gone back with the horses. Arthur, with his two attendants, therefore, John and Toby, immediately set forth on their undertaking. As Toby Tubb knew every inch of the way, they soon reached the high ground above Luccombe Cove.

"There's the cottage," he observed, pointing to a hut low down on the beach. "I know Jem the Spotsman well—a terrible old ruffian he is. Do you, Master Haviland and John Pratt, go in and give him your message. If he refuses to help you, call me, and I'll see what I can do."

Arthur, followed by John Pratt, stepped boldly in. The expedition, independent of the object, had peculiar charms for him; there was so much romance and excitement in it. He did not stop to knock, but flung open the door of the hut, and unhesitatingly entered. An old man, in a blue Guernsey frock, sat bending over a drift-wood fire, which spluttered and smoked as he kept piling on the yet damp chips. He looked round at the noise, and, seeing strangers, rose with considerable activity to his feet. He scowled at them beneath his white shaggy eyebrows.

Arthur had begged that he might be the spokesman; he felt fully up to the emergency. At an early age, indeed, he had learned much to rely on himself. "Jem the Spotsman, I have a message for you," he began.

"Who told you that was my name?" asked the old man, with a growl.

"Never mind, if it is your name," said Arthur. "We've come to do you good, and show you how to gain five golden guineas."

"Time was when I could gain fifty without much trouble," interrupted the old man.

"You cannot now, though; and five guineas is a good sum," observed Arthur. "You'll get that, but not more. Dame Marlow bids me tell you that the beaks will be on you; that you know where the young Squire of Bloxholme is hid away, and that if you would keep your neck out of a noose, you will show us where he is to be found."

The old man sat down and began to rake the ashes of the fire with a stick. He did not ask his visitors to take seats, though, but he kept watching them warily out of the corners of his eyes. "Five golden guineas, five golden guineas," he kept muttering. "Who are you who make the promise?"

"A friend of Mr Heathcote's," answered Arthur. "It will be faithfully kept with you, depend on that."

"Who's that man with you?"

Arthur told him.

"Ay, he looks as if he had the hay-seed in his hair," observed old Jem. "I'd rather trust a seaman."

"If I bring a seaman, one, perhaps, whom you know, will you trust him?" asked Arthur.

"Yes," answered the old man, after a little thought.

Arthur made a sign to John Pratt to go and fetch Toby; but he seemed unwilling to leave Arthur alone.

"Go, go. What have I to fear?" said Arthur, firmly.

The old man looked up at him. "Some who have been here have been afraid, though," he muttered. "Take a seat, young gentleman. I like your spirit."

Arthur thanked him, and sat down on a three-legged stool, near a table, which, from its appearance, he knew had

formed part of the furniture of the cabin of a ship, probably wrecked on the coast. Every portion of the hut, indeed, was evidently composed of wreck-wood—the roof, the sides, and floor.

John Pratt soon returned with Toby.

“Ho, ho, old shipmate,” said Toby, as he entered, “so you won’t believe what the young gentleman promises; but you’ll believe me. Five golden guineas or a rope’s-end, remember that.”

“The guineas,” answered old Jem, who at once recognised Toby as an acquaintance. “But I was placed here to receive a message; when they come who will they give it to?”

“Never you mind that; we’ll be back in time, I dare say,” answered Toby.

“Then come along,” said the old man, whose weak mind was evidently powerfully influenced by the prospect of receiving the five golden guineas to the exclusion of every other consideration. “It will be rough work for the young gentleman, but he looks as if he wouldn’t fear it.”

Getting up, and walking with wonderfully firm steps, the old man led the way to a little inlet of the sea, into which a stream fell. It was large enough to allow four or five boats to float in it at once. One only was seen, and she was drawn up on the beach. A pair of oars and a rudder, and a mast and sails were in her. The old man called to Toby to help him launch her.

“What, be’es we going by the sea?” asked John Pratt, who had a thorough dread of the ocean.

“It’s better than going by the land, seeing that we could not get there at all, if I guess the place we are bound for,” observed Toby. “Now step in, young gentleman—step in, master.”

“Can you steer?” old Jem asked of Arthur.

“Yes, I am well accustomed to it,” he answered.

“Then take the helm, and do as I bid you,” said the old man, taking the after oar.

Toby took the other, and they pulled away from the land. The cove was sheltered by a high reef of rocks, so the water was perfectly smooth—so smooth, that a thin coating of ice had been formed at the margin, through which the boat easily forced her way. The stars shone brightly forth from the dark sky, and enabled Arthur to discern the whole outline of the wild, and fantastically-shaped cliffs, which formed the coast, as they towered high above his head on the right. The boat had gone out to clear a reef of rocks which ran out from the shore, and having got to the end of it, old Jem told Arthur to port his helm, and thus doubling it, he steered close in under the cliffs. In many places there was no beach, the water coming close up to their bases; and so close was the boat that frequently the oars touched their rugged fronts. Often, too, the sea-fowl, roosting low down on ledges of rocks, were disturbed from their perches, and flew up with loud screams, circling round and round their heads, till they had passed their resting-places.

John Pratt looked about him with considerable awe, if not dread; all was strange and new to him.

Arthur had witnessed similar scenes. The boat made but slow progress, for she was kept all the way in and out, through all the little bays, and bends, and inlets of the shore. Many thoughts passed through Arthur’s mind during the long pull. He hoped to recover his friend, and to enjoy the delight of restoring him to his family. At the same time, he could not help recollecting what Dame Marlow had said to John Pratt, and also the remarks of old Jem, and often he feared that they might arrive too late at the cavern where they expected to find him; that he might already be carried off to the distant lands of which the old woman spoke. Such things had occurred before, and might occur again; yet he was puzzled to know what motives the smugglers could have in such a mode of proceeding. He thought and thought over the matter without coming to any satisfactory conclusion. No one spoke above a whisper.

“We might be seen or heard by some passing coastguard man,” observed old Jem.

Now a lofty, dark, and beetling headland was seen before them.

“It’s on t’other side of St. Niven’s Head. We’ll have to go round it,” said old Jem.

Arthur did not object to the long pull, but he was eager to discover Digby, and to relieve him from all the anxiety he must be feeling.

On pulling out towards the end of the promontory, a swell was felt which, as it rolled in, broke on the cliffs, and compelled them to keep at a somewhat greater distance. On they went. As Arthur looked up it appeared as if the cliffs rose to a prodigious height above his head, almost reaching the sky. In several places, indeed, they appeared to be completely overhanging the water; and he could scarcely divest himself of the feeling that they were about to fall down and overwhelm the boat. The boat now rose and fell more rapidly to the heaving wave, and nothing but John Pratt’s earnest desire to find his young master, prevented him from bitterly repenting that he had trusted himself on the treacherous ocean.

“Starboard your helm!” suddenly exclaimed Jem, with an energy which he did not seem capable of exerting.

A loud splashing, washing sound, was heard, and Arthur saw the sea breaking wildly over a rock, on which, in another instant, the boat would have struck. The danger passed, they pulled on till they rounded the headland. Wilder than ever was the scene. On one side the lofty cliffs, with their steep front, on which there appeared scarcely a ledge on which a sea-fowl might set its foot; while on the other was the broad boundless expanse of ocean. Arthur thought what would have been their fate if the boat had struck on the rock, and sunk.

"The cave where we may find him is not many hundred fathoms off," said old Jem.

Arthur's heart beat eagerly at the information; and John Pratt forgot all his fears.

"Remember, you have to deal with men who care not for law of any sort. You must speak them fair, or you will gain nothing," said the old man. "Now steer in for that white spot. You'll find some steps and a path cut in the face of the rock. Take care you don't slip, or you'll chance to break your neck. Enter the cave as boldly as you entered my nephew's cottage; say your say, and wait for the answer. If they threaten you, call for me. I want my five golden guineas."

Arthur sprang out of the boat, followed by Toby and John Pratt.

Toby whispered that he had no idea of the place they were going to.

Arthur carefully groped his way up the cliff, but had great difficulty in finding the path. He could not help allowing it to occur to him how completely they were in the power of the ruffians they had come to seek. A few stones rolled down would have precipitated them all into the sea. Still the idea was far from making him repent that he had come on the expedition. His chief thought and earnest wish was to rescue Digby.

Toby Tubb puffed up after him, but John Pratt, once on dry land, was himself again, and came along with easy strides. Lichens and salt-loving plants grew on the face of the cliff, and served Arthur as handles to assist him to mount, though he trusted chiefly to his feet and the ledges and excrescences in the rock. Up he went—on, on, on. He thought that he must have got into the wrong path; not a sight of a cave appeared. Then he thought that perhaps old Jem had played them a trick, and having placed them on the wild rock had pulled away. The old man had charged him not to speak, so he was afraid of stopping and consulting with Toby and John Pratt. He was beginning to despair, when suddenly he found that he had reached a broad ledge. The party collected on it. A dark spot on the face of the cliff was before them; that was evidently the entrance to the cavern. He drew his breath faster; who would not on such an occasion? Then he and his two attendants walked rapidly forward, till they found themselves under the arched roof of the cave. There was no light, or signs of any one being there. Toby had brought a lantern; he lighted it. As he did so, he whispered to Arthur—

"There may be pitfalls in the way; it's as well not to tumble into them."

The cave did not run directly into the cliff, but turned sharply round to the left. Toby holding up his lantern, they boldly advanced. Still no voices were heard.

"The fellows are asleep," whispered Toby.

They soon reached a narrower part of the cave, with a screen of rough planks running across it. At one end of the screen was a low door; Arthur pushed it open, and entered, fully believing that, in another instant, he should grasp Digby's hand. Arthur saw before him a large vaulted cavern. In the centre was a fire, over which an old man and a boy were sitting toasting some slices of fish at the points of their knives. So eager were they in their occupation that they did not perceive his approach. Could the boy be Digby? The idiotic expression of wonder and fear with which the lad looked up at him showed him that he was not. The few inarticulate words uttered by the lad made the man turn round, when, starting up, he drew a pistol, and presented it at Arthur.

"We come in peace, and have no wish to hurt you," said Arthur. "Tell me where is Squire Heathcote's son. We come to seek him."

While the man stood irresolute, without replying, Arthur's eye fell on some clothes on the top of a cask. He took them up: there was a cap, and jacket, and waistcoat, such as Digby was accustomed to wear. He had little doubt that they were Digby's. His heart sunk within him.

"Where is Squire Heathcote's son?" he repeated.

The man stretched out his hand. "They have carried him off; he is far down Channel by this time."

All Arthur's worst apprehensions were realised; he was too late to save his friend.

Chapter Nine.

Digby's New Pony—Attacked by Smugglers—The Outlaws' Cavern—A Voyage—The Gale—An Ill Wind that Blows no one Good—Digby Shipwrecked.

"You beautiful little Sweetlips, many a jolly ride I'll have on you," cried the young Squire of Bloxholme Hall, as he patted his pony's neck while he cantered along over the ground, just crisping with the newly set in frost. He had intended to go only as far as the park gates, but the air was so refreshing, and the feeling of finding himself once more in the saddle was so exhilarating that, seeing the gate open, he could not help dashing through it, and giving his pony the rein and a cut with his whip, galloping along a smooth piece of turf which ran for some distance by the side of the road. "I shall be back quite time enough to dress for dinner," he thought to himself, "and Sweetlips likes the fun as much as I do." He galloped on a little longer. "Oh, this is delightful! We must go a short distance further, Sweetlips," he exclaimed. "We will turn back, then, and you shall have a capital feed. I'll tell John Pratt to give it you. Oh, how kind is papa. You are a first-rate pony, indeed you are, old fellow." On he went; the pony certainly seeming to enjoy the gallop as much as his young master. "Now we really must go back, Sweetlips," cried Digby, pulling in his rein, for the gloom of evening was rapidly increasing. He did not perceive that several men were coming quickly along the road close to him. "Now for Bloxholme, at your best speed, my pony, he shouted in his glee."

"Hillo! stop, master!" cried one of the men, springing forward and seizing his rein. "Who are you?"

"Let go my bridle," answered Digby, trying to free himself. "I am Mr Heathcote's son, if you wish to know."

"Ho, ho! are you, indeed, youngster?" said one of the men. "We are in luck, then. I say, though, you are not going home just now. Come along with us."

"Along with you! Indeed I will not," answered Digby, with very natural indignation.

"Ho, ho, my cock of the woods, don't crow so loudly, or we may have to squeeze your windpipe," exclaimed another of the ruffians coming up.

All Digby's spirit was raised. He struck out right and left with his whip, and endeavoured to force his pony out from among them. In vain were his efforts. He, however, struck the ruffian who held the reins so severe a blow across the eyes that the man let them go, and he might have escaped, had not, at the same moment, two other fellows seized him by the collar of his jacket, and he was dragged to the ground. The pony, finding his head free, sprang forward, and before either of the men could catch him, had galloped far beyond their reach, though one of the most active ran on in the hope of catching it. Digby in the scuffle, while bravely trying to escape, let go his whip, which fell to the ground unperceived by his captors. Few other words were spoken. They dragged him rapidly along the road they had come, which led past Dame Marlow's cottage. One of them threatened to blow out his brains if he made the slightest noise, and suspecting that they might put their threat into execution, he refrained from crying out. Still, as he went along, he was considering all the time how he could effect his escape. He counted eight or ten men in the party who had got hold of him. When they arrived at Mile-End gravel-pits, they turned off and took the path to Dame Marlow's cottage. They seemed to be expected there. When they entered, the old woman was leaning over the fire, stirring a large caldron boiling on it. As the bright light fell on her thin, sharp features, and her long, bony arm, almost bare, was stretched out grasping the ladle, with her red cloak thrown over one shoulder, her long, straggling hair, and her fantastic dress, she looked, indeed, like one of the witches Digby had read of, and he could not help feeling that the outrage of which he was the victim, was a just retribution for the trick he had once played here—a retribution probably brought about by her machinations.

"We've caught the young bird sooner than we expected, Dame," said one of the men. "But, we've more work on hand to-night. We'll leave him with you and Dick Owlett till we come back. Take care that he doesn't fly off."

Master Dick Owlett, who had hitherto kept in the background, now made his appearance. He had grown so much stouter and bigger since Digby saw him last at Osberton, that dressed as he was, in a rough seaman's costume, he could scarcely have recognised him.

Digby knew that he had been sent off to sea, but he learned, from his conversation with the old woman, that he had deserted and found his way back to his old haunts.

One of the men placed a bench near the fire. "Sit down there, youngster," he said. "Mind you don't stir till we come back. Dick, keep an eye on him."

Dick Owlett scowled at Digby, and drawing a pistol from his coat-pocket, sat himself down at the other end of the bench, eyeing him as a bull-terrier does his master's bundle he has been placed to watch. The rest of the men then hurried out, leaving only old Marlow, who lay groaning on a bed at the further end of the cottage, the Dame, and Owlett watching Digby.

When the men were gone, the Dame came and placed herself before Digby, eyeing him with a very sinister glance. "So, young Squire," she hissed out, "the old Squire will learn that the poor can love their children as much as the rich. He sent my boy across the sea with the help of the law, and never will he come back to gladden his old grandmother's eyes; and now I'm going to send his son far away, and may be he'll never come back to brighten Bloxholme Hall with his smiles and his laughter. Revenge is sweet, and there are many to-night who find it so, and there are some who will find it bitter, too."

Digby heard these words, but scarcely comprehended their full meaning, or was aware of the very terrible misfortune threatening him. He sat still for some time, while the old woman's words were ringing in his ears. "I don't much fear her threats, and I ought to be ashamed of myself in allowing the old woman, and that young rascal, not so many years older than I am, to keep me a prisoner," he thought. "I'll break away from them." He sprung up to rush to the door, but before he had moved further, the click of the pistol-lock struck his ear.

"I'll fire," exclaimed Owlett, with a dreadful oath. "I'm not going to be informed against, and sent off to prison for this night's work."

"Young Squire, he'll kill thee," cried the old woman, placing her long, skinny hands on his shoulder, and forcing him down to his seat with a strength he could not resist.

He was too indignant to expostulate, but he eyed Dick Owlett, and considered whether he could compete with him in a tussle, and wrest the pistol from his hands. Then he recollected that if he made the attempt, he should have the old woman attacking him in the rear with her sharp, talon-like fingers. Whenever she moved, he felt that the Dame's keen eye was upon him. Even while preparing the supper for her guests, and stirring the caldron, her glance was constantly turned towards him. Then, also, Owlett had his finger on the lock, and the muzzle of the pistol pointed at his breast. A full-grown man might have felt very uncomfortable under such circumstances, so, considering that Owlett might possibly put his threat into execution, much against his will he sat still.

A long time seemed to pass, and then, at length, the band of ruffians came back. From their appearance and conversation Digby supposed them to be smugglers. They seemed highly delighted with their performances that

evening; and having hurriedly discussed their supper, they declared that they must be off without further delay.

Digby now thought it was time to speak out.

"What is it you want with me?" he asked. "I wish to return home."

"That's what you will be crying out for many a day, youngster," answered one of the men. "No, no, you'll go along with us."

In vain Digby expostulated, and threatened, and at last entreated his captors to let him return home. They only laughed and sneered at him. Had he himself only been the sufferer, he felt that he would not have condescended to use any arguments but threats with such ruffians; but he knew the misery his disappearance would cause his parents and sisters.

"Poor dear little Kate; how she will cry about me," he said to himself; and he thought again and again how he could get away.

The men buttoned up their coats, slipped a rough pea-jacket over his shoulders, and put a tarpaulin hat on his head, which they tied down so that he could not throw it off.

"Gag him," said one of them; and he found a handkerchief passed tightly over his mouth, effectually preventing him from crying out. Two of them then took him by the arms between them, and, nodding to Dame Marlow, went out. She merely cast one very unpleasant glance at him, but said nothing. The whole party followed, and walked along the road at a rapid rate, every now and then looking behind them as if they expected to be pursued. In about twenty minutes they reached a low public-house, well known as the resort of smugglers and other bad characters. Two carts were standing before the door; jumping into them, without entering the house, they drove on at a rapid rate. Digby looked up at the sky, which was beautifully clear. Mr Nugent constantly gave his pupils lessons in practical astronomy, and Digby was therefore able to discover that they were driving towards the sea. They kept, however, considerably to the west of Osberton. At last they reached the edge of a cliff; before him lay spread out the ocean, now sleeping in calm grandeur. The men roughly pulled him out of the cart, and two of them taking him as before, between them, made him descend a narrow zig-zag path down the face of the cliff. Down, down they went, till they reached a small curving beach, the high cliffs towering above it, and without any communication with the other part of the shore. A boat lay there; she was quickly launched, and the men, getting in, took Digby with them.

He had been full well sure that search would be made for him, but he saw that the difficulty of discovering him would be much increased by this proceeding of the smugglers. He had been unable to drop anything on the road by which he could be traced; and now embarked, and, as he thought, about to be carried out of the country, he was brought to the verge of despair.

The smugglers, however, had not rowed far before they once more turned the boat's head towards the land; and he soon found that they were at the foot of a lofty cliff.

"You may sing out now, youngster, as loudly as you like; no One will hear you whom we fear," said one of the men, undoing the handkerchief secured round his mouth.

Up the cliff the whole party climbed till they reached a cave in the face of the rock. Digby had not supposed so curious a place existed in that part of the country. The entrance was of no great size, but when they had gone a little way, he saw that it branched off into several broad and lofty galleries. Into one of them the smugglers turned, when a wooden partition appeared before them, and going through a small door, he found that they were in what looked like a large hall, lighted with lamps hung from the roof. A fire burnt in the centre with pots and caldrons cooking over it, and near it were several long tables and benches, sufficient to accommodate a considerable number of persons. The glare of the fire fell on numerous packages, and bales, and casks, piled up round the walls of the cave, while several ship's bunks and rough-looking bedsteads were arranged at the further end of the hall.

Several persons already occupied the place. Two of them were women, so Digby judged by their dress, though they were the roughest specimens of the female sex he had ever seen; the rest were men and boys. They all evinced great curiosity about him, and made many inquiries as to how he had been taken, and what was to be done with him. Digby did not hear the answers made to these questions, so that he was left in the dark as to the fate intended for him. The party were soon seated at the tables, and fish, flesh, and fowl, in ample quantities, were placed before them. Digby was invited to join them in somewhat a rough manner, but with no unkind intention, apparently. At first he thought that he ought to refuse, but he had grown very hungry, and he felt that it would be foolish not to make himself as comfortable as he could. Room was made for him near the fire, and one of the women brought him a plateful of the most delicate of the morsels of food which she could pick out.

"Poor little chap, it's hard for you to be taken away from home just now; but cheer up, may be they'll let you go again, by and by."

"Hillo, Bet! what are you talking to the child for?" exclaimed a man, whom Digby had for some time suspected to be the captain of the band.

The men, however, addressed him in the same familiar way that they spoke to each other, and called him "Nat Charnick." Though roughly dressed, his costume was neater than that of the other men; he spoke more correctly also; in appearance there was, perhaps, less of the ruffian about him. He was of moderate height, strongly built, and of a fairish complexion, but the expression of his countenance showed that, in essential points, he was in no way superior to the men who surrounded him. The ruffian crew appeared, from some reason or other, to be accustomed to look up to him, and a word from his lips speedily brought the most unruly to order. Food, though somewhat coarsely dressed, there was in abundance, and spirits of various sorts were passed round and drunk, as if they had

been so much water. When, however, the carouse appeared to be growing fast and furious, Nat Charnick called his crew to order, and reminded them that they had work to do that night. In an instant the men put aside their glasses, and rising from their seats, each one loaded himself with one of the casks, or bales, I have mentioned, and went out of the tavern. Digby sat still, wondering what was going to be done. The men, however, quickly returned and took up more bales or casks. Everybody, even the boys and women, were employed in the work. Like ants they kept going continually backwards and forwards, till the heaps of goods sensibly diminished.

“Oh, oh!” said Digby to himself, “here is a possibility of my effecting my escape, and I will carry out a burden with the rest, and as soon as I have put it down, I will try and make off, or hide myself somewhere outside the cavern.”

Accordingly he jumped from his seat, and putting a bale of silk on his shoulders, he followed Dick Owlett and some other lads out of the cave, as he fancied, unobserved by any one. How delighted he felt at getting into the open air, keen and cold as it was.

“In a few minutes I shall be free,” he thought; “if I once get to the top of the cliff won’t I run on? I doubt if even the fastest among the smugglers would overtake me.”

On he went with his burden, which was a pretty heavy one. They soon reached a narrow ledge on the face of a perpendicular cliff. Ropes were hanging over it, and the smugglers securing their bales and casks to them, away they were hoisted rapidly out of sight; but bitter was Digby’s disappointment when he found that there was not a spot near where he could by possibility conceal himself.

“Well done, youngster,” said the voice of Captain Charnick; “I like to see a lad willing to make himself useful; you’ll soon become like one of us, and spend a much more happy and free life than you would at school or at the old Hall there.”

Digby found himself caught in a trap, and that the smugglers might not suspect the design he had entertained, he was compelled to run backwards and forwards with the goods, as they were doing, till the cave was completely empty. The exercise had, however, the effect of making him so thoroughly tired, that he was glad to throw himself on a bed pointed out to him; and in a minute he was fast asleep. When he awoke the smugglers were astir, and the women were bending over the fire, busy in preparing breakfast. He was invited, as before, to partake of it.

“They cannot intend to do me much harm, or they would not feed me so well,” he said to himself; and he very wisely resolved to keep up his spirits, and to make himself as much at home as possible. He thanked the women in a cheerful voice for their kindness, and laughed and chatted in a perfectly natural and free way with every body round him. Dick Owlett looked surprised and rather suspiciously at him.

“You are a merry as well as active youngster, I see,” said Captain Charnick, coming up to him; “keep alive, and we will give you employment before long.”

“Thank you,” answered Digby, “I am much obliged to you for the good supper and breakfast you have given me, and if you will pay me a visit at Bloxholme Hall, I shall be very happy to give you as plentiful ones in return.”

The smugglers laughed heartily at the remark.

“It’s a doubt whether you’d like to see us at Bloxholme Hall, in the way we should go there,” remarked one of them; “howsomdever, we are not likely to put you to the trial.”

Breakfast over, most of the men left the cave; some of the remainder hauled out ropes and sails, and began working away busily on them, while others employed themselves in overhauling sea-chests, casks, and sacks of provisions, or in cleaning and repairing arms. It was very evident that the smugglers did not spend an idle life in the cavern; indeed, from what Digby had hitherto had an opportunity of remarking, he could not help thinking that the same industry employed in any of the lawful callings of life, would have procured them far more wealth and comfort than they could in any way at present enjoy.

Thus the day passed on. Digby, however, found that he was still a prisoner, for whenever he went towards the entrance of the cavern, Dick Owlett jumped up and made a very significant sign to him to go back again, and as Dick strengthened his argument with a loaded pistol in his hand, Digby saw that it would be wise to submit.

It was late in the afternoon when the greater number of the band hurriedly entered the cavern. They evidently brought some information, which was not of a pleasant character; the rest sprung quickly to their feet—the sails were rolled up—the rigging was put in a form to be easily carried; sea-chests, and cases, and baskets, were brought out and placed near the entrance ready to be moved; indeed, as far as Digby could judge, the smugglers were preparing to desert the place altogether. The Captain was still absent. Soon after these preparations were concluded, he made his appearance. Whatever had been the information previously received, he corroborated it.

“Be smart, my lads,” he exclaimed; “the lugger is ready, and the revenue people are on the wrong scent. We’ve no time to lose, or they may be back on us.”

At these words the men loaded themselves with the various articles which they had got ready to move, and one after the other left the cavern.

Digby hoped that he was to be allowed to remain, and to find his way home as best he could after the smugglers had gone; but again he was doomed to disappointment.

“Come, youngster, you are going with us,” said Captain Charnick, who had remained behind to see that nothing was left which he required.

Digby began to expostulate.

"Why, just now you were, I thought, all ready to join us," exclaimed the Captain, with a laugh. "Come along, though. I want you, that's enough."

Saying this, he took Digby by the arm in no very gentle way, and led him out of the cavern and down the face of the cliff. At the foot of it, so close in that she looked as if she must be touching the shore, lay a large lugger. The cliffs there formed a bay, in which she lay, and from her position, no one, except those who stood near the mouth of the cavern, could by any possibility see what was going forward on her deck.

Digby found, on reaching the foot of the cliff, that nearly all the things just carried from the cavern had been conveyed on board her. At last everything was embarked. Even now Digby hoped that he might be allowed to get away.

"Come, my lad, wish good-bye to old England," said the Captain, taking him by the arm, and lifting him into the boat. In another minute he was on board the lugger; the boats were hoisted in, the anchor was got up, and sail being made, with a fair and strong breeze she stood down channel.

Digby burst into tears; it was long since he had cried so bitterly. No one seemed to pity him; but they allowed him to grieve on by himself. The smugglers themselves, however, it was evident, were not free from anxiety. A bright look-out was kept in every direction, and more than once the lugger's course was altered to avoid a strange sail. The weather, too, had changed for the worse, and had become very threatening. To increase their difficulties, a thick mist and driving rain came on, so that they could often see but a short distance beyond the vessel. Still they ran on under all sail. The evening of a short winter's day was drawing on, when suddenly, the mist clearing off, a large cutter was seen right ahead, standing across their course.

"Down with the helm! Haul aft the sheets!" cried the Captain; and the lugger was brought on a wind. The movement, however, did not escape those on board the cutter, for she immediately went about, and stood after the smuggler.

That she was a revenue vessel Digby had no doubt; and now he hoped that his emancipation was near. But the lugger proved herself to be a very fast craft; and though the cutter carried all the canvass she could bear, she did not appear in the slightest degree to be overhauling them.

"We are not in her clutches just yet, my lad," said Captain Charnick, as he saw Digby anxiously watching the cutter. "Once upon a time we would have fought her, and beat her off, but now we must trust to our heels. We've a pair of smart ones, let me tell you; and if you expect ever to step aboard that cutter you are mistaken."

Digby's heart sunk at hearing the Captain express himself with so much confidence. The wind continued increasing; and Digby heard some of the smugglers say that it was shifting about very much, and that it would settle down into a regular south-westerly gale. In spite, however, of the strong wind, neither the smugglers nor those on board the cruiser appeared inclined to shorten sail. The lugger tore through the water with a mass of foam at her bows, which came flying in sheets over the deck. The sea, too, was getting up; and as she rushed on she seemed to be making such headlong plunges into it, that Digby sometimes thought that she would never rise again. There was a little binnacle on deck. Digby got a look at the compass within it, and found that the cutter was once more running up Channel. This again raised his hopes; he thought that there was a better chance of the lugger being overtaken by the revenue cruiser, when he had little doubt that he should be able to make himself known. The gale increased, the waves danced more wildly than ever, their white crests gleaming amid the gloom of night, which rapidly came on. Still the smugglers would not shorten sail; they trusted to the stout little craft which had carried them safely through many a storm, and to the darkness of night, to enable them to escape.

Digby kept on deck in spite of the way the vessel tumbled about, and the seas, which every now and then washed on board, soaked him through. He had been for some time standing holding on by the weather bulwarks, looking anxiously ahead, and wondering whether the lugger could possibly mount again over the next foaming wave. Had he not learned a good deal about sailing from Toby Tubb, he would have been much more alarmed. As it was, the smugglers remarked to each other that he was a brave little chap, and would make a good seaman some day or other, when he was one of them. Digby might have been flattered with the remark, but he would have rather shrunk from the career they proposed for him. He had stood thus for some time, when turning round, and looking astern, the cutter was no longer to be seen. In vain he tried to pierce the gloom; nothing could he see but the dark waves, and the white spray, dancing up towards to the sky.

"There's no fear, we've given her the slip this time," he heard one of the smugglers remark; and soon all were congratulating themselves on their escape from their pursuer.

Poor Digby felt very miserable. The gale came down stronger and stronger. The lugger held on her course; the smugglers no longer spoke to each other; only now and then the Captain issued some order in a loud tone, which all hastened to obey. And Digby judged from this that they were far from contented with the state of affairs. Some sail was taken off the vessel, but she still had too much; she at times heeled over fearfully, and the seas, with terrific force, washed on board. Digby felt that he would have been carried away, but he had bound a rope fast to the weather bulwarks, and securing it round himself, he was preserved from a fate so dreadful. Hour after hour passed, and still the lugger went tearing through the dark waters.

"You'd better go below and turn in, youngster," said the Captain, good-naturedly, to him. "There's some brandy and water and a biscuit for you in the cabin; it will do you good."

Digby thanked him, but said that he would rather stay where he was, and see what was going to happen.

Sometimes the wind seemed to lull, and Digby hoped that the storm was going to be over, but it again breezed up,

and blew harder than ever. The smugglers stood some at the helm, and others clustered round the masts. As the storm increased, the darkness became more intense. The vessel seemed to be rushing into a mass of black; the rain came down in torrents; thunder, in terrific peals, rolled overhead; and forked lightning darted from the skies. Digby felt almost worn out, and ready to sink—a dreamy unconsciousness came over him. Had he not secured himself by the rope he would have fallen to leeward, and been washed overboard. How long he had continued in this state he could not tell. He was aroused by a terrific crash; he was up to his waist in water—a tremendous sea had struck the vessel; the masts had gone by the board; and many of the crew had been washed away. He could hear their shrieks of agonising despair as the vessel was swept on away from them; and they, with all their sins on their heads, were left amid that dark sea to perish miserably. The survivors, bold seamen as they were, held on to whatever they could grasp, knowing that, till daylight, they could do nothing towards getting up a jury-mast, on which they could set sail, to carry them into port. Were they destined ever again to see the bright light of day? On went the lugger, impelled by the force of the wind, bodily to leeward. Suddenly there was a crash; the vessel seemed to be lifted up and down; she came again on a rock, which split her into fragments. Shrieks of terror and despair sounded in Digby's ears. He, too, cried out—it was that God would save him. He was alone, tossed about by the wild waters, clinging to a part of the bulwarks. Soon the voices of the once bold and hardy smugglers were silent. Digby felt himself lifted up and down by the waves; the spray, in thick masses, flew over him. The loud roar of the sea dashing on the shore almost deafened him. There was a grating sound as if he was close to the beach; he touched the sand with his feet. Now he was carried away; but another wave rolled in, and sent him high up against a rugged rock. He had become separated from the plank to which he had been but loosely secured. He grasped hold of the rock; the wave rolled back, and he found his feet touching the soft sand. He ran on as fast as he could move, but he ran against a rock. Again he heard the roar of a wave as it came rolling up, but it did not even reach his feet. He clung to the rock till it had retired. Once more he tried to work his way on, but he could discover no outlet, and stooping down, he found that the sand was dry and soft; he therefore suspected that he had been thrown into a cave. It did not, happily, occur to him that the tide might be rising, and that even then the sea might pursue him. He crawled up to the furthest end, where the ground was dry, and the air comparatively warm; but he himself felt numbed and chilled, and could not help thinking that he should be frozen to death. As he sat there he began to consider how he could make his escape. In the dark he could do nothing. It was still some hours to daylight he supposed. He wished that he could make a fire; it would show him where he was, and help to dry his clothes. He felt about, and found that there was an abundant supply of wood, but it had been so long there that much of it was soft as tinder. Not long before, one of his companions had given him a present, which every boy prizes—a flint and steel, with some tinder; it was in a small tin case. He expected to find that the water had got into it, and spoilt it, or that it had been washed out of his pocket. He felt for it; there it was safe. He scraped all the wood he could find round him, and then took out his box; it was well made, and had proved water-tight. With a grateful heart he struck a light, and put a piece of the burning tinder under some of the soft wood; then, stooping down, he blew it steadily till, to his joy, the wood caught, and very soon burst into a flame. He piled more wood on till there was a good blaze. Looking around, he found that he was in a large cavern, with the water filling its mouth, and which ran up some way directly from it, and then turned sharply round to the left. He had happily been guided to this turning, where he was sheltered from the wind, and was well supplied with fuel. The blazing fire again made the blood circulate through his numbed limbs, and dried his clothes. He looked about and could not see how he could escape; but he felt, after the merciful way in which he had been preserved, that it would be gross ingratitude to doubt that means for saving him would be provided.

“Where are all the people who so lately were with me, full of life, on board the lugger?” he thought to himself; “not one of them remains in existence. I alone have been saved among them all, though the weakest, and least able to help myself.”

Such, indeed, was the case. His strength had hitherto been wonderfully kept up, but he was beginning to grow very faint and hungry, and he felt as if he should not be able to hold out much longer. He, however, exerted himself to the utmost to keep up his fire; he knew that his life might depend on it. It was so cold and damp, though fortunately not freezing, that he thought if he went to sleep, and let his fire go out, he might be so chilled and benumbed as to be unable to rally. Whenever, then, he felt very sleepy, he got up, and walked round and round his fire to arouse and warm himself. How anxiously he looked for daylight; how he longed for the storm to cease, that he might try and make his escape.

Poor Digby; he was very young, and not altogether very wise, but there was good stuff in him, as the way he behaved on this occasion showed; but it required care and attention to bring it into permanent practical use.

At length he grew very weary; he was obliged to sit down. He drew as near the fire as he could venture to sit; his eyes closed, and his head dropped on his knees. All sorts of strange scenes passed before him: he felt as if he was still struggling in the waves; that he heard around him the shrieks of the drowning wretches. He started up—a cry or shout rung in his ears. The fire was still blazing, for the drift-wood burnt slowly; the bright sunlight, too, was streaming in at the mouth of the cavern, and the storm was over.

Chapter Ten.

Further Adventures of Arthur and his Companions—Digby Rescued—Rejoicings at Bloxholme—Christmas Amusements—The Leader of the Revels—The End of the Holidays.

Arthur Haviland and his companions having assured the old man and idiot boy, whom they found in the cavern, that they had no wish to do them harm, they, after some time, succeeded in quieting their apprehensions. In vain Arthur tried to gain more information about Digby. All he could learn was that the captain had carried him off in the lugger to foreign parts, and that they had all made up their minds not to come back to England.

As it was getting late, and they had a long way to pull, Toby now summoned Arthur to return. Arthur, however, was not satisfied with the information he had obtained, and was unwilling to go away without gaining some definite clue

to the place to which Digby had been carried. Finding that threats were of no avail, he tried to induce the old man to say all he knew by the promise of rewards.

“You hear what the young gentleman says,” observed Toby. “You and I know each other, old Joe, and you know that I would not deceive you. What Mr Haviland says, he’ll do; that he will, depend on it. Come along, sir; I know where to find him. If he’s got anything to say, he’ll tell me. We haven’t another moment to lose, that I know.”

Saying this, Toby led the way from the cave, followed by Arthur and John Pratt.

The weather had evidently changed very much for the worse, and the wind was blowing strongly, and sending the spray right up to where they were standing. Toby shook his head doubtfully; but he continued to descend.

“I thought so,” he exclaimed, when they reached the bottom of the cliff.

There was old Jem with the boat partly out of the water, he hauling away with all his might to get her out of danger; but the waves were dashing against her stern, and threatening every instant to knock her to pieces. They had arrived only just in time; but, by dint of working away together, they got the boat hauled up beyond the reach of the sea. When this was done they went back to the cave, for the wind was blowing stronger and stronger, and it was very evident that they would not be able to leave the place that night. They had reason to be thankful that they had a place which would afford them so complete a shelter during that tempestuous night. When they got back they found the old man perfectly ready to be civil; and making themselves at home, they rummaged, out an ample supply of food, and materials for forming beds, which they ranged round the fire.

Toby talked for all the party, and told many of his best anecdotes and stories. The genius of the place seemed to recall the memories of his early days, and many a tale of smuggling life and adventure he poured forth.

Neither Arthur nor John Pratt were inclined to talk. They were thinking too much of poor Digby, tossing about on the wild ocean that stormy night. Had they been able to see the terrific danger to which he was exposed, they would have been still more alarmed. How mercifully has God hid the future from us, as well as the scenes of peril and suffering to which those we love at a distance may be exposed. How it would double our anguish to feel that we could not fly to their help, that we could afford them no relief. How foolish and wicked, then, are those persons who try to draw aside (by devices the most absurd however) that impenetrable veil which the Almighty, in his infinite wisdom, has placed before our eyes. Never let us put faith in those who pretend that they can either show the future, or bring the present, when at a distance, before our eyes. Clairvoyants, spirit-rappers, and similar pretenders, under whatever name they may appear, we may depend on it, are impostors. They have been shown to be so over and over again; but like Chinese tumbling-figures, though knocked down, they will spring up again, over and over again, as long as dupes can be found to put faith in them.

Arthur Haviland long recollected that night in the cavern—the flickering light of the fire; the red glow cast over some parts of the sides and roof; and the dark, strange-shaped shadows, which passed over others; the low voices of his companions; the howling of the wind; and the incessant roar of the waves, as they beat against the foot of the cliffs. He at length, however, fell asleep, and did not awake till Toby called him, with an invitation to take a cup of coffee and a biscuit before they embarked. He was not sorry to accept the offer.

As soon as the meal was over Toby went out, and returned with so favourable a report of the weather, that it was agreed that they might venture once more to embark.

Arthur repeated his promise to the old man, who undertook to bring any information to him he could gain about Digby.

The sun was shining, and the air was keen, for the wind had got round to the north. That, however, was an important advantage, as it sent down the sea; and the boat, when they had launched her, though tossed about a good deal, was able to continue her progress by keeping close in shore, and skirting all the bays and inlets. They had gone some way, and had just rounded a reef of rocks, whose black heads rose with threatening aspect out of the water, when Arthur exclaimed that he thought he saw a smoke coming out of the cliff. Toby ceased pulling, but did not speak. He looked round on every side; several pieces of timber were floating about, and on the shore lay a mass of cordage and broken spars.

“Some vessel was cast away not far from here last night,” exclaimed Toby, at length. “Heaven help the unfortunate fellows on board her; but that smoke may be made by some of them who have escaped. What say you, old Jem?”

Old Jem agreed with Toby, and told him that there was a small cave just in there, from which the smoke might proceed.

Paddling in cautiously, for there were a good many rocks about capable of knocking an ugly hole in the boat’s bottom, as Toby observed, they approached the cliff. The entrance to the cave on the sand was soon perceptible. The boat reached a sandy beach. So completely did the cliff overhang the water, and so much did it project on either side of the cave, that only by means of a boat could anybody possibly leave it. So Arthur remarked as he jumped with Toby and John Pratt on shore. They could see the gleam of a fire from the interior. Arthur ran on; a little sailor-boy was sitting over it.

“Hillo, my poor lad; we have come to help you,” exclaimed Arthur.

The little sailor-boy looked up. There could be no doubt about it—there sat Digby Heathcote.

With a shout of joy Arthur sprang forward, and lifted him up in his arms. John Pratt, in his delight, gave him a hug which almost squeezed the breath out of his body; and Toby Tubbs seized his hand, and gave it a shake which well

nigh wrung it off. It was some moments before any one could speak, and Digby could hurriedly give an account of what had occurred.

"Well, I be right glad, that I be," exclaimed Toby. "Them who has gone to their account has brought their fate upon themselves. Howsomdever, Master Digby, come into the boat; you are cold and hungry, I'll warrant, and will be glad of a breakfast and warm bed."

Digby was ready enough to go, but he begged that search might be made in case any of the crew of the lugger might have been washed on shore, and be still clinging on among the crevices of the rocks.

Toby shook his head. "It was not likely any had escaped. It was a wonder he had done so."

Search was made, however, but there was not the sign of a living being, nor had any of the bodies of the smugglers been washed ashore.

Toby and John Pratt insisted on taking off their overcoats to wrap up Digby; and the former had a little brandy in a flask, which he insisted on pouring down his throat. Digby, to his surprise, found that it appeared very little stronger than water, a proof of how much chilled he was, and how important a stimulant this was to him.

Little are spirit-drinkers aware of not only how much injury they are doing themselves, but how completely they are depriving themselves of important assistance in time of need. A glass of brandy may save the life of a person who never touches spirits, but would have no effect on an habitual brandy-drinker.

The voyage back to Osberton need not be further described. The reception Digby met with from Mr and Mrs Nugent may easily be conceived. Digby indignantly declined to go to bed, but he did not refuse to eat a hearty breakfast, in which Arthur joined him, or to change his sailor's clothes for a suit more fitted for the heir of Bloxholme to appear in.

"Put up the others, however; I'll have them with me," he exclaimed. "They will remind me of my trip in the smugglers' lugger, at all events."

"Of its fearful termination, and of the merciful way in which you were preserved, my dear boy," observed Mr Nugent.

"Yes, uncle, yes," said Digby; "I thought of that. I don't feel I can ever be too thankful."

A carriage was ordered, and Mr Nugent, and Digby, and Arthur, went inside; and John Pratt and Toby Tubb, whom Digby insisted should accompany them, went outside; and away they rattled as fast as four horses could gallop towards Bloxholme. Every minute was of importance to release Mr and Mrs Heathcote from their state of suspense. The carriage with its four smoking horses, rattled up the avenue. Almost before John Pratt had time to jump from the box the hall-door was flung open; Alesbury had caught sight of Digby, and hurrying down the steps faster than he had moved for many a day, he pulled him out of the carriage, and carried him into the house. Then Digby found himself in his mother's arms. Then, and not till then, did he burst into tears, but they were tears of joy and gratitude.

Poor little Kate, how she cried, too, and then she smiled and laughed; and when she got hold of Digby she could scarcely refrain from beating him for making her so very miserable; indeed, she gave him two or three severe slaps, and called him naughty, dear, tiresome, good boy; and Digby pulled her ears, and her nose, and showed his love in a variety of other eccentric ways. Digby came in for a great deal of caressing from all sides, of which he did not at all approve; but he submitted to it as an unavoidable evil, and looked very much as a donkey does when harness is about to be put on its back.

Gusty shouted and laughed louder than ever that day; and his elder sisters kissed him as elder sisters generally do their younger brothers; but he took that sort of thing better from them than from any one else.

Then he had to tell the story of his adventures over and over again. John Pratt, however, was able to help him in that respect in the servants' hall, where he did ample justice to the young Squire's courage, and never was tired of telling all he knew about his adventures.

Digby was a strong hardy fellow, but he was not made of iron; and, long before dinner-time, he gave signs of being very sleepy and tired. He consented to go to bed, provided he was called in time to get up and dress for dinner. When, however, he was called, he was so fast asleep that nothing could awake him; and so he was allowed to sleep on till the following morning. It was ever afterwards a constant joke against him, that, when he came down, he fancied that he was coming down to dinner, and was very much surprised to find breakfast on the table.

Arthur Haviland had pretty well kept him in countenance by sleeping the greater part of the time; and neither of them were quite themselves again for two or three days.

Their adventures were fully a nine days' wonder; and the whole visiting acquaintance of the family called to hear about it. Indeed, Digby had to tell the story so often that he got weary of it; and at last insisted that Kate should represent him, and tell it instead, as if the events had happened to her. He did not, however, forget poor Dame Marlow, of the death of whose grandson he had heard from some of the smugglers. He told Mr Bowdler of the trick he had once played her, and begged him to go and break the news to the old woman before she heard it from any one else.

At first she would not believe that the only being she seemed to love was lost to her for ever; and at length, when the Vicar assured her that there was no doubt about the matter, she gave way to a fit of tears such as she had not shed for years. Her heart was softened. The clergyman placed before her in the clearest way the great truths of the Gospel. Many days passed away, and many visits he had to pay, before she at all seemed to comprehend them; but he persevered—as every true and faithful minister of the Gospel will persevere—when he feels that a lost soul is to

be saved. At length the light seemed to dawn on her long-benighted mind.

“You tell me wonderful things, Mr Bowdler, which I never before understood,” she said, at last. “I am a sinner, I feel that; and if I was left to myself, I am sure that I should be lost, for I don’t think that I could undo a quarter, nor an hundredth part, for that matter, of the sins I have committed; but as you say, that if I repent I may go to One who will wash away my sins, I will go to Him; and I am sure, from everything he has caused to be said in the Bible, that he will wash away my sins, and save my soul from death.”

Much more she said, showing that she fully comprehended the great truths of the Gospel; find now her great anxiety was to warn those she had so long misled, and she was never weary of going about, and telling them of the Bible, and of the comfort it had been to her. At first, people could scarcely believe their senses when they heard her talk, so completely changed she had become, and so anxious she was to be doing all the good in her power. She tried to make her old husband comprehend the truths she had imbibed; but he afforded one of the numberless examples of the danger of putting off repentance to another day. His mind was dead, though his body was still alive, and in a short time he sunk into the grave. Her great grief was about her grandson, to whom she had set so bad an example, and whom she had never attempted to direct aright. He was gone, and nothing she could do would now have any power over his fate.

Oh, may all those who read this reflect on the incalculable harm which a bad example may do to those younger, or in an inferior station to themselves. If they could see it, they would start back with horror and dismay at the result of their conduct. An idle word, an idle expression, or an irreverent joke, may seem a light thing in their eyes, but even words may produce a great deal of harm; much more will a continual course of idle, careless, and bad conduct; and depend upon it, many a younger brother and companion has been lost, body and soul, who might have had a very different fate had those who had an influence over him endeavoured to lead him aright.

Digby was very glad to hear the account Mr Bowdler gave of Dame Marlow, though he probably did not understand the great importance of the change. Kate, however, whose comprehension was far more advanced than Digby’s, did understand it fully, and, of her own accord, went and explained the trick she had once played her, and expressed her sorrow for it.

Digby was not quite himself again for a week or more after his dangerous adventure, and very often in the night he used to start up in his sleep, dreaming that he was on board the lugger, and that she was being dashed on the rocks. The holidays, however, promised to be as pleasant as usual. Many a delightful ride Digby got on Sweetlips; while often Kate cantered gaily by his side, dispelling, by her cheerful conversation, any of the over-gloomy thoughts which, in spite of his well-strung nerves and constitutional hardihood, would occasionally occur.

The expected guests, also, arrived, and several of them had sons about Digby’s age; so that the house was full, and a very merry Christmas party were collected.

Cousin Giles was the life and soul of the younger portion of the community. He started all the games in the evening, and arranged all the out-door amusements. A hard frost set in, and, as soon as the ice bore thoroughly, skating became the order of the day. Neither Digby nor Arthur Haviland had ever skated; indeed, only two of the boys had begun the previous year, and they were no great adepts at the art. Skates were, therefore, sent for, and cousin Giles undertook to be the instructor of the party. As he said that he should be frozen if he fastened on all the skates to his pupil’s feet at the pond, he had them all fitted and secured in the house, and then procured a small cart, and carried them all down bodily in it to the pond. He allowed those who wished it a kitchen chair to shove before them; but Digby and Arthur disdained such assistance, and preferred trusting to a stout stick and their own legs to keep them from falling. Cousin Giles having taken them out of the cart, arranged them in line about two yards apart.

“Now, boys, watch me,” he cried out, putting himself before them. “Stand upright, as I do, feet a little apart, ankles stiff. Don’t tremble; you won’t tumble if you do properly. Just give a slight touch with the point of the right skate and away you go on your left foot; now touch the ice with the point of your left foot, and you slide on with your right. Away we go. Who’s that tumbled down? Oh, Benjie Bowland. Never mind; up, Benjie; at it again. Bravo, Arthur. Bravo, Digby. You get on better than the fellows with the chair. You’ll skate in a day or two, do the outside edge in four or five days, and the spread-eagle in a week.”

With such assistance and encouragement the boys got on rapidly, and enjoyed their skating. Digby beat all the others by perseverance and pluck. The moment he tumbled, he picked himself up, never minding the bruises; while his sturdy little legs soon got the entire command of his skates. He did not promise to make a peculiarly graceful skater, but it was evident, from the rapid progress he made, that there were very few things he would not be able to do.

At last, however, a heavy fall of snow came on, and completely covered up the ice. Though men were set to work with brooms to sweep passages across and round the pond, yet a second fall again covered them up. This happened three or four times. A small space was still cleared every morning, but only the most persevering skaters frequented it; and the boys expressed a wish for some other amusement.

“I vote we build a snow-man, the largest snow-man that ever was built,” exclaimed Cousin Giles, while all the party were assembled at breakfast.

The idea took, and was hailed with enthusiasm.

Cousin Giles went about everything he undertook systematically. He set John Pratt to work to cut out a number of bits of board, with handles, to serve as trowels, and he collected all the wheelbarrows and hand-barrows, and spades, on the premises. John Pratt and three other men were called in to assist. A sheltered place on the lawn was chosen for the erection of the snow-giant, while a large field on one side, through a shrubbery, would afford an amply supply of snow, when that on the lawn was exhausted. All hands, with great glee, set to work; some were to bring the snow up

to the spot, others were to act under Cousin Giles, as masons.

“He will be very imposing if we make him like an ancient king, seated on his throne, with a huge staff in his hand,” he observed. “We will make him hollow, with steps in his inside, so that we may climb up, and look out of his eyes, and halloo out of his mouth—eh, boys? Then we must have a seat in each arm, and another in his crown, where one of you must get up, and make a speech from. You see we have undertaken to perform a gigantic labour; we must lose no time, therefore, though, luckily, our material is not difficult to work.”

First, Cousin Giles marked the foundation of the giant’s throne; the sides of it were five feet thick, so that a large quantity of snow was required for that alone. The greater part of it was scraped up from the lawn. While that was being done, Cousin Giles made a model of the proposed giant in snow, a couple of feet high, and that very much assisted his young workmen in their undertaking, as they at once saw the figure he had conceived, and which they wished to produce. Everybody labouring with a will, and systematically, the work went on rapidly, and the chair assumed gigantic proportions. The giant’s feet, which were placed on a footstool, were four feet long, and his legs were eight feet high up to his knees. Ladders were soon required to reach the seat of his chair; and then his body was commenced. A young pine-tree was procured, and that supported one of his arms, while the other rested by his side. Some pretty severe tumbles were got from the top of the chair, but no one was much hurt. Cousin Giles arched the greater part of the inside, but he did not disdain to make use of some timber to strengthen his erection.

A great deal had been done by luncheon time, when all the party assembled, with very good appetites, in the dining-room; but Cousin Giles begged that none of the visitors would go out to see their little man till he was complete.

After luncheon, they all went back; but though they worked away till dark, the giant still wanted his head and crown. It was agreed that though they might continue labouring with lanterns, they could not complete it before dinner. Not to lose time, however, they all joined in bringing in snow, and piled it up near the figure, ready to begin work the next morning.

They had a very merry evening, and all sorts of games were played. Cousin Giles, however, disappeared earlier than usual, and they were afraid that he was tired with his labours during the day, and had gone to bed.

The next morning the party assembled at breakfast, and, after it was over, and the letters had been read, and the newspapers glanced at, Cousin Giles invited everybody to see their little man.

“But we have to finish his head,” was the general exclamation from the boys.

“Never mind,” was his answer. “Head or no head, or crown or no crown, I beg that he may be looked at.”

Great coats and cloaks, and hats and bonnets, were procured, and the party assembled. A sheet was seen thrown over the top of the figure, and behind it was a tall pole, at the foot of which stood John Pratt.

“Here is our snow-giant, ladies and gentlemen,” cried Cousin Giles. “Though so large, he is perfectly harmless, and no one need be afraid of approaching him.”

He then made a signal to John Pratt, who, hauling away on the rope, withdrew the sheet, and beneath it appeared not only the giant’s head, and a large pair of black eyes, and a red mouth, but a crown of gold a foot or more high, on the top of it; while in the centre stood Kate Heathcote, waving a flag, with Digby on one side, and Arthur Haviland on the other.

Loud shouts from the spectators greeted them; and everybody complimented the architect on the execution of his vast undertaking. No one present had ever seen so huge a man. He was said to be even larger than the idols of the Assyrian temples, represented at the Crystal Palace.

As Kate and her young companions found it somewhat cold on the top of the giant’s head, they very soon descended; and then all the boys amused themselves by climbing up and about the monster, till they ran no small risk of pulling him bodily down. He was, however, so scientifically and securely built, that he withstood all the rough usage he received. The snow-giant afforded a fund of amusement for a long time. The next morning, his crown was gone, and a huge broad-brim hat was on his head. Another morning, a pipe was found in his mouth actually smoking, and for some time he continued to blow his cloud. Another day, he had a large branch of holly in his hand, and a wreath of holly, with red berries, round his head. Once he appeared in a high conical cap, very like a fool’s-cap, while in front hung a placard with “Won’t say his lessons,” painted on it. Indeed, there was no end of the changes the snow-giant underwent. Then he was seen to appear with a post-bag hanging from his arm; and, on its being opened, it was found to contain a variety of letters to different people present, mostly the younger ones of the party. They were from very odd correspondents. One was from the Man in the Moon; another signed himself—Your affectionate cousin, Timothy Tugmutton; the Antipodes. The King of the Cannibal Islands wrote two letters; and the Polar Bear another. They were very amusing epistles; and the writers seemed to know in a wonderful way what was going forward in the house. The arrival of the snow-giant’s post-bag was looked forward to with even more interest than had been the changes which had taken place in his head-dress.

Thus the early weeks of winter passed pleasantly by. Mr Nugent tried to induce Digby to give some time in the morning to study, to prepare himself for the new school, to which it was arranged he should go after the Christmas holidays; but he appeared always to be in too great a hurry and bustle to sit down quietly to his books, so as to imbibe any information from them.

“You will be sorry for your idleness, my dear boy,” said his uncle. “Not only are you acquiring no knowledge, but you are altogether getting out of the habit of study—out of training, I will call it. Suppose that you were to give up running for some months, do you think that you would be able to move your legs as fast as when you were constantly using them? Or if you were not to employ your arms for the same length of time, you would be very unwilling, I suspect, to

climb a tree. The mind, in the same way, requires constant and regular exercise, or it very rapidly gets out of use, and it takes a great deal of trouble to bring it into working condition again."

Digby listened respectfully to what his uncle said; and though the next morning he got out his books very manfully, one of his young friends coming in, made him put them up again, and they were not looked into that day.

Thus the holidays glided by, and the day of his departure approached. He liked having so many guests in the house, but they prevented him from enjoying Kate's society as much as formerly, and he was not sorry when all of them, with the exception of Arthur Haviland, went away.

Everybody liked Arthur. He was a great favourite with Mrs Heathcote, as well as with the Squire and Digby's eldest sisters; and Kate thought him a first-rate fellow; he was so very different to Julian Langley.

Digby was very sorry to part from Arthur. He, as it had been arranged, was to go to Mr Sanford's school, in Berkshire, while Arthur returned to one in Hampshire, of which he spoke in the highest terms, and regretted that his friend was not to accompany him.

Digby pressed Arthur warmly to come back and spend the summer holidays. This, however, he could not promise to do.

"My father may wish me to accompany him somewhere, and I, of course, shall wish to go with him," said Arthur. "But I will promise not to let a year pass, if I can help it, without our meeting."

No one ever quitted a house having more completely secured the regard of all the family than did Arthur Haviland.

Cousin Giles, who had great discernment of character, spoke very highly of him, and regretted much that Digby could not have been more with him.

To Digby's surprise, a day or two before he was to leave home, his father called him into his study; not that the Squire ever did study anything there beyond the newspaper, or a compendium of information for justices of the peace, or some similar work.

"So, my dear boy, you are going away again from us," he began. "I wish that you could stay with us always, and have John Pratt to look after you, as he did when you were a little chap; but as that can't be, you must make the best use of your time when you are away from us. What I want to talk to you about is this—your mother and I intended that you should spend a couple of years or so at Mr Sanford's, at Grangewood House, and then go to some public school; however, we shall talk about that by-and-by. I wish to see how you get on at the school to which you are going. It will be a very different sort of life to that to which you have hitherto led. You'll get some hard knocks and kicks, but you'll not mind them; and you will have to fight your way upward, but that you are well able to do; and I have little fear that you will take good care of yourself. I am not much in the habit of giving advice, as you know, my boy; but there is one thing I must charge you, never to forget that you are a Christian, and a gentleman. I have done my best to make you hate and scorn to tell a lie, and the consequence is, that I would sooner take your word than I would the oath of any man I know. And now I charge you to fight against every bad thought which comes into your mind, and to scorn to do a mean or ungenerous action. Guard especially against selfishness; nothing so quickly grows on a person by indulgence. Fight for your undoubted rights, but gladly give up anything which may conduce to the pleasure of others, or benefit them. I don't mean, of course, that you are to let a bully take anything he may fancy from you, that is quite a different matter; but never try to get hold of what you know another person wishes for, and of which you will thus deprive him."

Much more the Squire said to the same effect. Digby grasped his father's hand.

"Yes, papa, I will do my best, indeed I will, to act as you tell me," he answered. "I have done a good many things I have been sorry for, but yet I don't think there has been anything which would make you ashamed of calling me your son."

Such were the sentiments with which Digby went to school. His parting was not a very melancholy one. Kate and Gusty cried, but he held up very bravely; and when a postchaise came to the door, and his boxes were secured, and he had manfully stepped in, and John Pratt, who was to accompany him all the way, had taken his seat on the box, and the postilion had cracked his whip, he was able to wave his cap out of the window, and to sing out, in a cheerful voice—"Hurra for the Midsummer holidays!"

Chapter Eleven.

Digby's New School—How he was received there—He learns the Inconvenience of Want of Discipline—His Companions and their Characters—Advantage of a Bold Front in a Good Cause.

"Is this Grangewood House, John?" asked Digby, as he looked out of the window of the fly which had brought them from the railway station, and which was now stopping at a large white gate, which John Pratt had got off the box to open.

"Yes, sir; this be Mr Sanford's academy for young gentlemen. There's a great many on 'em comes backwards and forwards by me at times," answered the driver, instead of John, who did not hear the question.

It was a substantial, large, red-brick house, completely in the country, with a circular drive up to it, and a meadowish piece of lawn, with some fine elms, in front. The place was not picturesque, but well suited for the requirements of a school. There were wide-spreading wings on either side, with a walled enclosure on the right, from which proceeded

the sound of many young voices, shouting, bawling, and laughing, showing Digby that it was the playground. He altogether liked the look of things outside.

The fly stopped in front of the house; a flight of stone steps led up to the chief door. John descended, and rang the bell, and, while it was being answered, busied himself in taking his young master's things out of the fly.

"Is this Mr Sanford's school, young woman?" he asked of the maid-servant, who opened the door.

"It is, young man, and my name is Susan," was the quick reply; some people might have called it pert.

"Then, Susan, do you just tell your master that young Master Digby Heathcote, the eldest son of Squire Heathcote, of Bloxholme, has come," answered John, letting down the steps, and handing Digby out with an air of the greatest respect. He unintentionally spoke, too, in a tone which sounded not a little pompous.

Several boys, who had been passing through the hall at the time, and, of course, followed Susan to the door, to have a look at the new comer, overheard the announcement. A loud shout of laughter from many voices followed, in a variety of tones, as they retreated down a passage. Digby heard them repeating one to the other "Young Master Digby Heathcote, the eldest son of Squire Heathcote, of Bloxholme, has come. Ho, ho! young Master Digby, what an important person you are—ha! ha! ha!—we don't think." Great emphasis was laid on the words young master, and eldest son. Digby knew quite enough of boys to wish heartily that poor John had held his tongue.

"You'll go round to the back door; or are you going away in the fly?" said the maid-servant, addressing John, with rather a scornful glance.

"Neither one nor t'other, Mistress Susan," answered John. "I'm going to stay with Master Digby for the present."

"You can't do that; Master Digby has to go at once to Mr Sanford," replied Susan.

"That's where I'm going to, young woman, let me tell you," exclaimed John, bristling up. "He has been spirited away once, and we had a hard job to get him back; and I'm not going to lose sight of him till I see him safe in Mr Sanford's hands, who must be answerable for him whenever he is sent for. A pretty thing to leave him with such as you, indeed, who might go and declare that you never got him. No, Master Digby, dear—that's what I'm going to do, I know my duty, and I'm going to do it."

The last remark was made to Digby, who was expostulating, by signs, with John, fearing that he would offend Susan. The damsel, however, seemed not to care a bit for what John said; and would have shut the hall-door in his face, but he would not let go of Digby's hand.

"Well, I don't know what master will say to you," exclaimed Susan, as John entered the hall, evidently resolved not to lose sight of Digby, or his boxes, till he had delivered them into what he considered proper custody. Susan, meantime, disappeared at a door on one side of the hall. She soon returned.

"You are to go in there," she said, addressing Digby. "Not you," she said, looking at John.

"There are just two opinions about that," answered John, coolly opening the door, and walking with Digby into a handsome library.

A tall, delicate-looking man, was reclining in his dressing-gown on a sofa, with a book in his hand. He looked up with an expression of surprise on his countenance on seeing John; and then glanced at Digby, but did not rise.

"Bee's you Mr Sanford, sir?" asked John, pulling the lock of his hair he usually employed for that purpose.

"Yes, I am, and the head of this school; and who are you?" said the gentleman, but not at all in an angry tone.

"I'm Squire Heathcote's man, of Bloxholme, and this is his son, Master Digby Heathcote; and I'm to deliver him safe and sound into your hands, to keep him carefully till he is sent for home, or till you send him back," answered John, firmly. "I suppose it's all right, sir?"

"I will give you an acknowledgment in writing that I have him all safe," said Mr Sanford, much amused at John's mode of proceeding. "Go into the kitchen, and get something to eat and drink after your journey."

"No, thank you, sir; I'd rather have the writing. I'm not hungry. We had something, Master Digby and I, as we came along; and I have to go back to the station with the fly."

"Very well; push that table with the desk on it near me. I will give you what you require."

John did as he was desired; and Mr Sanford wrote a short note, which he gave him.

John forthwith handed it to Digby. "I suppose it's all right, Master Digby, dear," he whispered. "I bean't no great scholar, sir, and so I just wanted the young master to see that the lines was all right and proper. No offence to you, sir, you know," he added, turning to Mr Sanford.

The schoolmaster was highly amused; but Digby was afraid that John had gone too far.

"It's all right, John," he exclaimed, taking his hand affectionately. "Good by, good by. My love to papa and mamma, and Kate and Gusty, and all; and don't forget to look after Sweetlips, and tell Kate to write to me about him; but she'll do that, I'm sure. You must go, John, I know you must." Digby felt more inclined to cry than he had done before. John was the last link which united him with all the home associations he was conjuring up. John warmly returned Digby's

grasp. He went to the door, and opened it. He turned round once more with his hand on the lock.

"You has him in charge, sir," he said, looking sternly at Mr Sanford. "Oh, take care of him, sir; he's very precious down at Bloxholme there."

John, afraid of trusting himself, bolted out of the door.

Digby overheard some words between John and Susan outside; they ended in a laugh, just before the fly drove off, so he had no doubt they had become good friends; and he afterwards had reason to believe that John had bestowed half a sovereign on her from his own pocket, to secure her good services for the young master.

"Sit down, young gentleman," said Mr Sanford, in his usual languid tone, when John had taken his departure. "I am glad to have you as a pupil, for I find that you are a nephew of my old friend, Nugent, for whom I have a great regard. I dare say he has done you justice. What books have you read?—Latin and Greek, I mean?"

Digby told him; he had very little Greek to boast of, however.

"I thought that you were more forward," observed Mr Sanford. "You will be placed under the third master, Mr Tugman, in his upper class, I hope. I must leave him to settle that. I will send for him, and he will take you round the school before tea-time, and introduce you to some of the boys. He may not be quite ready yet, so I will let Mrs Pike, the housekeeper, show you your dormitory, and have your things put away."

Mr Sanford was taking unusual trouble about Digby. He rang the bell, and the usher and housekeeper were sent for. Mrs Pike appeared first; Old Jack, the boys called her. She had a stern, relentless expression of countenance, Digby thought. Her dress was black, with a plain white cap, and a large serviceable apron. There was business in her.

"Come along, young gentleman," she said, taking Digby by the arm, when she had received the master's directions. "It will be time for tea soon, and I shall have to go and look after it."

She first showed Digby a large room fitted all round with lockers, or drawers, and numbers on each. Into this his things had been wheeled on a truck.

"Here is your drawer, Master Heathcote," she observed. "You will remember the number—sixty-five. We had a hundred and thirty not long ago. Here you will keep your clothes; your play-box you can have with you in the play-room to-morrow; it can stay here till then. Now, come along to your dormitory. Susan will unpack your trunk; and if there is anything in it you want, you can have it when you come back."

All this sounded very well. There were a dozen rooms on the first and second floors appropriated as bedrooms; some had eight or ten beds in them, others only three or four. Digby was shown a room looking out at the back of the house, with eight beds, in one of which Mrs Pike told him he was to sleep. There were wash-hand basins and tubs, and a drawer for each boy to hold his dressing things. All looked very neat and well-arranged. Mrs Pike prided herself on having her department in good order. She looked as if she could have said, "Better washed and fed than taught at this establishment."

Digby returned well satisfied to the study, where Mr Sanford was still reading his book. He looked up, and was putting a question, in a kind tone of voice, to Digby, when the door opened. Digby looked up. A broad-shouldered, pock-marked man, with sandy hair and small grey eyes, entered. His costume, which consisted of a green coat, with a reddish handkerchief, a many-coloured waistcoat, and large plaid trousers, did not improve his appearance. He threw himself into a chair, if not with grace, at all events with ease, and observed, in an off-hand way, that it was a chilly day—a fact about which Mr Sanford did not seem inclined to dispute. He looked at Digby with no pleasant expression, and Digby looked at him, and hoped that he was not the usher under whom he was to be placed.

All doubt, however, about the matter was quickly removed by Mr Sanford saying—"I have sent for you, Mr Tugman, to beg that you will take charge of this new boy, Digby Heathcote. Examine him to-morrow, and place him as you judge best. I hope that he will be in the highest of your classes, as he has been lately under a clever man, an old college friend of mine, his uncle, for whom I have a great regard."

The usher was listening, with a look of impatience, to all this.

"Oh, I know; he's the son of Squire Heathcote, of Bloxholme," he observed, with a laugh, which Digby understood, for he spoke exactly with the expression of the boys who had heard him announced.

"I will take him with me, and introduce the young gentleman to his future playmates. I hope that he may get on well with them."

"Do, Mr Tugman, do," said Mr Sanford, languidly. "I wish that my health would allow me to afford greater support to my assistants, efficient as I am bound to say that they all are."

Mr Tugman did not seem to listen to the compliment, but, with a slight good evening, taking Digby by the shoulder, walked him off to the schoolroom.

Digby felt somewhat like a fly in the grasp of a spider, for there was very little of the *suaviter in modo*, however much there might have been of the *fortiter in re*, in Mr Tugman's proceedings. They passed a large glass door, guarded on both sides by wire-work.

"These are your future companions," he said, opening it, and pointing to a wide-extending gravel space at the back of the house, which Digby guessed was the playground. Though it was growing dark, the boys were still there; but all he could see was a confused mass of fellows rushing about, hallooing, and shouting: some with hoops, against which

their sticks went clattering away incessantly; others driving, with whips cracking and horns tootling; some were running races; others playing leap-frog, or high cock-o'-lorum; indeed, nearly every game which could make the blood circulate on a cold winter's evening, had its advocates. From the darkness, and from the state of constant movement in which they all were, there appeared to be double the number of boys Mrs Pike had mentioned.

"Well, what do you think of them?" asked Mr Tugman.

Digby said, "That he could form no opinion from the slight view he had of them."

"Not badly answered," observed Mr Tugman. "Now I will show you the schoolroom before they come in, and select a desk, so that you may make yourself at home at once."

Going down a few steps, Digby found himself in a large and lofty room, or hall, lighted by lamps from the ceiling, with rows of desks across it, and two large fire-places at the sides towards each end. At one end was a high desk, and there were five or six smaller desks, intended for the masters, down the hall, flanking the rows, as the sergeants stand in a regiment, drawn up on parade. The hall ran at right angles to the back of the house, by the side of the playground, and had evidently been built for a schoolroom.

Mr Tugman took Digby to the further end, where his own desk was, and lifting up several in one of the last rows, he came to one which was entirely empty.

"Seventy is the number, is it not?" he asked, going to his own desk. "Now, take this key, lock up whatever you like. I dare say you have some good things in your play-box, or valuables of some sort; put them there, and make yourself at home."

Scarcely had these arrangements been concluded, when a bell rang, and the boys came trooping into the schoolroom. He was fairly caught, like a mouse in a trap. At first he was not perceived; but it was soon buzzed about, that the new boy was there, and he was quickly saluted by—

"How do you do, Master Digby Heathcote, son of Squire Heathcote, of Bloxholme Hall?"

"Pretty well, I thank you, young gentlemen," answered Digby, determined not to be outdone, and resolved to put a bold face on the matter. "I shall be happy to make the acquaintance of any of those who will favour me with their cards, and an account of their own family, parentage, and connexions."

"He is a pert little chap," observed one. "Plenty of impudence in him," said another. "A plucky little cock, though, I think," remarked a fourth. Opinions among the bigger fellows varied considerably as to his character, and how he was to be treated.

Seldom is there a school without a bully, and Grangewood was no exception to the rule. The chief bully was a big, hulking fellow, called Scarborough. He remarked, "That there was a great deal to be taken out of the little cock, and that he purposed having the satisfaction of taking it."

"I'm in the habit of giving small change, remember that," said Digby, who had overheard the remark—as it had been intended he should.

Scarborough turned white with rage on this being said; and would then and there have inflicted condign punishment on the daring upstart, had not the bell rang, and the boys been called to order by Mr Yates, the head usher, who, entering Mr Sanford's desk, assumed command in the evening. He only deferred doing so, however, till another opportunity.

The little fellows, and those about Digby's own age, listened with eager and surprised ears to what he said; and at once looked upon him as one likely to prove their champion. In a very short time he had made a number both of friends and foes; but, curiously enough, he knew none of them by sight, as he could only distinguish the countenances of the few who sat immediately about him. They being mostly about his age, and having suffered from the tyranny of Scarborough, were inclined to side with him.

As, of course, he had nothing to do, he was able to sit quiet, and observe what was going forward. Each of the masters called up a class to say lessons, while the rest of the boys had to prepare them for the following day. Books were got out, and a murmur of voices was heard through the school. A stranger coming in might have fancied that everybody was very studiously employed; but although all had piles of books before them, on a closer inspection he would have seen, as Digby did, that very few were really learning their lessons; some were drawing, others playing games, draughts, or spillikins, or dominoes, and some even had cards; many were cutting out things in card-board or wood, making models of carriages, and houses, and boats. It had become the practice of the school at that time of the evening, especially as they would have another half hour in the morning to look over the lessons they were then supposed to be learning. Digby was surprised, and thought that he had come to a very slack sort of school. He was not particularly shocked, for he could not fancy that what everybody was doing was so very wrong.

The classes had just been dismissed, when another bell rang, and everybody hurried away out of the schoolroom. Digby, not knowing what was to take place, sat still.

"Come with me," said a boy, who looked rather smaller than himself. "I am delighted with the way you answered that big bully, Scarborough. Keep up to it; don't give in, and I will stick by you. We are now going into tea. I will find a place for you near myself, and tell you all about the fellows."

Digby was very glad to fall in at once with a friend; and he at once accepted the little boy's offer.

"My name is Paul Newland," said his new companion, as they followed the rest into the tea-room. "I am rather older

than I look, for I am not very big; but I intend to grow some day. You will be in my class, I suspect. I'm at the top of it, and expect to get into the sixth soon; that is, under Mr Moore, who is a very quiet sort of fellow. You must try and work up along with me. There is nothing like working, I find. I came in at the lowest, and got up three classes in one half year. But this is the tea-room. Come along; don't mind what fellows say."

This was not an unnecessary caution, for Digby found himself saluted as he went along by the boys turning sharply round and saying—

"How do you do, Master Digby Heathcote, son and heir of Squire Heathcote, of Bloxholme Hall? Welcome to Grangewood House, most noble young Squire."

It need not be said how Digby felt, but he fortunately kept his temper; nor did he lose his appetite in consequence of these sarcastic greetings.

"I wish that John Pratt had not announced me in that way. Of course it would make a capital joke for the fellows," he said to himself, as he took his seat at the table.

The boys near nodded to him, holding up their mugs of tea with mock gravity.

"Your health, Master Digby Heathcote, son and heir of Squire Heathcote, of Bloxholme Hall," was repeated over and over again, in various tones.

Digby was determined not to be put out, whatever was said or done. He lifted his mug to his lips—it was filled with a liquid he thought most execrable—some one had evidently put salt in it; but he pretended not to have discovered the bad taste.

"Young gentlemen," he said, holding up his mug, and mimicking the tones of those who had spoken to him, "I beg to return you my thanks for the honour you have done me. When I know your names and places of abode, as well as you appear to know mine, I can address you more personally. As neither tea nor salt-water are the proper things to drink to the health of one's friends, I will make a libation with the contents of my mug into the slop-basin, which you will receive as a mark of the honour I wish to do you."

Digby was sorely puzzled to pump up all these words. He had never made so long a speech in his life before; but the importance of the object inspired him; and a large slop-basin standing before him to receive the dregs of the mugs, put the idea into his head. He had been afraid at first that he should have been obliged to drink the salted tea.

His young friend, Paul Newland, inquired why the boys addressed him as they had been doing; and he then explained that it was owing to John Pratt's desire to give him importance; instead of which, as is often the case, a contrary effect had been produced.

"I need not tell you not to mind, for I see you don't," observed Paul. "Everybody has to go through something of the sort when they first come, and some remain butts all the time they stay. That sort of thing matters very little if a fellow keeps his temper, and pretends not to notice it. They soon grow tired of a joke when it produces no effect. They bothered me a great deal when I first came, and called me Paul Pry, and Paul the Preacher, and Little Bank Note, and Pretty Poll, and Polly, and all sorts of names, and they played all sorts of tricks; but I pretended not to mind, though I was really very much annoyed; and, at last, they gave it up, and it is only occasionally that I now get addressed in that way."

Digby thanked Newland for his good advice, and promised to follow it as far as his temper would allow.

"Oh, that is the very thing; you must keep in your temper," answered Newland. "I don't mean to say that you may harbour revenge, or that you intend to pay them off another day. Far from that; that would be horrid, you know, not like a Christian or an honest Englishman; but that you may disarm them, make them ashamed of themselves, or tired of their stale tricks or jokes."

Paul went on talking in a quiet, low tone, while Digby was munching a thick slice of bread-and-butter. He sent up his cup for some more tea by one of the attendant maid-servants; but was told by Mrs Pike, who had seen him throw the first away, that he could have no more.

"But some salt had got into the mug, marm; and salt with tea is not pleasant, I assure you," exclaimed Digby, feeling very indignant, notwithstanding Newland's exhortations and his own resolutions.

"We only use sugar at Grangewood House, young gentleman," answered Mrs Pike, looking angrily at the bold assertion of the new boy. "Those who throw their tea away can have no more. That is the rule here; is it not, Mr Tugman?"

The third master, thus appealed to, replied, with what he intended to be a bland smile, though it had very much the look of a grin—

"Certainly, marm, certainly. Master Digby Heathcote, of Bloxholme, has been brought up with rather extravagant notions, and has been accustomed to take salt as well as sugar in his tea."

This sally produced a grin from the surrounding boys who heard it; for the big fellows considered him a great wit, and a jolly cock, a character he had striven to obtain from some, that he might the more easily manage, or rather bully, the rest.

"Never mind," whispered Paul; "wait a moment till no one is looking, and take mine. I'll get some more presently, if I want it. Mrs Pike likes me, as I never bother her. She'll like you some day, if you are quiet and well-behaved. She's

not ill-natured at bottom, but her temper gets put out very often. She almost manages the school now, since Mr Sanford has been ill."

Digby accepted the offer; and Newland soon afterwards got a fresh and ample supply for himself. Perhaps Mrs Pike winked at the arrangement, after she had duly asserted her authority.

Digby had been accustomed to very different tea arrangements, and did not admire those he now saw. The tea was made in great urns, and there were huge jugs of milk, or, as the boys declared, of milk-and-water, and basins of brown sugar. The mixture was served out in blue and white mugs, which did duty as beer mugs at dinner; while trays, with slices of bread-and-butter, were continually being handed round. Of the latter, the boys might have as much as they wanted; and their tastes were so far consulted, that they might have milk-and-water without tea and sugar, if they wished for it. They sat at table chattering away, or playing tricks with each other, or reading, if they liked, provided the books were not on the table, till the bell again rang, and they hurried back into the schoolroom.

Other classes were now called up, and more lessons were supposed to be learned; but nothing was very strictly attended to at that time in the evening. In summer, they would have been out in the playground. The boys in those classes which had said their lessons were allowed to amuse themselves as they liked at their desks, either in reading, or writing, or making some of the nine hundred and ninety-nine curious articles which boys are wont to manufacture.

As Digby had nothing to do, Newland lent him an interesting book—"The Swiss Family of Robinson"—which he had never seen. He was soon absorbed in it, and not at all inclined to be interrupted. The shipwreck he had suffered enabled him to realise that described in the book. At length, however, he heard somebody speak to him. What was said he did not understand. He turned round, thinking it was Newland; but, instead of him, he saw a much older, taller boy, with a fair complexion, and greyish eyes. At the first glance, he did not like the expression of his countenance; and he was not over-pleased at being interrupted.

"What do you think of our school?" said the boy. "Some of the fellows have been trying to make fun of you, but you do not mind that. I hate that sort of thing myself. We have got some tremendous bullies here. I'll point them out to you, and show you how to avoid them. Where do you live?"

Digby told him.

"I live in Berkshire, some miles away from here, though. My name is John Spiller. I manage to get on very well with the fellows, and I'll put you up to a thing or two which will be of great assistance to you. Now, about your play-box; you haven't unpacked it yet, I suppose?"

"No," said Digby; "not yet."

"All right. Don't till I can help you, or you'll have everything carried off by the fellows," observed Spiller. "While you are looking to see who has got hold of a knife, or a saw, or a cake, or a boat, others will be carrying off a pot of jam, or a Dutch cheese, or some gingerbread, or a pot of anchovies, or a parcel of herrings, or—"

"Oh, there's no fear of that. I have not got half the things you speak of," said Digby, rather inclined to laugh at the collection of valuables his box was supposed to contain.

"What have you got, then?" asked Spiller, point blank.

Digby, who had not suspected his new acquaintance's object in introducing the subject, was going to tell him, when Paul Newland came back to his desk.

Spiller did not see him. He started, and seemed very much annoyed when Paul put his hand on his shoulder, and said, quietly—

"Well, what do you find that he has got?"

Spiller looked big enough to keep in awe a dozen such little fellows as Paul Newland, but he seemed in no way inclined to pick a quarrel with him.

"Nothing that I know of," he answered. "We have been merely talking about things in general; have we not, Heathcote? It will soon be bed-time, or I should like to have heard more about your part of the country. I'll get you to tell me to-morrow. Good-night, Heathcote." Saying this, he moved away.

"I'm glad I came back when I did," said Newland. "That fellow is the most notorious sponge in the school. We call him Spongy Spiller. He makes friends with all the new fellows, and sticks like a leech to them as long as they have a piece of cake, or a lump of barley-sugar, or anything else in their boxes, which he can get hold of. His desk is full of things, which, he says, were given him, but which he has, in reality, sponged out of fellows. About your box; unless there is anything in it which won't keep, just don't open it for a day or two, till you are able to judge for yourself a little of fellows. To-morrow is a half-holiday, and you will better see what the different fellows really are."

Digby said he would take his advice, for he felt sure that he might trust him. Both Newland and Spiller were strangers, but, when comparing the two, he did not for a moment hesitate as to which was most worthy of his confidence.

Just then the bell rang; and Paul told him they were to have prayers. He expected to see Mr Sanford; but instead, Mr Yates entered the head-master's desk, and saying that he was too unwell to come into the schoolroom, read a very brief form of prayer, while the boys knelt up on the forms at their desks.

Digby was not surprised to find very little attention or reverence, for though Mr Yates read slowly, in a loud voice,

there was a something in his tone which showed that the devotional spirit was not there.

The moment prayers were over, the boys rushed off upstairs. The lamps were put out by a man in a fustian coat, whom Digby had not seen before. Digby found Paul by his side.

"Come along quickly, or you will have an apple-pie bed made," he said, in a low voice. "You ought to have been out one of the first."

"Never mind," answered Digby, laughing. "I know how to unmake it fast enough. I have done such a thing as make one myself."

"Very well, then," said Paul, "we need not hurry. You are to sleep in our room, I find. I have gone through a good deal from the fellows there, though they now let me alone. You'll not have a pleasant night of it, I am afraid. I wish that I could help you."

"You can help me," exclaimed Digby, who had been been silent for some time, as they went upstairs. "I have made up my mind how to act. Is there no one who would support you?"

"Yes; I think that there is one, Farnham. He is a good sort of fellow, but he generally sides with the majority. However, if he sees anything done in a spirited way, it would take with him."

"Then I'll do it," cried Digby. "There are no very big fellows who could thrash me easily."

"There are two or three a good deal bigger than you are; and I don't think that you could thrash them."

"I don't mind that," answered Digby. "They would find me very tough, at all events, if they attempt to thrash me. You go into the room first; it won't do to let it appear as if we had formed any plan together."

Newland seemed highly delighted at Digby's proposal, and ran on into the room, which was at the end of a long passage.

Digby followed in a few seconds. He had noted well the position of the bed Mrs Pike had told him was to be his, so he walked straight up to it. Susan had placed his night-shirt and night-cap on the pillow. A lamp, with a tin reflector, placed against the wall, over the wash-hand places, gave light to the room. Most of the boys had already got their clothes off, and had tumbled into bed; they were laughing, and talking, and cutting jokes with each other.

Paul had begun to undress. Presently one of them, directly opposite Digby's bed, put up his head, and said—

"Ah, Master Digby Heathcote, son of Squire Heathcote, of Bloxholme Hall, how are you?"

"That's me," answered Digby, firmly; "I'm very well, I thank you, in very good condition, and not bad training; and I am strong, though not very big. And now I'll tell you what I am going to do: I am going to make my bed, to see that it is comfortable, and then I am going to say my prayers, as I always do; and I beg that you fellows will not make a row till I have done. I shall not be long; then I intend to undress, and get into bed. After the candle is put out, if anything is shied at me, or any other trick is played, I'll tell you what I intend to do. I have fixed upon one of the beds, with a fellow in it, and, big or little, as he may be, I'll pay him off in such a way that he will be glad to help me another night in keeping order. I am not a greenhorn; I just want you to understand that."

There was something in Digby's well-knit figure, sunburnt, honest countenance, and firm voice, which, as the boys, one after the other, popped up their heads to look at him, inspired them, if not with respect for him, at all events with a dislike to bring down on their heads the chastisement he threatened. The bigger boys, though they might have thrashed him in open daylight, could not tell what means he might have for attacking them; and those of his own size saw that he was very likely to thrash them, even on fair terms, if they attempted to try their strength together. No answer was made; so, whistling a merry tune, he set to work: first, he carefully and systematically undid his bed, which had been made into an apple-pie, and smoothing down the sheets, and tucking in the feet, he said—"Ah, now that will do." Then he knelt down by the side of the bed, and most earnestly and sincerely repeated the prayers he had been accustomed to use. Several attempts were made to disturb him.

"Shame, shame!" cried Paul Newland from beneath the bedclothes.

Another voice said, "Shame! Let him at least say his prayers."

Digby very soon rose from his knees.

"I am much obliged to those who cried shame," he said, firmly. "It is a shame. It is an insult, not to me, but to Him to whom I was trying to pray. To morrow night I shall know most of the voices of our fellows, and I am resolved not to be interrupted. Now, make as much row as you like; I can sleep through it all; but you remember what I said."

Digby began undressing, and stowing his clothes away at the head of his bed, so that they could not be removed, jumped into bed.

Just then an usher entered, to put out the light. It was the French master, Digby concluded, for one or two of the boys exchanged salutations with him, calling him Monsieur Guillaume. "Bon nuit, bon nuit—va dormir, mes enfants." There was a great deal of chattering and noise as he went out.

"Remember," said Digby, in a firm voice; and then put his head on the pillow.

"Oh, he's a crowing little cock," cried some one. "A regular bantam," observed another. "I wonder if there are more

like him at Bloxholme Hall?" exclaimed a third.

But Digby made no answer. Similar remarks were made for some minutes, but he kept silence, till his persecutors began to grow sleepy. One after the other they dropped off, and so did he, at last; and never slept more soundly in his life.

If all right-thinking boys would exercise the same firmness and resolution as Digby did on this occasion, the better disposed would soon gain the upper hand, and there would be much less bullying and general bad conduct than is too often to be found even at the best-regulated schools.

Chapter Twelve.

Digby's Trials and Triumph—The Bully and the Sponge—A Dinner at Grangewood—Digby's Fight with Bully Scarborough—A Friend in Need.

Digby had gained a great triumph—more important, probably, than he was aware of. That first night of his arrival at Grangewood had been the turning-point of his school life. Had he yielded in the first instance, been terrified by threats, lost his temper, shown the white feather in any way, he would, insensibly, have become like one of the rest—leavened with their leaven, addicted to their bad habits, a thoughtless, idle little tyrant; too likely, on entering the world, to become a useless profligate. As it was, in consequence of his conduct, he had inspired some of his new companions with admiration, and others with respect; while even those of baser nature felt that he was likely to prove a person with whom it would be disagreeable and inconvenient to contend; and so it became impressed on their minds, that it would be better to let him alone. Of course, these feelings were only shared among the boys of his room. He had still to make his way in the school. Like a knight-errant of old, there were many giants for him to overcome; many castles, surrounded by enchantments, to enter, before he could hope to establish himself on a proper footing in the school. Of course he did not think all this; he only felt that he had altogether acted in a perfectly satisfactory way, and was contented, and pretty happy. He slept soundly, but was the first to awake in the room. He jumped up, put on some of his clothes, said his prayers, and then went to the wash-hand basin, and began sousing his face away in the cold water, as was his custom.

Slowly the cold, grey light of a February morning drew on. A bell now sounded loudly through the house, to rouse the inmates from their slumbers. The other boys awoke, and lifted up their heads to see how the new boy looked by daylight. They saw him standing in his trousers and shirt, with his sleeves tucked up, his face glowing with the cold water, his hair brushed back, and scrubbing away at his hands in a basin full of lather, with an energy which showed that cold water had no terrors for him. His well-knit frame, broad chest, and muscular little arms, appeared to considerable advantage. Some of the boys, who were unable to appreciate higher qualifications, could not fail to feel respect for these; though Digby had not thought about them, nor was he aware of the strength which he possessed, which, for his size, was considerable. He brushed his hair with the same sort of energy with which he had washed his hands, and then went to the drawer which had been awarded to him, to put away his things. He was rather disgusted than amused at seeing the dawdling way in which the boys put on their clothes, and the mode in which they dabbed their faces over with the cold water, and hurriedly dipped their hands in, though some only half dried them, after all. Paul and Farnham were an exception to the rule.

"Well, Heathcote, I hope that you have slept soundly in this, to you, strange place," said Paul, in his usual brisk tone.

"As sound as a top. It is all the same to me, when I have my head on a comfortable pillow. It takes a good deal to keep me awake," answered Digby, in the same tone. "I sleep fast, and get it over the sooner. I hate to be long about what can be well done quickly."

"So do I," answered Newland. "Slow coaches are apt to break down as often as fast ones."

Another bell now rang loudly, and the boys all hurried away downstairs to the schoolroom. Digby accompanied Paul. He felt several fellows push against his back, to throw him downstairs, but he was on his guard; and one of them, to the fellow's surprise, he lifted up on his shoulders, and, without difficulty, carried him down to the next landing-place, where he bumped him pretty hard against the wall. Another, not seeing what had occurred, tried the same trick. Digby, putting his hands suddenly behind his back, seized him, and had carried him down, holding the boy's arms tight, and was beginning to bump him, when he felt his own ears pulled, and a voice exclaiming—

"Vat you do dat for? Is dat de way you new boy is going to behave here?"

Digby guessed that it was Monsieur Guillaume, the French master, who was thus addressing him.

"He tried to push me downstairs, sir; and I wish to show him that two can play at most games of that sort," answered Digby, quietly.

"Ah, I do not tink you say de truth, you," exclaimed the French master, angrily. "He is a good boy; my *protégé*; speak French well. Put him down, I say. Tommy Bray, come here; you not hurt, my poor boy?"

Digby put Tommy Bray on his feet, who accompanied Monsieur Guillaume into the schoolroom, where Paul and Digby followed.

"The Frenchman has given you a fair specimen of himself. He is the most uncertain, fickle little fellow I ever met. He bullies all the little fellows except his favourites, or *protégés*, as he calls them, and makes up to the older ones, who are big enough to thrash him, if they like. He spites those who don't learn French, because he is not paid for them. He is always trying, therefore, to get new pupils. However, I do not believe that he is really bad tempered when he

has his own way. He has been soured by loss of property; and having to live out of la belle France. And do you know, Heathcote, I really do believe that an usher at a school like this, when no one is exactly master, and the big boys have it much their own way, has a good deal to put up with."

"I should think so," observed Digby, as they entered the schoolroom.

They went to their desks. Mr Yates read prayers, and though everybody was cold and hungry, lessons began.

Mr Tugman had not yet had time to examine Digby, so he sat at his desk reading the Swiss Family of Robinson, which he confessedly preferred to lessons. Each master had a class up before him; there were some crying; a good deal of caning on the fingers—a particularly disagreeable punishment, in cold weather especially—and a considerable amount of blundering and hesitation. A few quick runs round the playground would have saved a great deal of suffering and discontent; but Mr Sanford never went out in the morning, and it never occurred to him that the blood in his pupils' veins would circulate more freely with a little brisk exercise, and give vivacity to their intellects.

Breakfast was at last announced by the constant sounding bell. It varied little from tea, except that those who liked bread-and-milk might have it. It was served out in large basins.

Digby, however, preferred the tea. He kept his eye sharply on his mug, to see that it was not tampered with. He observed Tommy Bray take a pinch of salt, and then ask for a cup of tea, though he had a basin of bread-and-milk before him.

"Tommy Bray," cried Digby, in an undertone, "you had better not. Susan, bring me that mug of tea, please. He does not want it."

Susan, remembering John Pratt's half sovereign, brought Digby the tea intact; and Tommy was disappointed of his trick.

Several other boys, however, commenced their jokes on the new comer as soon as their spirits had revived a little, by their appetites being satisfied; but none of those in his room attempted anything of the sort; and it soon became whispered about that the new boy was a plucky little cock, and that his arm had a great lump of muscle in it, as big almost as Scarborough's, which he was so fond of exhibiting.

After breakfast, the boys went into the playground. It was cold enough to make everybody wish to run about as much as they could. Hoops were the order of the day; and Farnham came up and asked Digby if he had got a hoop.

"No; I never trundled one in my life, but I will try," he answered. "I did not know that gentlemen used them. I have only seen the boys in the streets at Osberton play with them."

Farnham thought that he was supercilious in his remark. "Oh, then, I suppose you would not condescend to trundle a hoop?" he exclaimed, turning away.

"But I would though, gladly," cried Digby; "if you can lend me one, and just show me the knack of the thing, I shall like it very much."

Farnham was satisfied, and brought him a good strong hoop which he had wished to offer him. His first attempts were not very successful; but he saw how Farnham pressed the stick against the hoop rather than beat it, and kept his eye on it and not on his stick, watching every deviation from the direct line, so he was soon able to drive it along at a fair rate, with tolerable satisfaction to himself.

Soon after returning into school, Mr Tugman called him up to undergo the threatened examination. It was not very severe, and he managed to get through it pretty well. He had a vague suspicion, indeed, that the usher himself was not an over-ripe scholar. He found afterwards that his suspicions were correct, and that poor Mr Tugman had to get up every night the lessons he had to hear his head class the following day. No wonder that his temper was not over-sweet, and that he was awfully afraid of the big boys, lest they should find out how much more they knew than he did. He was placed in Paul Newland's class, but as it was Saturday he did not go up with it; so that, with Paul's assistance, he was able to prepare his lessons for Monday. He determined to do his best, and set to work to get them up thoroughly.

Boys in a private school have an advantage over those at a public one. If they wish to study during school hours they can do so, under the eye of the masters, without any fear of interruption. In a public one, excellent as the system of most of the great ones is, the boys, working in their own studies with one or two companions only, are liable to the practical jokes and tricks of various sorts of the idly disposed, who may have resolved to prevent them altogether from getting up their lessons, and, of course, then it is very difficult work to do so. School was over at half-past twelve, and then for a short time they all rushed into the playground.

Spiller was on the watch for Digby at the door. "I am glad to find you, Heathcote," he said, in a soft, quiet voice. "You remember what I told you about your play-box last night. If you come with me I will show you where to put it, and what to do with the things you have got."

"Shall I call him spongy to his face, and so show him that I know his character?" thought Digby. "No; I don't like to do that, it's scarcely right.—Thank you, Spiller," he said aloud, "I am not certain that I shall unpack my things to-day. I have nothing that won't keep, I believe; and I want to become better acquainted with fellows before I cut up my cake."

This was a poser for Spiller, who had never before received such an answer. He looked very hard at Digby, to try and find out whether he knew anything about his character; but Digby had said simply what he had intended to do, and

Spiller was completely puzzled. Still he was determined to try again. "Most fellows like to open their boxes at once, to give away some of the good things they have got, to prove their generosity," he observed. "A fellow can't expect to have friends unless he does something to win them, you know. I only tell you this as a hint, just that you may know how to act."

"I don't fancy buying friends in that way," answered Digby, laughing; "I should not trust much to a fellow who said he was my friend for a piece of cake or a spoonful of jam. If anybody else offered him a bigger piece, or more jam, he would very quickly leave me. I like fellows not for what they have got, but for what they are; and I want to be liked for the same reason myself."

"Oh, I see that you are a radical," said Spiller, sneeringly; "those are regular chartists' sentiments; but they won't go down with me, let me tell you."

Digby burst out into a regular fit of laughter.

"Well, I never should have supposed that it could be considered radical to like a fellow with a number of good qualities who was poor, in preference to a bad fellow who happened to be rich. I must repeat it, that I hope to find friends among the boys here, whom I shall like for their good qualities."

"As you please," remarked Spiller; "of course I can't force you to do as I recommend; but if, on thinking the matter over, you change your mind, come to me and I will help you. Those are my principles; I'm not ashamed of them, let me tell you."

What Spiller meant by his principles, Digby could not tell. Perhaps he might have explained more clearly, but he saw Paul Newland approaching, and he knew that he must abandon his designs for the present on Digby's strong box.

Digby told Paul how he had managed Spiller.

"Capital," exclaimed Paul. "I wish that we could get rid of all the disagreeable fellows in the school as easily as you have, for the present, of Spiller; but I want to tell you to be on your guard against that big bully, Scarborough. The fellows were talking about you just now, and mentioning the plucky way in which you behaved last night; instead of saying, as I am sure he ought, that you acted very rightly, he sneered and vowed that he would very soon take the pride out of you."

"Let him try, if he wishes," answered Digby, not particularly alarmed, for he never had been imbued with any especial dread of big fellows; his fearlessness, however, in reality, arose from his want of experience of the evil they had the power of inflicting; "if he knocks my nose off, he certainly will prevent me from feeling proud of my face, but otherwise, I don't see how he can very well alter my character."

Paul thought Digby a perfect hero, and wished for the time when he would be big enough to be cock of the school. While they were speaking, Scarborough lounged by with his hand on the shoulder of another fellow, very much of his own character. There is a great similarity in the look of all bullies, not so much in figure as in expression of countenance; some are big, burly fellows, like Scarborough, others are tall and thin. Of course, they all have more or less physical strength; some are dark and some are fair, but they one and all have an inexpressible resemblance to each other. Scarborough passed close to Digby, and as he did so he put out his foot, and tried to trip him up; but Digby observed the action, and, guessing the intention, jumped off the ground, and escaped even being touched. He felt inclined to make some remark, but he restrained his temper, and left the bully without any excuse for picking a quarrel with him. Scarborough strolled to the end of the playground, and when he came back, he stopped, and looking hard at Digby, said—

"I suppose you are the new fellow who is going to do such mighty things in the school—well, I want you to understand that I shall not allow you to play any of your tricks with me; remember that."

Digby looked at the bully very steadily; he felt that he ought to answer him, if he could do so, quietly, so he said—

"I don't know of any tricks which I wish to play; but if you will just tell me what you don't like of what I have done, or have been said to have done, I will do my best not to offend you."

"It's very well for you to talk in that way," said the bully, disarmed for the moment; for even he could not venture to thrash a fellow without some pretext; "just remember to keep up to it, or you'll find yourself in the wrong box with me, my lad, that's all."

With this ambiguous threat, the bully moved on.

"Well done again," exclaimed little Paul, who had been trembling with alarm all the time for the result of the meeting; "he won't let you off without many another attack; but manage him as you have already done, and I do not think that he will annoy you much."

The moment the dinner-bell rang, there was another general rush into the dining-room. This was that the first comers might secure the best pieces of bread and mugs of beer, arranged up and down the tables. Digby found only half a mugful of beer and a very small piece of bread remaining to his share; but he was not at all put out, and made no remark, resolving another day to be earlier in the field.

Grangewood School had existed for a number of years, and things were carried on there very much in the old-fashioned style in most respects. Mr Sanford was a very good scholar and a gentleman, but he had no talent for the economical arrangements of a school. It is a favourite saying with some people, that boys are better fed than taught. He had resolved that, as far as he had the power, they should be well taught; but it did not occur to him, that it was

incumbent on him to see that they were well fed and well looked after.

Mrs Pike was, fortunately for him, a conscientious person; but her notions were somewhat antiquated. She wished to attend to his interests, and she was not aware that they and those of the boys were identical; that is to say, that if the boys were thoroughly looked after, well fed as well as well taught, brought up as Christians and gentlemen, the school would flourish; and that if the boys were badly and coarsely fed and treated, and neglected, the school would go down-hill.

Digby was very hungry; the novelty of his position did not spoil his appetite. He turned his head in the direction of the table at which Mrs Pike, supported by Mr Yates, usually sat to superintend the serving out of provender, to see what was coming. Some huge dishes piled up with large white balls were brought in, and plates, containing half of one of the balls, were in succession thumped down before each of the boys. Digby turned over the mass with his fork to discover the contents, but finding nothing but a mass of dough and a strong smell of beer, he put it down; and when one of the maid-servants came by, held out his plate, and quietly said, that he would rather have meat before pudding. The maid-servant, who was not Susan, or she might have whispered a bit of good advice, seized his plate, and going up with it to Mrs Pike, said in a loud voice, so that all might hear:—

“The new boy, Master Digby Heathcote, marm, says that he likes meat before pudding.”

Mrs Pike cast a withering glance at Digby; such a piece of insubordination had not been met with for a long time to her authority.

“We here give pudding before meat, young gentleman, if it suits us,” she exclaimed, in a dictatorial tone; “if you do not choose to eat such excellent pudding as this is, you can have no meat. Take it back to him, Jane.”

Again the plate was placed before him.

“You had better eat it,” whispered Paul Newland. “It is very good yeast dumpling, and you will like it when you are accustomed to it.”

“With all my heart,” answered Digby, laughing. “I did not want to make such a fuss about the matter. I like duff very well, only I really thought that they had forgotten to put the meat on my plate.”

“Don’t touch the stuff, Heathcote, take my advice,” exclaimed Spiller, in a low tone, across the table. “You have got plenty of good things in your box to feed on, I dare say. All new fellows have; and there is nothing like holding out against injustice.”

“Thank you,” said Digby, pretty well guessing Spiller’s drift. “I had rather not lose my dinner. Very good stuff, though; capital duff; a little sugar and wine would make it perfect.”

He ate it all up.

“Here, Jane,” he exclaimed, holding out his plate; “say that I find it very good, and should like some more.”

Jane, who was pretty well up to the tricks young gentlemen were capable of playing, looked suspiciously at his pockets, and then under the table, to ascertain whether he really had eaten up the dumpling; but even she was assured by his ingenuous countenance, and so she went up to the head table, and said that Master Digby Heathcote liked the yeast dumpling and wanted some more.

Mrs Pike looked, also, very suspiciously at Digby.

“I’ll give him some,” said Mr Yates, who was assisting in serving out the provisions.

Mrs Pike, with feminine tact, would have given a small piece, not to disgust him; but he, whether with malice or from thoughtlessness, put very nearly a whole one on the plate. Some brown sugar, however, was added by Susan on its way to Digby; and when he got it, he liked the taste so much, that although not aware that Mrs Pike’s sharp eyes were on him, he sat manfully to work; and yeast dumpling being of a very compressible nature, he demolished the whole mass in a very short time.

It did occur to Mrs Pike’s economical mind that it was fortunate the new boy liked pudding, or he would be very expensive to feed.

Digby felt rather thirsty, so he drank up his beer. That was rather sour; but he was not easily put out, and he felt already very much as if he had dined. When a huge dish of salt beef, with carrots and turnips, did come, he could do but little justice to it; but he was grateful to Mrs Pike’s delicate attention, when, in a tone of which he did not discover the sarcasm, she pressed him to take a second helping.

He begged to have some more beer, though; but was told that one cupful was the allowance, and so had to quench his thirst with water.

“We have pudding first only twice in the week,” observed Paul. “I have got accustomed to it, and rather like the variety, though I thought it odd at first. One day we have yeast, and another suet-dumpling. Then two days we generally have pease-soup, or some fellows do call it pease-porridge. It is rather thick, to be sure, and on those days we have porter instead of beer. I seldom after it have an appetite, even for Irish-stew or toad-in-the-hole. On Wednesdays, Mrs Pike lets a cake-man come just before dinner with gingerbread and lollipops; and many fellows would rather spend their money on his grub than in any other way; and they are not so hungry on that day, and don’t care so much what they have. We call that scrap-and-pudding day, because we have hashes first and rice-dumplings afterwards. Mrs Pike, on that day, always talks about the immense sum she spends on currants and other groceries

for the school.”

However, enough about eating; Paul and Digby were philosophers in their way, and had no wish to make grievances out of trifles.

Mr Sanford himself would have been horrified had he known the light in which the domestic arrangements of his establishment were regarded; and it told among the elder boys with very injurious effect to his interests. Some of the best left; and their parents, knowing him to be a gentleman—cruelly, certainly—did not explain the real cause, and so he let things go on as before. The worst remained; those whose friends knew that they were not likely to get on well anywhere, and perhaps would not believe their statements. They, of course, leavened the rest. The younger ones, by degrees, took up their notions and habits; and a first-rate school had not only diminished in size, but had deteriorated sadly in quality, by the time Digby went to it.

He, of course, did not find this out. The state in which he found things he supposed to be inseparable from schools in general, and he was disposed to make the best of them. However, he had resolved not to give in to the bad ways of others, when he once saw that they were bad. But he had yet to learn how insensibly a person may be drawn into the bad habits, and a bad style of thinking and speaking, and may adopt the erroneous notions of people among whom he lives. Digby was in a much more perilous position than he was aware of. He was of a dauntless disposition; he had always been accustomed to rely a good deal upon himself, and he was anxious to do his duty. More than that was wanted to preserve him. He had at home a pious mother and sisters, who never failed to offer up their prayers for his safety. Surely those prayers were not uttered in vain. It would have been doing, also, great injustice to the Squire of Bloxholme to say that he forgot his son, though those who knew him best might have supposed that his prayers might have been of a somewhat inarticulate nature. Still, certainly, there was fervency and sincerity in whatever ejaculations he uttered.

The subject is too serious to be touched on lightly. Only thus much may be said, that if more parents prayed for their children, and more children for their parents, the sacred ties of that relationship would not, as now is too often the case, be loosened or rudely torn asunder; and there would be more good parents and good children than are to be found.

Dinner was over; the boys rushed into the playground; neither the yeast dumplings nor the salt beef stuck in their throats. Most of them were hallooing, shoving against each other, trying to trip up those nearest them, slapping each other's backs, and, indeed, playing every conceivable trick of the sort.

Digby was soon overtaken by Scarborough.

“Well, jackanapes, how are you?” said the latter.

Digby ran on without taking any notice of the address.

“Did you hear me speak to you?” exclaimed the bully, catching Digby by the collar of his jacket.

“I heard some one speak to somebody, but I could not possibly tell that you meant to say anything to me. There are big monkeys as well as little ones. You might have been wishing to say something to a fellow of your own size.”

Digby had shaken himself clear of the bully, whose face was livid with anger, and stood facing him.

Scarcely were the words out of Digby's mouth, than he received several tremendous boxes on the ears. He felt a choking sensation in the throat; he had never before been struck unjustly. All the pugnacity in his disposition rose at once into his well-rounded knuckles, and springing forward before the bully had a conception of what he was about to do, he had planted two such heavy blows in his two eyes, that they flashed fire in such a way, that he could scarcely see what had become of his small opponent, while he himself absolutely reeled back with pain. When he did open his eyes, there stood Digby, his feet firmly planted on the ground, his fists clenched, his teeth firmly set, undaunted and ready to do battle, yet well knowing that he must inevitably get the worst in an encounter with so big an antagonist. He had not provoked the quarrel; he had justice on his side, and he was encouraged by the shouts of a number of boys, and cries of “Bravo, little cock!” “Well done, new boy!” “Give it the bully!” “Stand to your colours!” Digby felt like a martyr to a great cause. If Scarborough had been angry when merely spoken to, he now became furious at being thus unexpectedly bearded by so small an antagonist. If the new boy escaped without a severe punishment, he might become a most troublesome opponent in the school. He rushed at him, uttering terrific threats of vengeance, intending to seize him by the collar and to throw him down, and to bite his ears and kick him at the same time, *more tyranni*. Digby leaped nimbly aside, and hit his right arm a blow which made it tingle from the shoulder to the tips of the fingers. This, however, only put off the chastisement which was sure to be inflicted, where his antagonist was so vastly superior in strength.

It is not necessary to repeat the abusive epithets and oaths which flew from Scarborough's mouth. Hitting Digby a terrific blow with his left hand, which knocked off his cap, and kicking at his legs, he brought him to the ground, when seizing him by the hair, he began to knock him about most unmercifully on the head and shoulders.

“Shame! shame!” cried many of the boys together; “a new fellow, and down on the ground. Shame, bully! shame!”

“Why don't some of you come and help me?” cried Digby, in the interval of the blows, and trying to get on his legs.

“I will,” cried little Paul Newland, who had only just come into the playground, and had run up to see what was happening; “who'll follow me? Farnham, you will, I'm sure.”

“That I will,” cried Farnham, all the generous emotions in his heart rising up; “he stood up bravely for us younger fellows. He is a gallant little cock. To the rescue! to the rescue!”

Farnham was a good-sized fellow, though young. A number of other boys, inspired by his address, joined him; and, without further concert, they made a bold dash at Scarborough, who little thought that they would really attack him. Some clung to his legs, others seized his arms, and clung round his neck and pulled him backwards, so that Digby had time to jump to his feet, and to shake himself to ascertain that no bones were broken.

"Thank you, thank you," he exclaimed: "I am not much the worse for the way that big coward behaved; but take care, he will be hurting some of you; I don't mind if he was to set on me again; I dare say I can stand his knocking about as well as anybody."

The boys who had so gallantly come to Digby's rescue had not thought of that, and Scarborough, struggling desperately to free himself, had thrown some of them off, and was in his fury striking, right and left, blows heavy enough to have maimed any of them for life; but at the same time he had his eye on Digby, on whom he was evidently longing to wreak his vengeance.

By this time most of the boys, big and little, were drawn round the scene of the contest. Scarborough had his friends, who urged him to annihilate his small opponents, but did not think it necessary themselves to interfere. Bad as were many of them, Digby's gallantry had been remarked by one of the elder boys in the first class, who, though not so big or so old as Scarborough, was a person not to be trifled with. His figure was light, active, well-knit, and his countenance had a mild expression, at the same time that it possessed signs of peculiar firmness and decision.

Scarborough had freed himself from all those who surrounded him, except from Farnham and Newland, who were in vain trying to prevent him from once more seizing Digby, when Henry Bouverie, the boy spoken of, stepped up, and placing himself between Scarborough and Digby, exclaimed:—

"You shall not touch him; while I remain at this place, I will not, if I can help it, allow so thoroughly un-English and cowardly acts to be committed. That young fellow only came yesterday, and you must needs run foul of him and half kill him with your brutality to-day. Whatever others may think, I know that the sooner you leave the school the better it will be for all of us."

Scarborough was still advancing. Bouverie lifted up his fists.

"You shall light me and thrash me before you again touch that young fellow," he exclaimed, in a voice which made the bully draw back. "Remember, Heathcote, if he strikes you, you are to come and tell me; and any of you fellows who came to Heathcote's help are to do the same."

The bully stood irresolute. Should he at once fly at Bouverie and attack him. He was certainly stronger; he might thrash him; and if so, he should not only keep him in check, but be able to tyrannise over all the other boys as much as he liked; but then he looked at Bouverie, and observed the calm, firm attitude he had assumed. The reverse would be the case if he failed. His prestige, already having suffered a severe blow from Digby, would be for ever gone.

When Bouverie had first spoken, Farnham and Newland had let him go, and though he struck at them as they did so, they escaped without much injury. Some of the bigger boys, who did not like Bouverie, shouted out:—

"Knock him over; down with the radical!"

But still louder rose a shout of approbation from Farnham, Newland, and the boys with more generous feelings who had sided with them, in which Digby heartily joined.

"Bravo, Bouverie, gallant fellow! we'll stick by you."

"Thanks to all those who so express themselves," said Bouverie; "recollect, however, it is only by being kindly affectioned one to another, and by supporting each other in everything that is right, that you can hope to resist tyranny and oppression. Mark me, also, Scarborough; I have no wish to set the fellows on against you, but I detest bullying, and if you continue the system you have been pursuing, I shall do my very utmost to help the younger fellows, and to oppose you. No more shouting, pray. I'm for a game at Prisoners' Base. Here, Farnham, you lead one side, I'll take the other. Any fellows who will oppose bullying may join; no others, remember."

Digby was surprised at the rapid and systematic way in which the arrangements were made. Farnham was evidently pleased at being chosen by a big fellow like Bouverie to play against him. Of the mysteries of the game he himself knew nothing; still he longed to join in it in spite of his sores and aching bones. Bouverie at last looked towards him and invited him to join.

"All right; I thought he would," said Paul Newland, who was standing near.

"But I have never played at it before," said Digby.

"Oh, never mind that! I'll show you what to do; and I am certain you can run fast, and will play well," urged Paul.

"Yes, he'll play," he added, turning to Bouverie. "You know, Heathcote," he continued, "you must be up to everything and ready for everything—in the way of games, I mean. When you know the ways of the school, the younger fellows will look to you as a leader. They want one, and I know that you will make a good one."

These remarks naturally could not fail to fire Digby's ambition. He forgot all about his bruises, and ran eagerly to the spot marked out for the game. Paul explained it to him. The base was at the bottom of the playground from one side to the other. This was divided in two. The prison was at a pump which stood in the middle of the ground—a great luxury in hot weather, but a terror to the little boys in cold, for they were sometimes placed under it and unmercifully soused.

"Now, you see," said Paul, "one fellow starts out on one side, then another on the opposite, who tries to touch him. If he succeeds, the first goes to prison; but if the first gets in, the second may be touched by a third, and himself have to go to prison, and so on. The next aim is to get those on our own side out of prison. This is done by running to them and touching them, but in so doing, a fellow is liable to be touched by one of the opposite side, and have to go himself to prison. If, however, he rescues a prisoner, he may not be touched on his return to the base. To my mind, it is the best running game there is."

Digby thought so likewise, and entered with great zest into the game. He soon understood it as clearly as if he had played it all his life. Once Bouverie himself was touched, and had to go to prison. Nearly all their side were out chasing, or being chased. Digby rushed back to the base, and then, quick as lightning, started out again, and though pursued by a fast runner, he succeeded in rescuing his leader in gallant style.

"Well done, new boy! well done, small one! well done, Heathcote!" was shouted by several on his side, and Digby felt very proud of his success. Whenever one of his party was taken prisoner, he was the first to dash out to his rescue; and if he saw one pursued, he was instantly in chase of the pursuer. From this time he entered warmly into all the games which were played, and was soon invariably chosen to take an active part in all those which did not require practice. Some required, however, both practice and instruction, and for those he always found ready instructors in Farnham and Paul Newland. He practised away, however, so zealously, that he very soon played, even in games of skill, almost as well as those who were teaching him. He not only listened to what they told him, but he attentively watched them and all the best players, and saw how they did things, and their various tricks and devices. He did not forget also to observe, occasionally, the bad players, that he might see how it was they managed so soon to be put out. Cricket, of course, had not yet come in; in that capital game, likewise, he was anxious to become a proficient. He had been initiated at Mr Nugent's in single wicket, so he could bat and bowl pretty well, but he knew very little of the game at large.

From the style of his previous education, he found himself also in lessons somewhat behind many boys younger than himself, though he knew a great deal more than they did of other things, and of affairs in general.

However, he had no reason to complain after his measure had been taken by his schoolfellows of the position he occupied in their estimation. Whether this was for his ultimate advantage remained to be seen; one thing was certain, it demanded of him a considerable amount of temper, judgment, discretion; and not only good resolutions, but strength to keep them.

Chapter Thirteen.

The Play-Box and its Contents—A School Supper—Digby learns French, and Wishes that he did not—Digby rises in his schoolfellows' estimation.

Digby's first half-holiday had been full of stirring events. As the evening drew on, his hunger reminded him of the contents of his play-box. He had not entirely lost his taste for jam and honey since the days when he had made free with Mrs Carter's preserve pots; and it was with some anticipation of pleasure that he proposed to Paul Newland to examine his treasures.

Paul was a thorough schoolboy, so he willingly agreed; but suggested that it would be wise to keep the jam till after tea, when they might have bread to eat with it. "I have two bottles, and we will pour our tea into them," observed Newland. "Cold tea is very nice, you know; and we will stow away as much bread as we can in our pockets. I have some gingerbread and a bottle of ginger-beer remaining; and we shall have a good supply for a feast."

"But I dare say that I have plenty of things more, for I did not see what was put up; only I know that the housekeeper was told to fill my box as full as it could be," answered Digby. "And do you know, I should like to ask some other fellows to join us. Farnham, certainly, and all those who came to my help when that bully attacked me; or, if you like, all who were playing with us just now. I can easily get some more pots of jam, if I want them, I dare say."

"Capital, capital!" exclaimed Paul. "But I don't think it will do to have as many fellows as you propose. I'll just ask those I think you would really like; but would it not be wiser to see what you have got first. I have known boxes broken open, and when the owners have gone to them, they have found only lumps of paper instead of cake, and empty jam and honey pots."

Digby's heart sank somewhat on hearing this; and with no little trepidation and doubt he accompanied Paul to the play-room.

It was a good-sized place, and had been originally used as a schoolroom; a passage led to it from one end of the present schoolroom. A fire was always lighted there on half-holidays in the winter, so that it was a very favourite resort in the evenings, especially in bad weather. It was not the thing to read there, nor were running games allowed. An exception was made in favour of high-cock-o'-lorum and leap-frog, which might be played at the end furthest from the fireplace. There were tables, and benches, and a few strong wooden chairs and stools; and shelves all round on which the boys might keep their boxes, and other treasures, boats, or little theatres, or museums, or anything they were making.

Digby found his box standing by itself, on a spare shelf. The lock looked all right; he produced the key, and opened it—nothing had been touched.

"All right, then," exclaimed Paul. "We ought to get Farnham and two or three other fellows to stand by as guards, or we shall have Scarborough pouncing down on us like a hawk, or Spiller insinuating himself like an eel, and carrying off the spoil, as they will call it. I have seen those two fellows, before now, half clear out the box of a fellow who had

just come from home before he has been able to give anything to his friends. There they both come; I thought so. Shut it again, and hide the key in your pocket."

"I say, though, don't you think we might ask Bouverie to come to the feast?" exclaimed Digby, as Paul was running off. "Is he above that sort of thing?"

Paul stopped, and considered.

"He likes jam and cake, I dare say; but I don't think he would take yours, lest it should be said he helped you for the sake of what you have got," he answered. "I'll ask him in your name, though; there can be no harm in doing that."

When Newland was gone, Digby sat down near his box. Scarborough stood at one end of the room, eyeing him, and considering whether or not it would be worth while to indulge himself in the satisfaction of attacking him, and compelling him to give up some of the contents of his box.

Spiller, meantime, also, was playing with a ball, while he reflected how he might most easily obtain the object of his wishes, and get hold of the eatables he doubted not the new boy had brought. Still, as he felt sure that Newland must have warned Digby against him, he knew that he must exert the utmost circumspection and caution. Once more he glided up to Digby, and sat down near him, taking out his knife, and shaping a piece of soft pine into a boat.

"You are not fond of this sort of thing?—it is too sedentary for you, I have no doubt," he observed. "It suits me, as I am not fond of games. I shall be glad to make you a little vessel some day. Perhaps you have got some tools, now, in your box. I could do it much better with them than with a knife."

Digby very nearly laughed in Spiller's face. As to tools, he had never even possessed a hammer; and besides, his eyes having been opened to his companion's character, the object of his remarks were perfectly evident, and he had resolved not to be humbugged by him. However, he said, "Thank you;" for Digby never forgot to be polite even when he lost his temper, which was not often. "But, to tell you the truth, I do not care much about models and little things. I like sailing in a real vessel, or pulling in a real boat, or swimming, or riding; and, therefore, any such thing would be thrown away on me. Still, if you do anything for me when I ask you, I shall be very glad to repay you with a piece of cake, or some jam, or anything I may have which suits your fancy."

This was plain speaking; but Spiller was in no way offended. His wages had been settled, and now he had to consider how he might most conveniently win them. Still his mouth watered for the sweet things; and he wished that he could get paid beforehand.

Digby felt inclined to go to his box, to cut a piece of cake, and to throw it to him, as people sometimes do a penny to an importunate beggar, whom, in their hearts, they believe to be an impostor; but he restrained himself.

Just then, Paul Newland, Farnham, and three or four more boys, of whom, though they were younger than himself, Spiller had an especial dread, made their appearance at the door of the play-room. He knew that his chance of getting anything just then out of Digby was gone, so he sneaked away to a distance, where he sat down to watch their proceedings.

"I have arranged everything," said Newland. "I first gave your message to Bouverie. He is much obliged, but cannot join our party. Then I got Farnham and the other fellows to keep guard while you open your box: and Bouverie told me that if anybody interferes with you, one of us is to run and let him know, and that he will come to your assistance."

"He is a right capital fellow, then," exclaimed Digby. "It is all the better that there should be a few bullies and blackguards, that the good qualities of others may be the better discovered."

Paul answered that he thought Digby's philosophy was very good in theory; but that practically, he would rather dispense both with bullies and blackguards, as he was constantly a sufferer from them.

At length, all arrangements being made, Digby's box of treasures was opened, and found to contain even more good things than even he or any of his friends had anticipated. Everybody at Bloxholme who could think of what boys liked best, had made some suggestion which had been adopted, and the wonder was, that so much had been stowed away in so small a space. Every crevice had been filled with little and big pots of jam, and marmalade, and honey, a tongue, a Dutch cheese, chocolate-paste, anchovies, a pie without gravy, and a fine plum-cake were only some of the eatables,—then there was a hammer and nails, and gimlets, and screws, and a hasp-knife, and a writing-case, and a number of other useful things; enough, as Paul declared, to enable him to set up house by himself, if he wished.

They had only time to put back about two-thirds of the things, which were all they could get into the box, the rest having to be distributed between Newland's and Farnham's boxes, before the bell rang for tea.

One of the party, William Ranger, Digby heard him called, was easily persuaded to stay away from tea, to watch that no burglary was attempted during their absence.

Tea was quickly over; the bottles were filled, and the bread-and-butter stowed away in their pockets, and then, more hungry than ever, they hurried back to the play-room.

Ranger told them that he had placed himself on a bench, pretending to be fast asleep, and that scarcely had they gone, than Spiller glided into the room, and went up to the well-filled box. He had begun to work away at the lock, when up he had jumped and sung out—

"You had better not."

Without making any answer to this, Spiller had sneaked away again. In another minute, who should come in but the bully Scarborough, with a hammer in his hand. He walked straight up to the box, and finding that it was locked, was about to strike it with all his might, when Ranger, though trembling for the consequences to his bones, again cried—

“You had better not.”

The words acted like magic, even on the notorious bully, and he betook himself out of the room as fast as he could, having also, probably, lost his share of the provisions in the tea-room.

The supper-party were now able to assemble in peace and tolerable quiet; and a very merry party they were. The supper service was not exactly uniform, for each person had brought his own plate; some were of wood, and others of earthenware, or iron, or tin, while cups differed as much as did knives, and forks, and spoons. The pie, and the tongue, and the cheese, and the cake, and the jams, were all pronounced excellent, and though all the party eat as much as they wanted, helped out with their own bread-and-butter, it was agreed that there was enough for two or three more feasts, helped out a little, perhaps, with some of the contents of the cake-man’s basket. The beverages were, however, of a nature almost too simple for dishes so highly flavoured; the strongest was ginger-beer, the others were lemonade, cold tea, milk-and-water, and water alone. It were well if none of them had ever indulged in anything stronger.

It would be absurd to say that the way in which Digby dispersed the eatables in his box did not contribute to make him popular; at the same time, they would not have done so unless his own personal qualities had been calculated to win the regard of his schoolfellows. Ever cheerful, honest and upright, and bold and fearless, he quickly gained the kindly feeling of all the better boys in the school. With the others, he almost instinctively avoided associating. One of his greatest annoyances was Tommy Bray, who seemed never to lose an opportunity of trying to put him out of temper.

Digby, as he had promised, wrote very frequently to Kate. He had not altogether a satisfactory account to give of the school; still, he was happy—very jolly, he described himself—and there were plenty of fellows he liked, more or less, and he was learning a number of new games, and he was getting on very fairly with his lessons. Kate wrote even oftener to him, and told him all she was doing. Among other things, she said that she was learning French, and it would be so nice to be able to talk with him, and that she had persuaded papa to let him learn if he wished it, and so that he must, and she had enclosed the necessary written permission.

Digby had seldom differed with Kate in any of her propositions, so, in a fatal moment for his peace, he took up the order, and was at once placed in Monsieur Guillaume’s junior class.

The French master was highly pleased, and complimented him much on the wisdom of his resolution. All went very well at first; he managed to get through the rudiments about as well as the ordinary run of boys, but his advance after this was very slow, as Newland used to tell him, it was all goose-step with him. Somehow or other he could not manage to twist his thoroughly English mouth, so as properly to pronounce the French words. In vain the master made him repeat them over and over again. He knew the meaning of a good number of phrases and words, but when he came to express himself, Monsieur Guillaume vowed that he could not understand a word he said.

“That is because he speaks in one way, and I speak in another, I suppose,” observed Digby. “But I don’t see why my way is not the best; it is the English way, and I should be ashamed of myself if I did not consider everything English better than anything French.”

There was a twinkle in Digby’s eyes as he said this which showed that he was not altogether very serious.

“You remind me, Heathcote, of a story my father tells,” observed Newland. “An old shipmate of his, a Master in the Navy, was taken prisoner by the French early in the war, and had to remain at Verdun for several years. At last he was liberated, and was very soon again afloat. It was necessary, on the occasion of some expedition being dispatched, to send an officer who could speak French. The Captain knowing that the worthy Master had been many years in France, sent for him to take the command of it, explaining the reason why he had done so.

“‘I speak French, do you say, sir?’ he exclaimed. ‘No, sir; I am thankful to say that I never learned a word more of their lingo than I could possibly help. I, a true-born, patriotic Englishman! I should have felt that I was disgracing myself if I had.’”

“I am not so bad as that,” said Digby. “I should like to learn if I could; but I have no aptitude for languages, I suppose.”

Monsieur Guillaume had, however, resolved that his boys should not only learn, but speak French; and all his pupils were ordered to speak French at certain hours, either in the playground or anywhere else, except when they were up saying their lessons. To compel the boys to talk, several marks were distributed to those who spoke best; and they were to give them to whatever boys they found speaking English. Those who had them at the end of the day had a task of several lines of French poetry to learn by heart, an occupation Digby especially hated. Still the decree had gone forth, and Digby was continually having an odious piece of wood, with “French Mark” burnt on it, slipped quietly into his hands. Nine times out of ten, Tommy Bray was the person to give it him. How Tommy so often became possessed of it seemed a mystery, for he spoke French with more ease than most of the rest, and was not likely to have been caught, thoughtlessly, talking English.

Paul at length found that he would go up to a fellow he knew had got the mark, and address him in English, when, of course, it was given to him. He would then not try to pass it till the evening, when he would continually hover about Digby till he found him tripping. At last Digby, in desperation, would get hold of one of the marks early in the day, and keeping it in his pocket, give, as he said, free play to his native tongue. Of course, the system did not increase his affection for French, or for Monsieur Guillaume, or Tommy Bray, in particular; yet, after all, it was a less

annoyance than many to which he and some of the best boys were subjected by the masters.

Mr Sanford's illness increased, till he was unable to appear at all in the schoolroom; and yet, as he still retained his post as head-master, points were supposed to be referred to him which never were so referred; and various grievances which sprung up remained, day after day, unredressed.

Mr Yates became more pompous and dictatorial than ever, and not only took to caning, but assumed the power of flogging, which even Mr Sanford had long disused.

Mr Tugman, too, bullied more than ever; he pulled and boxed the boys' ears, and hit them over the shoulders and knuckles with a cane, which he always kept by his side.

Monsieur Guillaume imitated his example; and Mr Moore, the second master, was the only one who continued to treat the boys in the quiet, gentlemanly way he had always done.

One of the punishments Mr Yates had invented was to lock up a culprit in a dark room for several hours together, without food. This was especially hated; and some of the boys declared that they would sooner leave than submit to it. As it proved, it was calculated to produce very bad effects in the school. These punishments, and the unusual harshness of the masters, instead of introducing more order and regularity into the school, had a very different effect, and never had it been so disorganised and in so unsatisfactory a condition.

This state of things had begun to grow up before Digby's arrival. He, of course, did not, at first, discover it, and was not of a disposition to trouble himself much about the politics either of the school or of the nation at large. In a few months he found himself holding not only a good position in the school, but looked upon as a leader in many games, and in all expeditions and amusements.

Spring was advancing, and, as the days were long, the boys were allowed, according to an established custom, to go out after dinner, on half-holidays, and to make excursions to a distance. They were obliged, however, to say where they were going, and to report themselves on their return, when they were expected to give an account of their proceedings. In the summer, when cricket had come in, the privilege was seldom taken advantage of, as most of the boys spent their time in the cricket-field. Several, however, even then, who did not care about cricket, would get away from it; some to fish, others, who had a fancy for the study of natural history, to collect insects and other creatures; and some, unhappily, and the number was increasing, to assemble in spots where they were not likely to be observed; then they brought from the nearest public-house pipes, and tobacco, and beer, and often spirits, and they would spend the whole afternoon smoking, and drinking, and talking, as they called it, like men. Often, miserable, ignorant fools, they talked on subjects which no gentleman, no Christian man, worthy of the name, would even touch on.

Digby knew of these assemblings, and of the orgies which took place at them, but had resisted all the invitations he received to join them. Of course, he scarcely saw the evil in its true light, likely to result from them; health injured; habits of intemperance gained; the mind contaminated and debased with vicious ideas; and time, which ought to be spent either in health and strength-gaining exercise, or in study and preparation for the real business of life, squandered.

Bouverie, whose good opinion Digby had gained, spoke to him on the subject.

"I tell you this, Heathcote," he said, "when I was a little chap, I knew of a good number of big fellows who carried on much as these are doing. They thought themselves very fine fellows, and so did I. Had I not had a friend, who warned me to keep free from them, I might have done the same. There were about a dozen of them; the youngest was only two or three years older than I was. They all grew up; some went into the navy, others the army, and others abroad, in different capacities. Out of the whole number, four only are now alive; and of those four, one was dismissed from the navy, and another from the army, for drunkenness, and conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman; a third is a confirmed invalid, with a broken constitution; and one only, whom I meet occasionally, has given up his bad practices; and he never fails to say, that he hopes I do not imitate the bad example he set me, as I may be sure that the momentary satisfaction, I may fancy I should obtain, would make but a poor amends for all the suffering and wretchedness of mind and body I should be sure to reap in the end, and which he had gone through. It never occurred to me that a little smoking and drinking, and merely loose conversation, could do a fellow much harm. One might, I thought, easily give up the first, and, of course, with grave people and with ladies, one wouldn't talk loosely. But from what my friend told me, and from what I found out myself, I now know the consequences are sure to be bad. With regard to drinking, I tell you how it is. Beer, spirits, and wine are stimulants, and excite the lining of the stomach into which they are poured. Nothing so quickly acquires a bad habit as the stomach, because it has not got reason to guide it, and is, besides, full of sensitive organs. When once it is stimulated—that is, excited—it wants to be excited again; and so one says, I must give it a little more drink. If it has been excited by brandy, or rum, or gin, it generally longs for the same thing. It acts on the mind, remember, much more powerfully than the mind acts on it. If it gave pain at once, people would not drink; but it excites in a pleasant way, and the excitement goes on increasing till the brain is confused, and a person does not know what he is about. When the excitement goes off, while the nerves are returning to nearly their former state, then comes the pain. These nerves, understand, run all the way from the coats of the stomach up into the brain. They do not return quite to their former state, at all events, for a long time, and so have a longing for more excitement; and thus if a person can get spirits, or wine, or beer, he pours some down his throat to gratify them. The more these sensitive nerves are excited, the more stimulating liquid they desire; and thus, acting through the brain, the more they make their owner wish for. So he goes on increasing the frequency of the times in which he gratifies them, and the quantity of liquor he pours down, because that which at first gratified them will do so no longer. This goes on till a man becomes what is called a confirmed drunkard. The younger a person is, the more sensitive are all his organs, and therefore the more likely he is to establish an irritable state of stomach, if he stimulates it in any way. Now, these fellows don't actually get drunk, but their stomachs will not long be content with the quantity of liquor they pour into them; and so they will go on increasing till they not only get drunk, but

become miserable drunkards, on whom no one will depend, and who will very soon sink into early graves, loathed and despised by those who once cared most for them. There, Heathcote, I have told you something I know about the subject, not in a very learned way, but it is the truth. I might tell you a great deal more. Smoking, I own, is not nearly so bad; but common tobacco irritates the lining or coats of the stomach, and makes it wish for drink; and so I object to it. And I'll tell you what, also, bad conversation, such as those fellows indulge in, irritates and excites the mind, and so acting on the body, excites all the lower and grosser passions, and keeps out pure and ennobling thoughts. You must understand, Digby, that the mind cannot stand still. I am afraid that it has a tendency to becoming debased; and it requires all a person's resolution, energy, ay, and prayers too, my boy, to soar upwards to the condition it is capable of enjoying. The only safe course is to keep out all bad thoughts, or even light thoughts, and to resist every bad propensity from the very first, and to keep away from all temptations, from all examples, from everything, indeed, which may encourage them. I can tell you that so pernicious, so terrible are the results of the habits in which those fellows indulge, that I would far rather see my younger brother in his grave than know that he had become their companion, and was running the risk of being contaminated by them. There, Heathcote, I will not talk any more about the matter now. Perhaps I have said even more now than you can understand. Trust me, however, that it is the advice I would give my youngest brother, or any boy in whom I might feel a deep interest."

These remarks, whether entirely understood or not at the time, did make a deep impression on Digby's mind; and he thanked Bouverie for speaking so unreservedly to him. "But how did the other fellows, of whom you were speaking, die?" asked Digby. "Perhaps they had reformed, or would have reformed, had they lived."

"What they might have done no mortal can venture to say," answered Bouverie, gravely. "They had not reformed, but, on the contrary, had become worse and worse, and one and all of them died miserably. The deaths of some were laid to the climates to which they went; but had their constitutions not been completely weakened, they might easily have withstood the attacks of the climate. Two died from excessive drinking, another was killed in a drunken brawl, and a fourth broke his neck when unconscious of what he was about, while two more died miserably, horribly. I need not tell you now; but they had their own vicious propensities alone to blame."

"I believe all you have told me, and how I wish that you would speak to others in the way you have done to me," exclaimed Digby. "What shall we do when you go, Bouverie?" As he spoke, the tears came into his eyes.

"Remember what I have said to you; and let the right-thinking boys keep as much as possible to themselves," answered Bouverie (he was going at the end of the half). "I will let you know where I am, and you must write to me and let me know how things go on, and I will write to you, and give you my advice. I shall depend a good deal upon you, remember. Already many fellows look to you as a leader; you must do your best to keep that position, not only by your daring and activity, but by your moral conduct, by your steadiness and general good behaviour. As a proof of it, Farnham and others have been arranging a game of 'Follow-my-leader' for to-morrow, across the country somewhere; and, after discussing a number of fellows to act as leader, some much older than you are, they unanimously fixed on you."

Digby could not be but pleased at this, especially from the importance Bouverie attached to the circumstance. That very evening, Farnham, Newland, Ranger, and several other fellows came up to him.

"Heathcote, the weather is still cool, and we have all been talking of a grand Follow-my-leader run;" began Newland.

"Sibley, who was one of our best leaders, is lame, and can't run, and Cooper won't, and the fellows say that Hume, and Freeland, and Rolls, and Elmore don't give sport enough, and funk to go over difficult places, and can't jump half the brooks about us, and so it was agreed that the chances are you would make a better leader than any of them."

"That's not exactly it, Newland," interposed Farnham; "you know that when some one asked you to lead, you said, that from the way Heathcote had followed the last time we had a run, and from the capital manner in which he plays all the games he learns, that you were certain that he would prove about the best and most plucky leader we have had in our time. Then, Heathcote, say you will accept the office, and settle the matter."

"I can't make a speech, but I will undertake to do my best; and all I ask is, that if I tumble into a ditch and can't get out by myself, somebody will help me," answered Digby. "How many will join, do you think?"

"Twenty, at least," said Farnham. "Good sport is expected; because they all say a plucky fellow like you is certain to lead into new and difficult places."

"As I said before, I'll do my best, and just think over to-night the line of country I will take," said Digby. "I know it pretty well by this time, but I will consult you two fellows about it when I have formed a plan, and see if you approve of it."

So it was settled.

"We'll just take care, though," he added, "lest that little sneak, Tommy Bray, does not manage to slip his vile French mark into my hand the last thing. The only safe plan will be to hold my tongue altogether; then he can't say I am talking English or bad French."

The rest undertook to keep a watch over Tommy, and to draw him away should he be found near Digby.

The precaution was not useless, for he was very soon afterwards seen hovering about, his little sharp eyes twinkling with malice, as if he had made sure of his victim. The rest, however, sung out "Johnny Jackass, Johnny Jackass,"—a name which had lately been bestowed on him, while others "he-hawed—he-hawed" in concert, and in a way which prevented him from fixing on any of the party with whom, from their being in the French class, he could leave the mark. Besides, had he given it to one of them, he would have been prevented handing it to Digby, which it was his object to do. First one addressed him—not in very good French, certainly,—then another; and the others pretended to

be talking English a little way off; but by the time he got up to them they were either making dumb show, or chattering away in what was considered French. Then he would suddenly turn back to Digby, but would find him poring over a book, and as dumb as an adder. Thus the evening slipped away; and after the bell rang for prayers, the mark could not be passed. It was known that Bray did not really get any imposition for having the mark, and thus all escaped.

Digby, very naturally, could scarcely sleep at first going to bed for thinking of what he would do the next day. He resolved, at all events, that he would show he was worthy of the honour done him. Each boy was furnished with a strong ash leaping-pole, about ten feet long, and this added very much to the excitement and interest of the sport, because by their means wide and deep streams could easily be crossed, walls scaled, and difficult hedges got through. At last Digby recollected having taken a walk over a wildish part of the country, three or four weeks before this; and on thinking over the impediments to a direct course across it, he resolved that that should be the line he would follow. This done, he fell asleep.

Chapter Fourteen.

A Grand Game of "Follow my Leader"—Digby Leader—Farmer Growler proves far better than he looks—Arrival of Julian Langley—a conspiracy hatched.

The next morning broke with the promise of a very fine day, and as the sun rose, the weather improved. Digby was early on foot, and set to work at once on his lessons, that he might run no chance of being turned back, and having to keep in to do any task which might be set him, and which he fancied Monsieur Guillaume or Mr Tugman would be too happy to impose. Both tried hard to find him tripping, but entirely failed. School was over. Dinner was rapidly got through, and Digby and his followers hurried out to prepare for their adventures. They all had on their cricketing dresses of white flannel, with dark blue jackets over them—light blue ribbons were on their hats, and short streamers of the same colour at the upper end of their poles. Altogether they looked very neat and fit for work. As they were dressed in flannel, and all their clothes would wash, they did not dread the consequences of a tumble into a muddy ditch or a deep stream. Digby was distinguished as leader by having a red and white ribbon added to the blue streamer at the end of his pole. They all assembled in the playground ready for the start. Scarborough looked at them with an envious eye, and would have liked to have spoiled their sport—so would Spiller, for no one had asked him to join; but the appearance of Bouverie, who had come to see the start, prevented them from indulging in their bad feelings.

"All ready," shouted Digby. "Well, then, away we go."

A gate in the side wall of the playground led into some fields. Out of this they all filed, Digby leading and flourishing his pole above his head. From the moment his followers got outside the gate they were bound to do exactly as he did. Now he planted his pole in the ground and leaped as far as it would carry him—now he took a hop, skip, and a jump—now an eccentric turn on one side or the other—now he bolted through a hedge, and ran at full speed along a road till a practicable gap appeared in another hedge with a field on the right: into this he leaped, and made his way towards a high mound whence a fine view could be obtained of all the country round. A broad ditch intervened—that everybody knew. There was a plank bridge some way down, and it was a question whether he was going to make for it, but he had no such intention. He reached its sedgy margin, and planting his pole firmly in the centre, he sprang forward and cleared it with a couple of feet to spare on the other side. One after the other followed. Some, the bigger boys especially, leaped as far as he did. Paul Newland cleared it, and a very good leap he made for a boy of his size. One little fellow, however, John Nott, who always wanted to do things, but seldom found his nerves in a proper condition when it came to the point, planted his pole, began the leap, but trembled when half way over, and before his feet had touched the bank down he slipped, and into the soft mud he went. William Ranger, who had purposely brought up the rear that he might help any who got into scrapes, though he said that he did so to whip up stragglers, saw what had happened, and leaping across somewhat out of his turn, hauled up the mud-bespattered little fellow to the green turf.

"There, roll yourself on the turf, Notty, and then, on your legs once more, follow the rest." He exclaimed when he had performed this act of kindness, "Tally ho! tally ho!"

Away all the party went once more, till they all stood on the high mound, flourishing their poles and enjoying the balmy coolness of the early spring air, scented with numberless flowers of summer. Snowdrops and daffodils had disappeared, but primroses, cowslips, and violets covered the grassy fields and meadows in rich profusion. Wood anemones were carpeting with their delicate and white pink blossoms the leaf-covered ground in every wood and sheltered copse; and the delicate blossoms of the stellaria were shining forth, amid herbage of every description on all the banks and hedges, like stars in the dark sky. The glossy blossoms of the celandine, too, in every damper spot enamelled the turf; and the bright yellow flowers of the large water ranunculus garnished the sides of the streams and rivulets which flowed below them. Sweetly, too, and cheerfully the birds sang on every bush and tree-top with many varied notes. The cuckoo sent forth his unmistakable sounds, also, from many a neighbouring hedge, always calling loudly, and yet seeming to be so far off,—while high above their heads was heard the joyous note of the skylark, as he rose upwards into the blue sky, as if never intending to return again to earth. Varied, likewise, was the landscape. There were hills and downs in the distance—wide fields, sloping here and there, in which the corn was just springing up—rich green meadows, on which the cattle was enjoying the most luxurious of repasts. There were woods, too, and hazel copses on the hill-sides; and sparkling streams and ponds which looked as if they must be full of fish, and wide ditches full of tall sedges and flowering rushes, and many other water-plants, some few of which were already coming into bloom. Here and there might be seen small villages or hamlets, farmhouses, and neat cottages with rustic porches, over which the honeysuckle or clematis had been taught to climb; pretty little gardens—every inch of them cultivated—though the habitations only of the poorest labourers. The boys stood some time looking at it, and almost unconsciously drinking in its beauties. Digby had a feeling that he loved such a scene dearly

—perhaps he scarcely knew why it was. He had no inclination for some minutes to dart down again into the valley to proceed on the course he had marked out. No one seemed to wish to hurry him either. He looked and looked—gazing round on every side.

“Yes, this is England, dear old England,” he cried. “Old England for ever. Wherever we go, boys, never let us forget Old England, or what she is like.”

“No; nor that we are Englishmen,” added Ranger.

“Old England against the world in arms! Old England for ever!” shouted Digby.

And that shout was repeated loudly, enthusiastically by all those true English boys, as they stood on that hill-top; and never were those words, thus spoken in season, forgotten, nor did the sound of that hearty shout ever die away altogether on the ears of those who repeated and heard it. Had there been thousands and thousands of other English boys within hearing, they, too, would have repeated it with equal good-will. Oh, may English boys never forget those lines of our immortal poet:—

“Come the three corners of the world in arms,
And we shall shock them: nought shall make us rue
If England to itself do rest but true.”

King John.

“After all, I am sure there is no place like the country, and no country like England,” cried Digby, waving his pole. “But away we go once more, boys, with just another jolly shout for the land we all love—Hurra! hurra! hurra!”

All repeated the words, and down the hill dashed Digby, followed closely by his companions, and in another moment he was forcing his way up a steep bank, and through a hedge which few would have thought of attempting. He got through it, though, and the rest followed more easily. Probably the farmer who owned the field would rather they had taken a longer way round; but certainly it did not occur to any of them that they were doing any harm; hedges are so evidently made to be got through, somehow or other, by boys, if not by cows. On they went, along the edge of the field—for wheat was coming up in it, and Digby knew that they might do harm by trampling over that. There was, of course, a gate by which they might have got out of the field, but Digby scorned gates, and it was not in the direction he was taking. There was another bank, though, with a still thicker hedge on the top of it than that they had previously passed through. Up the bank dashed Digby; but, even with the aid of his pole, he could scarcely find footing; to get over the hedge seemed impossible. Strenuous were the efforts he made, though, and numerous the times he and his followers had to jump down the bank again. Foiled he was determined not to be. Casting his eyes on either side, they fell on a young beech tree, one of whose glossy branches hung, he fancied, within reach of the top of the bank. Along the bottom of the bank he ran; he climbed up it once more, but though he sprang as high as he could, he could not reach the branch; in an instant his pole was planted firmly against the branch; up it he swarmed, and sat perched in the tree. The pole was now hauled up, and the end placed on the opposite side of the hedge; down it he went, and found himself on the side of a wide piece of moorland, yellow with the bloom of the fern, or furze. The shouts of his followers showed him how much they appreciated the feat. A broad trench was still to be crossed, full of water.

“Not very deep, though,” he thought to himself. “Never mind; here goes.”

Down the bank he slid, and, feeling with his pole, attempted to cross; but the water would, he found, even then, be up to his mouth, and perhaps deeper still further on. The weather was not yet warm enough to make a swim pleasant; so he had to scramble along by the side of the bank. At last, he came to the end of the water, and then he managed to get up the perpendicular side of a gravel bank, and, hurrying on, reached a high gravel mound.

Paul Newland had closely followed him; he made up by resolution and sagacity for what he wanted in strength.

The two stood together watching the rest getting over. Some very nearly tumbled into the pool; and they had to shout to warn them of their danger. Farnham soon came up to the mound; but they did not begin to move till Ranger shouted out that all were safely over. Then Digby once more set off among the heather, and furze, and scattered pine-trees. The unevenness of the ground afforded an abundant variety in the run. Sometimes they came to deep gravel-pits, down which Digby plunged, skirting along the pools which filled their bottoms, and then climbing up their crumbling banks on the opposite side. The piece of common was soon passed; and then a copse-wood, filled with brakes and briars, had to be passed through. Dauntlessly, in spite of thorns and the numberless scratches they inflicted, Digby led the way. Shrieks and shouts of laughter burst from the boys as they rushed on, thrusting the boughs aside, and often letting them spring back in the face of those who followed. All was taken in good part; they were in too good spirits to lose their tempers. Once more they were in a cultivated field; it was in a sheltered position, and the wheat was much advanced.

“Look out, Heathcote; old Growler’s farm is not far off, and I shouldn’t be surprised but what the field belongs to him,” shouted Farnham.

Digby was keeping along the extreme border of the field, where no wheat was growing, so he knew that they could do no harm; and he had no intention of cutting across it. On he went, therefore, till he saw under the hedge a leafy arch over a drain, and he thought that he could pass through it.

“The sooner we are out of old Growler’s property, perhaps, the better,” he shouted; “follow me.”

As he spoke, trailing his pole, he darted through the hole. It was a somewhat difficult feat; and he did not exactly know where he should find himself when he was through. He popped up his head, and found a heavy hand clapped

on his shoulder.

“Hillo, young one; what have you been after?” said the man who had captured him, with a gruff voice. “Why, how many on you are there?” he added, as he watched one boy after the other emerge from the hole. “When will there be an end of you? You seems for all the world like young ferrets. Pretty mischief you’ve been doing, I doubt not, in my field of young corn. Oh, you think you’re going on, do you? Stop, stop, my young masters. I’m going to give you a sound good hiding, every one on you, or else you clubs together, and pays for the damage you have done my field.”

“We have done no damage whatever,” answered Digby. “We went in at a gap, we kept along the edge on the grass, and we came out at this hole, as you have seen.”

“I don’t believe thee, young ‘un,” growled the farmer, angrily. “Don’t you tell me that you didn’t go straight across the young corn. I know what boys is made of, I should think.”

“I say that I would not tell you a falsehood to save myself from a dozen such thrashings as you would venture to give me,” exclaimed Digby, looking up boldly in his face. “Strike away, if you like; but, remember, you do it at your peril. I have told you the truth.”

The stout old farmer held him at arm’s-length, and gazed at him attentively.

“I do believe if I ever seed an honest English face thee has got it, and I believes every word thee says,” exclaimed the farmer, in quite a different tone to that in which he had before spoken. “There, now, I only wanted to frighten thee all a bit; for I thought thee had been doing a careless thing, and been trampling down my corn; but I sees I was mistaken—so just come all on you to my farm, it’s just close at hand here, and there’s a glass of home-made beer and some bread and cheese, or a cup of sweet milk and some cake, I’ll warrant my missus has got, for each of you.”

“We are playing follow-my-leader, Mr Growler; so if he goes we all must go, remember,” cried one of the boys.

“That’s just what I wants, young ‘un,” answered the farmer, good-naturedly. “So come along, master—you’ll not repent it.”

So once more seizing Digby by the shoulder he hauled him off, without any vehement opposition, towards a comfortable looking farmhouse, a few fields away from where they then were. The farmer was better than his word, and bread and cheese and cake, and honey and preserves, and fresh milk and cider, and beer and gooseberry wine, all, as the farmer’s wife assured them, made by herself at home, were placed in abundance before them. They did justice to the provisions, but to their credit they drank very slightly of the fermented liquors. The farmer and his wife pressed them to partake of everything set before them. Really it was, as the good dame observed, a pleasant sight to see the twenty boys, all in health and spirits, their cheeks glowing with the exercise they had been taking, sitting round the large well-scrubbed oak table in the farmhouse kitchen, and the huge cheeses and equally large loaves of pure home-made bread, not sickly white, but with an honest brown tinge, showing that all the best part of the flour was there, and no admixture of alum or bone-dust. Then how the beer frothed, and smelt of honest malt and hops. The profusion of honest food was pleasant, and still pleasanter the hearty good-will with which it was given. The dame wanted to do some rashers of bacon and to poach them some eggs, but they all declined her kindness, assuring her that if they eat more they could never get through the work they had before them.

“Remember, my boys, I shall be main glad to see any of you whenever you comes this way, and can give me a look in,” said Farmer Growler, as they rose to continue their run, and Digby was offering to shake hands with him.

The farmer took his hand and wrung it heartily.

“I wasn’t inclined to think over well of the youngsters of Grangewood there; but since I have seen you, I tell you frankly, I likes some on you very much. Good-bye, good-bye.”

“We might have said the same of our new friend,” observed Digby, as they got beyond hearing. “After having known that honest, good-natured fellow, rough as his outside seemed, I shall be inclined to think better of some of the farmers I know, whom I’ve always fancied to be rather sulky, bearish fellows. We won’t forget to pay him a visit another day, and it will be pleasant if we can think of something to carry to him or his wife. But we must make up for lost time, and go ahead faster than before, or we shall not get back till dark.”

Away they all went; their meal—for neither was it luncheon, dinner, nor tea—in no way impeded their progress. On they ran faster than ever; nothing stopped them. At last they came out near a village. Right through it they went, much to the astonishment of the inhabitants, who hurried out of their cottages, to see the young gentlemen running like mad down the street. A meadow was on one side. Over a paling and a widish ditch Digby jumped, and along the meadow he ran, knowing full well that a broadish stream was to be found at the bottom of it. By this time a number of spectators had collected.

“It must be done,” thought Digby; “follow who can.”

He planted his pole in the middle of the stream and cleared it with a bound—shouts from the villagers showing their admiration of the feat.

Most of the rest went over in good style. Poor little Notty very nearly tumbled in, but generous Ranger went over first and stood by to catch him; and on they all went once more in line, and were soon out of sight of the village and its vociferous inhabitants, as Newland called them. Other streams were in their course. They came to some swampy ground, and Digby very nearly let them into a quagmire, where they would all have stuck, when he espied some stones to his left, and landed on a causeway which led across it. That stream-leaping was a fine exercise for the nerves and strength, and agility too, and required no little practice. A hill now appeared before them. They breasted

it boldly, as some of them did years afterwards other hills when crowned with fierce enemies, showering down bullets and round-shot on their heads. The parish church, with a lofty and beautiful tower, stood there. It had been all along Digby's aim to reach it. The view from the summit he knew was beautiful—no more extensive prospect was to be found in all the country round. The tower was undergoing repair, so the door was open. In went Digby, and up the steps he ran—round and round and round he went, as he ascended the well-worn circular stair—the voices of his followers sounding in various tones behind him. Near the top was a window—from it hung a stout rope, which his quick eye saw was well secured. He reached the top, where there was a platform large enough, for the tower was square, to contain all the party. Soon they all assembled there. If the view from the hill was sufficient to inspire them, this was still more calculated to do so. It did, and such a cheer was raised as perhaps had not been heard from the old tower top for many a year. There is good hope for England when her boys can cheer right lustily and honestly, as did Digby Heathcote and his friends. For some time they stood there drinking in unconsciously the beauty of the scene, not troubling themselves with details however, and imbibing, too, greater love than ever for their native land. Suddenly Digby recollected that he ought to be moving.

“On, on,” he shouted, and down the steps he dashed—not altogether, though. He stopped at the belfry and sprang to the window, from which hung the rope he had observed. Heaving down his pole, he grasped the rope, and, to the surprise and almost horror of his companions, he threw his legs over and down he glided; not very rapidly, though, but quietly, as if it was a matter of every-day occurrence, looking up and trying out, “Let those only follow who are certain they can do it. I forgive those who cannot.”

Farnham, Ranger, Newland, and others looked over, and doubted whether or not they would follow. They had a regard for their necks—it would not be pleasant to break them, and yet Digby performed the feat so easily, and it would be a disgrace if no one attempted it. Ranger did not hesitate long—he only waited till Digby reached the ground in safety, to grasp the rope and to follow him down. The rest shouted when they saw him gliding down. He was, as he deserved to be, a general favourite. Soon he was seen standing alongside Digby. Farnham and then Newland came, and three more; but the remainder could not bring themselves to make the venture. Indeed, Digby and Ranger entreated them not to do so; for though they stood underneath to catch any who might fall, they all felt that the risk was great. Digby, more especially, had scarcely reached the ground than he regretted having tempted others to follow his example.

“If any of them should be killed, or seriously hurt themselves, how dreadful it would be. I should never forgive myself,” he observed to Ranger.

All were at length assembled at the foot of the tower; and Digby having flourished his pole, once more started off as leader of the party, on their return towards home. He had arranged a different route to that by which they had come, away to the right; a portion of it being over a high chalky ridge. They had a steep hill-side to climb, but well and actively they did it; and, at the top, they were rewarded by the fresh health-inspiring breeze they met in their faces. For a mile or more Digby kept the summit of the ridge—a smooth, green surface, which appeared to afford but little variety to the leader's movements; but here Digby equally showed his talent for his office, never for a minute together was he in the same attitude. Now his pole was poised on high as an Indian dart, or javelin; now it was held as a lance; now he was flourishing it round his head; now he made a sudden leap forward with it; now he hopped; now he skipped; now he went round and round, spinning, but yet advancing. All these, and a variety of other eccentric movements were seen from the valley below, and created the greatest astonishment, and, in some instances, consternation, for the figures of the boys, seen against the evening sky, as they followed one after the other, in regular succession, appeared magnified to a considerable degree; and many wondered what extraordinary beings they could be. They were very much amused, some days afterwards, on hearing of the strange sights the people had seen on the ridge on that very evening, and how they passed by. The remainder of the leaps they took, the streams they crossed, and the duckings some of them got, need not further be described. They got back in time for tea, which on Saturdays, in summer, was always later than at other times.

Digby got very much complimented for the way in which he had led.

“It's the best run we have ever had, old fellow,” exclaimed Ranger and others. “Yes, indeed it was; and the plucky way in which you got down from the top of Whitcombe Church tower was very fine. It's not surprising some of us funk'd to follow. We must have another run like it next week, and we must get you to be leader again. Remember, you think over what course you will take, so as to give us plenty of sport.”

Digby, naturally gratified at all these compliments, promised that he would prepare for another run on the following Saturday.

The authorities, however, it appeared, had taken a different view of the sport to that which those had who had engaged in it. The descent from the top of Whitcombe tower was looked upon with unmitigated horror; and it was proposed to take steps for the prevention of any such dangerous adventures in future. Little, however, was poor Mr Sanford aware of how much worse proceedings were taking place much nearer home, and of the far greater dangers to which many of the boys were exposed during those long spring evenings, when they were allowed to wander forth beyond the supervision of their masters.

The Monday after this noted run, Digby was passing through the hall, when the front-door bell rang, and Susan went to open it, just as she had done the day of his arrival. He likewise stopped at the end of the passage to see who was coming. A fly was at the door, and in front of it stood Rubbins, the fat butler at Milford Priory, who was at that moment helping out of it no less a person than Julian Langley.

Julian was looking very sheepish and downcast, and very much inclined to cry; but the moment he saw Digby, who could not help coming forward, his countenance brightened up.

“Ah, Digby, this is pleasant, to have a friend to meet one, and to tell one all about the school,” he exclaimed. “I did

not know I was coming to your school. Now I don't mind. What sort of a place is it? Many fast fellows, eh? Any fun to be had? Tell me all about it; come, quick. You look jolly enough, let me tell you. Why, you are nearly as big as I am." So Julian ran on, much in his old style.

Although Digby knew perfectly well what he had been, and how much mischief he had led him into, yet he could not help looking upon him as an old friend and companion, and as such he received him, feeling really very glad to see him. They had not much time to talk then, for Rubbins having got all his luggage and things out of the fly, and shaken hands with him in a somewhat familiar and patronising manner, delivered him over formally to Susan, to be carried before Mr Sanford.

"Won't you wish to see master, sir?" asked Susan, who did not understand exactly who Mr Rubbins was.

"Oh, no; no, thank you," answered that gentleman, with a slight sneer in the tone of his voice. "The young one knows well enough how to take care of himself, I guess."

Susan, from these words, at once understood who Mr Rubbins was, and formed a tolerably correct opinion of the character of the young gentleman, which she did not fail to express to Mrs Pike.

Digby had to leave Julian, who was now taken before Mr Sanford; but he promised to wait for him at the end of the passage.

Mr Sanford was not altogether satisfied with his new pupil. Julian spoke in an off-hand way of his former career, and the education he had received; and then forthwith mentioned his friendship with Digby Heathcote.

"He will show me all about the school, sir, and put me up to its ways. All I want is to know them, and I dare say that I shall get on very well with the other fellows," said Julian, with consummate assurance. "Digby and I, you see, sir, are like brothers almost—we have been so much together, and think so exactly alike."

Now Mr Sanford, from what he had heard of Digby, had formed a favourable opinion of him; and therefore, taking Julian at his word, he was bound to form the same of him. He knew enough, however, of the world to be aware that the very worst way of judging of persons is to take them at their own estimate; and so Julian did not find himself quite so highly esteemed as he might have wished. Mr Sanford, however, rang the bell, and desired that Master Heathcote might be sent to him.

Digby very quickly made his appearance; and Mr Sanford was at once inclined to doubt Julian's assertion that they were acquainted, till Digby explained that they had just before met.

"Very well, Heathcote, introduce him to the other boys; and I hope I shall hear a good account of him from the masters," said Mr Sanford. "But remember, by the by, that you do not run the risk of breaking your own neck, and that of your companions, by slipping down from the top of church towers. I must take measures to prevent such a proceeding in future; and have begged Mrs Pike and Mr Yates to see to it. Now go, and be good boys."

Away ran Digby and Julian. The boys were in the playground, so Digby at once took his old friend there to introduce him. He was resolved to give him the chance of a good start; so he took him up only to the best fellows, intending to warn him of the characters of the others. This ought to have been a very great advantage to Julian.

Farnham, Ranger, Newland, received him, for Digby's sake, very kindly and cordially; and even Bouverie showed that he wished to be civil to him, and did not address him in the bantering way in which big fellows are apt to speak to those younger than themselves.

Julian, however, took it into his head that all this was owing to his own merits, and was not proportionably grateful to Digby. Although warned by Digby, from the first, of the characters of Spiller, Johnny Bray, Scarborough, and others, he at once showed that he had a hankering to become acquainted with them. Spiller, consequent, very soon got round him, and became the possessor of various articles in his box, as well as of some slices of his cake, and a pot or two of jam. Scarborough was not long in falling foul of him.

Digby was about to rush to his rescue, and calling on Ranger and Farnham to assist; when what was his surprise to hear Julian say—

"Please don't hit me, Scarborough, and I will give you a pot of jam and some marmalade, and will send home for some more, if you want it."

"Well, hand out the grub, young one, and I will let you off this time," answered the bully. "Remember, though, I won't stand any nonsense. You've promised to get me what I want, and I intend to keep you up to your word."

Julian sneaked off to his play-box, to get the eatables; and Digby turned away with disgust.

"The idea of buying off a thrashing from a big bully," he exclaimed, stamping with his feet in very vexation. "It is a thoroughly un-English, cowardly proceeding. Besides, it will only make the bully attack him more readily when he wants anything out of him. As he looks upon him as my friend, he wants to revenge himself on him, as he dares not attack me again while Bouverie remains."

Boys at school very soon find their own level. Julian rapidly sunk to his. He would have had a better chance of retaining the friendship of Farnham, Ranger, and the good set, had he been sent to sleep in their room; but, unfortunately, there was no vacant bed there, and he, consequently, was put into a room with Spiller, and some of the worst fellows. All the advantage, therefore, which he gained in the day, from associating with Digby and his friends, was undone in the evening by the loose conversation of his bedroom companions.

"I wanted to have had a jolly feast, such as you had, Digby, the fellows tell me, and which, it seems, gained you so many first-rate friends," said Julian, one day soon after his arrival, in a melancholy tone. "But do you know, what with that brute, Scarborough, and that sneaky chap, Spiller, and a host of others, I haven't got a single thing left. I don't think you benefited much by me, either."

"Oh, never mind that; but I did not suppose my feasts gave me friends," answered Digby. "Perhaps it might have been so; but then, when I think of it, Bouverie would accept nothing, and some of the best fellows took very little, and indeed, generally put in their own share of grub."

"Ah, still they knew that you were a fellow who was always likely to have plenty of good things," argued Julian. "I must see about getting some more things from the Priory; it won't do to be looking down in the world."

Poor, miserable Julian had evidently no notion of any other bond of union between people; it should not be called friendship, though he so called it, but interest, what one may get from the other. He was to be pitied certainly; but not for a moment exonerated. He had been miserably instructed at the first, there was no doubt about that; but then he had gone to Mr Nugent's, where he had every opportunity of learning what was right. The truth, the right was set clearly before him, but he deliberately refused to accept it. The laws of God and man, his duties in life, were clearly explained to him; he had a good example set him; he was kept as much as possible out of temptation to do wrong; still, as has been seen, he contrived to do it. Now he came where he had evidently the choice between good companions and bad, and he deliberately chose the bad.

So it will be with all those whose eyes may fall on these pages. If they abandon the straight and narrow, and perhaps difficult, path of right, and enter into the broad, and seemingly easy, course of evil, they do so with their eyes open, in spite of warnings, in spite of the whisperings of conscience, in spite of thousands of examples of the destructive results of the life they are pursuing; and they will in the end be unable to offer the slightest excuse for themselves; they will have to acknowledge they brought down all their misery and wretchedness on their own heads, that their punishment was just.

The next Saturday came, and when lessons were over, Mr Yates ascended the head-master's desk, and informed the school that leave to go out was stopped, in consequence of certain proceedings which had come to Mr Sanford's knowledge; but more than that he did not consider it just then necessary to explain.

This announcement, though received in silence, created the greatest vexation, and anger, and indignation among all the boys. Some thought the prohibition arose from one cause, some from another. Digby and his friends, who had played the game of Follow-my-leader on the previous Saturday, thought that it was owing to something they had done on that occasion. Some farmer, less good-natured than Mr Growler, might have complained about them; perhaps it was owing to their exploit in the church tower; others thought that it was owing to something which had occurred in the village; others, owing to a fight which had taken place between one of their boys and a country lad; and perhaps Scarborough, and Spiller, and their set might have suspected that their half-holiday practices were known, and that all the school was being punished on that account. One thing was clear, on comparing notes, that a very considerable number of misdemeanours were committed every Saturday; and that, altogether, they were not punished without cause. Those, however, as is usually the case, who were the most guilty, were the most furious.

Scarborough declared loudly that he would not stand it; that, in spite of all the masters, he for one would go out as usual; so said a number of other fellows of his stamp.

Digby, and Farnham, and Newland did not like it; they thought themselves very unjustly treated; and of course that made them indignant. They talked of doing all sorts of things: they would scale the walls; they would take their usual expedition, with leave or without leave.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," exclaimed Farnham, who was always rather vehement when he fancied himself unjustly treated, "I'll write home, and beg to be taken away altogether, unless we have our proper liberty. After dinner, I'll go straight up to Mr Sanford, and ask him why we are all kept in because some other fellows have done what is wrong; and then I'll undertake to guarantee that if he will allow them to go out, they will all behave as he could wish in every way. If he still refuses, then I will frankly tell him that I will write home, and complain, and that others are determined to do the same."

Farnham's proposal was very much applauded by nearly all the moderate party, a few only advocating a quiet run through the country for an hour or so, just to show that they would maintain their rights.

The dinner-bell rang. They all went in; and no one ate a worse dinner in consequence of the perturbed state of their minds. They still, however, continued, in low voices, talking the matter over; and the masters and Mrs Pike saw that something was evidently wrong. The weather, however, summarily settled the matter for them. The sky had been for some time clouding over, and before they had left the dinner-table, the rain began to descend in torrents, so that it was impossible for any one of them to make any complaint of not being allowed to go out on that day. Harder and harder came down the rain, till it was evident that it was going to be a settled pouring afternoon. Although, in one respect, this was an advantage, as it enabled the better disposed to calm their spirits, and to think quietly over what they had proposed to do, yet it, at the same time, allowed the rest to brood over their fancied wrongs, and to concoct a variety of schemes of vengeance.

Julian Langley was one of the most indignant, and most ready to join any of the plans of the extreme party. He had come to a school where he understood there was plenty of liberty and gentlemanly treatment, and he found, he said, neither one nor the other. He had read of some fellows at a large school getting up a grand rebellion, barring out the masters, and standing a siege of several days, till their terms were complied with. The idea was caught up by others. It was grand in the extreme, if not novel. Scarborough and some of the bigger fellows were delighted with it. Julian undertook to win over Heathcote and his set.

"They must not be left out, certainly," observed Scarborough. "They are plucky fellows, and would be powerful allies; but I suspect that you will have some difficulty in managing them."

"Let me alone for that," answered Julian, with a self-satisfied tone. "I know how to touch up my old friend, Digby Heathcote, in the right place. He is well primed already, and only wants the spark to set him off."

There was certainly far less noise and disturbance that Saturday afternoon than there had been for a long time. On the Sunday, also, and the following days, the masters observed that the boys behaved even better than usual. An event which proved to be of considerable importance occurred on Monday. Bouverie, who had been counselling patience and submission, was suddenly summoned home to attend the sick bed of his father: he had time only to pack up and be off. He sent, however, for Farnham, and urged him not to do anything rashly, though he could not enlighten him as to the reason of the prohibition so much complained of. Strange to say, Digby was more pleased with Julian for two or three days than he had been since he came to the school—he was constantly with him, submitting to his opinion, and speaking so very sensibly on many matters.

"I'll tell you what it is, Digby," said Julian at last, "if all the fellows will sink their quarrels and disputes and unite heart and hand, we shall carry the day and gain our rights. For my own part, I do not care much about the matter; I am not going to be here long, so I argue for the sake of others more than for myself. Just, therefore, come and hear what Knowles and that clever fellow, Blake, has got to say. Depend on it they will show you that they are in the right."

In a fatal moment Digby consented to join a conference of those who called themselves the leaders of the school, to decide what should be done in case they were still denied the liberty they demanded.

Chapter Fifteen.

A Rebellion Proposed—Plans for Carrying on the War—The Weakest Find that they have to Pay the Piper—Commencement of Hostilities—Barring out.

The Saturday arrived which the boys at Grangewood expected would prove so big with events. It was a fine warm day—a great contrast to the previous Saturday. There appeared not the slightest reason why they should be kept in. As the school hours drew to a close everybody was on the tiptoe of expectation. At last half-past twelve came, and Mr Yates ascended the head-master's desk. "Boys," he said, in his usual disagreeable tone, "you were informed last week that you were not to go out beyond the playground. The same prohibition at present exists."

No sooner were the words uttered than a low groan was heard from one end of the schoolroom to the other. It rose higher and higher, till it burst into something which sounded very like a loud roar of anger.

"Mr Tugman, bring me up here some of the boys who are making that hideous noise," shouted Mr Yates. "Monsieur Guillaume, can you catch some of them? Mr Moore, is no one making a noise near you?"

Whenever one of the masters approached, the boys were found crying, with their handkerchiefs to their eyes, and saying, "Oh dear! oh dear! we mustn't go out; we mustn't go out."

This continued till the dinner-bell rang; for Mr Yates would not dismiss them, as was usual when school was over.

"You may go into dinner, boys," he sang out at last, fancying that he had gained the day.

Dinner passed over very quietly, however, and everybody eat even more than usual. Slices of bread and meat were also stowed away in the pockets of those who were sitting at a distance from Mrs Pike or any of the masters. Their intention was to lay in all the provisions of which they could possibly possess themselves. Digby had had a hamper of cake and tongues, and cheese and preserves, for which he was indebted to representations made by John Pratt to Mrs Carter, backed up by a petition from Kate. So numberless were the contents, and so liberal was the supply, that it seemed almost inexhaustible—sufficient, Digby and some of his friends considered, to last the whole school for many days. They were not well practised in commissariat arrangements or they would not have thought so. Other fellows, as it happened, also had hampers, which usually arrived about the middle of the half, to prevent their spirits sinking till the return of the holidays. All these things were collected in the play-room, as were the slices of bread and meat carried off from the dining-room. When, however, Scarborough and some of the heads of the rebellion came to examine the amount of provisions collected, they pronounced them totally inadequate for the purpose of enabling them to hold out till their grievances were redressed.

"Where, too, is the liquor?—where is the water? Is there any tea and sugar?" they asked. "We should die of thirst." They declared that it was absolutely necessary that a party should be told off to procure the necessary stores.

It then became a question as to who should go. Scarborough and Spiller had no fancy to run any risk for the good of others, nor indeed had Julian Langley, or Tommy Bray—indeed, a very sharp look-out was kept on all Master Tommy's movements lest he should sneak off and betray them. Water, it was suggested, might easily be collected in the water-jugs and basins, which could be brought down from the rooms, and an order was accordingly issued that the water in all the rooms should be preserved with the greatest economy. Then fuel was to be found for the fire, and kettles to boil the water, and saucepans to boil potatoes and to make stews, for they had no wish to undergo more hardships than they could help. With regard to the important point of procuring provisions, it was proposed that lots should be drawn, and that ten fellows, on whom they fell, should go out at night to obtain the supplies. Tea and sugar was loudly demanded by some: ale and ginger-beer and soda-water by others.

Scarborough and two or three of his intimates, managed the drawing of the lots: they fell in a very extraordinary manner on Digby, Farnham, Ranger, Newland, and others of the most steady boys, at the same time the most

spirited and likely to carry out what they might undertake.

"It is, indeed, fortunate we fellows are altogether, because we can thoroughly trust each other," remarked Digby, unsuspecting of any trick.

If Farnham did think unfair play had been used, he did not deign to say so. He had consented to draw lots, and as some one would have had to go, he was ready to run the risk.

The next thing to be done was to collect the funds to purchase the stores. Scarborough, and some of the other big fellows, went round and insisted on all those they could coerce emptying their pockets and their purses and contributing the greater part of their wealth to the common store. If a fellow had five shillings, he was told he must give four; if he had half-a-crown, he had to give up two shillings. Digby, Ranger, and their party contributed nearly ten shillings each. When, however, inquiries were made as to what Scarborough and some of the other big fellows were going to give, it was found that he had only a few shillings in his purse; he said that he could only put in eighteen-pence. He wanted the rest to buy tobacco, he asserted; which was very likely. Spiller, turning his pockets inside out, with a melancholy countenance, said he positively had nothing; but that he was not ashamed, as he was certain the advantage his wits would afford his companions would make ample amends for his want of tin. He, however, was certain that his friend, Julian Langley, who had so lately come from home, and had, as yet, no opportunity of spending his money, would be flush of cash.

"A fine idea!" exclaimed Scarborough, very much in the voice with which a Knight Templar of old would have addressed an unfortunate Jew whom he had got into his power. "Come, Langley, my man, we look to you for supplying the sinews of war; what have you got?"

Julian hummed and hawed not a little, and hesitated; but had at last to confess that he had got four pounds.

"Then three pounds is the least sum you can hand out," said Scarborough. "We might justly ask for ten shillings more, but we won't for the present; we shall know to whom to apply if more is wanted."

Julian had most reluctantly to draw forth the amount from his purse, and heartily he wished that no rebellion had been proposed. He had to learn the truth of a proverb, which runs to the effect, that in cases such as the present, "Whoever may dance, the weak and the silly ones have invariably to pay the piper."

"But when are we to begin the rebellion? when are we to commence barring out?" asked Digby, rising from his seat. "I thought that we were to set to work at once."

"We admire your zeal and courage, Heathcote," answered Scarborough, who had invariably spoken very politely to him since the lesson he had received.

It need scarcely be said that the bully looked forward to taking his revenge before long, now that Bouverie had gone.

"Your zeal and courage is great," he repeated; "but discretion is also of importance. We have now got a half-holiday, and to-morrow is Sunday, when we shall have to do no lessons; therefore it would be folly to shut ourselves up during that time. The provisions you are to procure cannot be got in before this evening. The difficulty will be to get them in; but we must manage it thus. You must all bring as much as you can; some must be packed in hampers, and directed to different fellows, as if it had come from home. Then the tradesmen must bring others in parcels; and I know a fellow who will, for a bribe, pretend to be a cake-man, and will bring in all sorts of things in his baskets."

Digby's feelings, as did those of his friends, revolted somewhat from these proposals; but they had entered into the undertaking, and they thought that they were in honour bound to go on with it.

"But how are we to get out without being seen?" he asked.

"I have thought about that, too," answered Scarborough, with a condescending smile. "We are to get up a grand game of hoops—that makes as much noise and confusion as anything. Football would, be better, if it had been the right time of the year, and we had grass to play on; now it might create suspicion. We must get the side gate open, and as we all press about it, so as to stop up the view of it from the house, you fellows are to slip out. The rest is easy. Hudson, and Jones, and Ware will supply you with what we want; they will do anything for money. Here, we have made out lists of what we want, and the different ways in which the things are to be sent in. It must all be collected in this room by to-night; if things come to-morrow, suspicion may be created. You understand the plan, now, all of you? By the bye, all the play-boxes, which have locks and keys, must be emptied, to hold the things, and the keys must be delivered over to our committee, which, you will understand, is called 'The Committee of Safety.' It is for the good of the cause—we must sacrifice everything to that. No one exactly would like a dictator, nor do I; so I hope all will agree that we have acted for the best."

Digby and Farnham were not quite satisfied when they found that this committee of safety consisted of Scarborough, Spiller, and three other fellows, called Ton, Smee, and Capron, their constant associates, and very nearly as great bullies and bad characters as Scarborough. However, it was too late to recede.

The foraging party were now provided with their lists, and with certain sums to pay for the things they were to get. Whether all the money collected was given to them they could not tell. Each of them, however, wisely made a note of what he received.

This was a piece of worldly wisdom my readers will do well to imitate through life—be exact in all money transactions. Put down at once all sums received and paid away, with the date of the transaction, and the name of the person to whom the sum was paid, or from whom received. It may give a little trouble at the time, but will save a great deal in the end.

The afternoon was drawing on; they all hurried out into the playground, having got hold of every hoop to be found. They divided into two parties, and were to charge each other from one end of the ground to the other. The foragers had hoops, also, but they were to throw down theirs, and to make their escape at the signal agreed on.

Digby's heart beat eagerly. Go he would, but still he would very much rather not have gone. He did not fear punishment, but he had hitherto been looked upon as a well-behaved boy, and he did not wish to lose that character.

The two parties drew up on either end of the ground.

"Charge!" shouted Scarborough. Away they went, rattling along, till they met in the middle. Many hoops were overthrown; the rest of the boys, with loud shouts, rushed on to the end, wheeling their hoops round, to prepare for another charge. Those whose hoops had been knocked down assembled on one side, close to the side wicket. Spiller was there, and so were all the foraging party. Spiller had some tools in his hands. The next encounter of the hoops took place exactly in a line with that spot; and though several other boys went up to it, their numbers did not appear to have increased. All that afternoon the game of hoops went on, the boys knocking away with their sticks and shouting at the top of their voices; till poor Mr Sanford's shattered nerves were almost completely unstrung.

At length, the voice of a man, who said he was a cake-man, was heard outside; and Spiller was dispatched, with a humble request to Mrs Pike for the key of the wicket, to allow him to enter.

In an incautious moment, influenced by the idea of saving her bread-and-butter, Mrs Pike gave up the key.

"I'll soon be back with it, marm," said Spiller, in his blandest tone.

The cake-man's basket was soon emptied; but it appeared that he had another one outside, and the contents of that disappeared with equal rapidity. Pockets, and pocket-handkerchiefs, and hats, were quickly filled, and the things carried off to the play-room.

The foraging party had been out, and came in, one by one, in the rear of the cake-man, heavily laden. The expected hampers also arrived. They always put Mrs Pike in good humour. A very large one was for Scarborough, who never had had one before. They were eagerly pounced on by him and the boys, and carried off into the play-room.

The masters congratulated themselves altogether on the good behaviour of the boys.

Tommy Bray, however, managed to elude the vigilance of those watching him, and got off to Monsieur Guillaume's room, to give him a hint of what was to occur; but the French master had gone to London for three days, and Tommy dared not tell anybody else, lest his name, as the informer, should afterwards transpire.

Night came, and all went to their rooms. Never, however, had Digby been more unhappy and less satisfied with himself since he came to the school. He prayed, but he felt that his prayers were hollow. He was not doing his duty to the best of his power. Probably several of his friends felt as he did, but they did not speak of their feelings to each other.

Sunday came; they went, as usual, to church. Poor Mr Sanford was too ill to go.

"And we are preparing a terrible annoyance for him to-morrow," thought Digby.

They walked out afterwards, in close order, with Mr Yates at their head, and Mr Tugman, who brought up the rear, watching that no one wandered on either side. They went again to church in the afternoon; and all the rest of the time was occupied in talking over their plans for the following day. They were to get up an hour before anybody was likely to be astir in the house, and assemble, with their jugs and basins of water, in the play-room. All the schoolroom shutters were to be brought into the play-room, as well as all valuables from the desks. All the books were to be collected, either to serve as missiles, or to be burned; that was not quite settled. Meantime, a party were to pay a visit to the coal-cellar and wood-yard, and to bring in a supply of coals. There were other minor arrangements, into which it is not necessary to enter.

On Sunday night, the boys went quietly to bed. At half-past four, one or two awoke, and they roused up the rest. All were soon on foot.

"I say, Newland, don't you feel as if you were going into a battle?" said Digby.

"Just as I can fancy soldiers feel," answered Paul.

"One satisfaction is that the row must soon begin," said Digby. "I hate having to wait for anything of the sort."

They spoke in whispers. They were ordered to take their pillows with them to serve as shields, if necessary, and to carry their shoes in their pockets. They all very quickly slipped downstairs. Digby and Newland, with four others, found themselves again told off to go and fetch coals and wood, an expedition of some considerable hazard. However, they none of them flinched, though, as Digby said, he felt very much as if he was committing larceny. Each carried a pillowcase, into which it was intended to put the coals or the faggots. It was broad daylight. They had several passages to traverse, and what was worse, some of the servants' rooms to pass near. On they went however.

"It must be done, though," whispered Digby to Newland.

They were afraid of the noise they must make in turning the keys, withdrawing the bolts, and lifting the latches. The last door was reached; they succeeded in opening it, and into the coal-yard they hurried. It did not take them long to put as much coal into their pillow-cases as they could carry. Those directed to carry faggots had more bulky loads, but not so heavy. They forgot to close the door as they returned laden with their booty.

As they went along the passage they heard Susan calling to one of her fellow-servants, "Jane, Jane, don't you hear footsteps?—is anybody ill?"

"I hope it isn't robbers," answered Jane. "Oh, dear! oh, dear!"

"Oh, nonsense; I'll just throw on my gown and go and see."

Now though these were not very terrible words, and uttered only by poor weak women, whom boys are apt to despise sometimes, they put the band of heroes in a great fright.

On they hurried as fast as their legs could carry them, expecting every moment to see Mr Tugman, or, perhaps, Mr Yates himself, descending the staircase to bar their progress.

"There is some one, surely," cried Newland. "I'll not run, though. I'll go and face him, whoever he is."

"I will go with you," exclaimed Digby.

It was, however, only Ranger, who had come out to reconnoitre, and to help them along, if they required aid. They told him that the alarm was already given; so they all ran on as fast as they could into the play-room. They took the precaution of locking the schoolroom door, and of piling up some forms and desks against it, so that they might have time to make further arrangements while that was being forced.

The play-room presented a very unusual appearance when Digby looked round it. It was full of boys. The windows were barred, and shutters were nailed up against them. On one side of the fireplace was a heap of coals—on another, a pile of faggots and potatoes. Near, stood several hampers full of provisions; jugs and basins of water stood on the shelves, while all the boxes were full of eatables. Indeed, it was evident that it would take a long time to starve the garrison into submission. The first thing to be done was effectually to bar the door. There were bolts and locks, and they might easily be broken open. Spiller, who was the engineer in this department, had provided several bars, and these he screwed on across the door, so that it would have been necessary almost to knock the wall down before it could be opened.

Digby had naturally a military eye; he was looking round for weak points.

"They may be getting down the chimney," he observed.

"Oh, then, we will light a fire and smoke them out," answered Scarborough.

A fire was accordingly lighted.

"I suppose we are all here; but let us call the names over, and see if there are any skulkers," said Scarborough.

This was done. Tommy Bray was the only boy missing.

"He'll have the pleasure of breakfasting with Mrs Pike, the young jackanapes, betraying all our secrets, and having no lessons to do. He does not think of the woeful thrashing he will get."

They heard the getting-up bell ring as usual, and then they waited, and waited, expecting some one to come to the door. No one came, however. The prayer bell rang as usual, and then, to their surprise, the breakfast-bell. This was very astonishing. They had good reason to know that it was the breakfast-bell for they were all getting very hungry. There was a general shout for breakfast. They soon had boiling water, and tea was made, and they had plenty of sugar; but some of the heroes complained much that they had no milk.

"Would you have wished to have had a cow shut up here, and hay to feed her?" asked Newland, laughing.

They all made a very hearty and luxurious breakfast—their early rising, and the excitement they had gone through, gave them appetites. Besides, they had an unusual variety of all sorts of nice things. Digby's basket was in great requisition; and Scarborough, and Spiller, and others, who seemed to think everything common property, nearly half emptied it.

"At such times as these we don't stand on ceremony, my good fellow. A little more of that capital marmalade, if you please," said Scarborough.

Poor Digby could not very well refuse; at the same time he did not see exactly why the bully should eat up his marmalade.

The breakfast set was composed of very heterogeneous materials; plates were decidedly scarce, and the tea was drunk out of tin cups, and mugs, and pannikins, while some of the little fellows had to content themselves with ink-glasses, which gave rather a strong flavour to their beverage. The weather itself was warm, and the fire, and the number of boys shut up in the room, increased the heat till the closeness became very unpleasant; but they were afraid of opening the windows to let in any air, lest some of the masters might find their way in also at the same spot. The only light they had was through a few round holes in the upper part of the shutters.

When breakfast was over they began to consider what they should do. It was much too hot to play any active games. Some of the younger fellows proposed high-cockorum and leap-frog; but they made so much dust and noise that it was not very pleasant work even to themselves, and the bigger fellows ordered them to desist, and sent a shower of books at their heads to enforce the order. Hop-scotch met with a like fate. A few tried marbles, but there was scarcely light for the purpose, and ring-taw was quickly abandoned. Others endeavoured to read amusing books to pass the time, but the dim light which fell on the page scarcely enabled them to distinguish the letters; and, besides,

they found all sorts of tricks played them by those who had no literary turn, and always objected to see one of their companions take up a book. Digby persevered with the "Swiss Family Robinson," which he had not had time to look into since the evening of his arrival, and finished it in spite of the heat and the variety of interruptions he underwent. When Digby read a work of fiction he read heartily, with his whole mind in the book, and nothing made him so savage as to be interrupted, and called back into the commonplace work of every-day life. A considerable number of fellows put their heads on their pillows in corners, and on benches, and went to sleep.

Thus the morning passed away. How different was all this calm and quiet to the fierce onslaught they had expected. They had fancied that the masters would have been thundering at the door with battering-rams, or climbing up at the windows and endeavouring to force their way in. Some even fancied that they would have appeared with muskets and pistols, and fired in upon them, or, if not, hurled stones in on their heads. Then they had vividly pictured the way in which they would have sheltered themselves with their pillows, and hurled back their lexicons, and grammars, and graduses, and delectuses, and other books, at the heads of their assailants. All that would have been very fine, and exciting, and delightful. Who would have cared for the bruises and blows they would have received? Black eyes, and even broken limbs, would have been things to have gloried in in so noble a cause. But this quiet, this perfect ignoring their very existence, was very trying. Not even a message sent to them; not a request to know what they wanted, or to beg them to return to their duty, was perplexing in the extreme. Some proposed that somebody should go out and reconnoitre; but who was to go was the question.

"It is very easy to say go," observed Paul Newland; "but who is to go, I should like to know. Will Scarborough, then? He ought to go, I am sure. We have too long been made catspaws of in this matter; and though I do not counsel giving in, I say that some of the big fellows should bear the risk and expense, which they have hitherto not done."

Paul had by some means or other discovered how things had been managed, and was resolved to speak out plainly. Scarborough looked daggers at him, and would have knocked him down had he dared.

"I have one thing to say," observed the bully; "I recommend you fellows not to quarrel among yourselves. For my own part, I wish to be at peace with all the world, and am now going to have a pipe. Who will join me?"

Several big fellows, as well as Spiller and Julian Langley, said they would, and soon the room was filled with tobacco smoke, which not a little increased its unpleasantness.

"Swipes, swipes!" sung out Scarborough in a short time, and from some secret recess bottles of ale and porter were produced, the contents rapidly disappearing down their throats. Then they sang, and insisted on all the other fellows coming round and singing in turn. Probably they would have made them drink also, but that they wished to preserve the liquor for themselves.

There were about a dozen fellows thus occupied; at of them, with the exception of Julian Langley and Spiller, great, big, hulking lads, and the two latter were forward in vice and knowledge of what is bad in the world. Dinner-hour came. As if to mock them, the dinner-bell rang as usual. Those who were not smoking and drinking began to get very hungry, and to cry out for food. They only, however, got abuse from Scarborough, who had now thrown off all disguise, and assumed the dictatorship.

"If anybody touches anything, I'll knock him down," he cried out, with a fierce voice. "Wait till your elders think it is time to dine. Do you fancy that we are to keep, in the free and independent republic we have established, the vulgar dinner-hour of school-time. We'll dine by and by, and you shall have some rashers of bacon to toast, and some herrings to fry, for your amusement."

How indignant did Digby feel at hearing these words. Was it for this he had made such sacrifices?—lost a good name; acted a part he knew to be wrong? He had to learn that such is invariably the fate of those who join a bad cause, or consent to unite themselves with unprincipled men, even in a cause which they fancy may be right. Still he did not wish to raise a rebellion in the camp, and he determined to bear his hunger till it pleased the dictator to allow him to appease it.

The bells went on ringing with the greatest regularity. The dinner-hour had long passed; now the bell rang to summon them into school. Tea-time came. Digby and many other fellows had been asleep. They jumped up; they were ravenous. They insisted on having food.

Scarborough and his companions were still smoking and boozing on. He growled out, "That they must wait his pleasure."

"I for one will not," cried Digby, grown desperate. "Who wishes to join me? Here is my hamper. I have a right to the contents of that, at all events."

The bully became furious at finding his authority thus openly defied; and rising from his seat, made an attempt to punish the bold rebel; but the beer he had imbibed had considerably affected his brain, and before he could reach him, down he came on his nose.

Julian, and Spiller, and the rest of his companions, seemed to think it a very good joke, and laughed heartily. But Digby and others turned him round, unloosed his neckerchief, and threw water in his face, in the hopes of reviving him.

"Oh, let him alone," cried out Spiller. "He'll come to by and by, never fear."

Digby, however, did fear very much that he would not, for he was almost black in the face, and looked very horrid.

"If he should die now, how dreadful it would be," observed Newland, in a low voice, full of awe.

They chafed his hands, and continued bathing his temples, keeping his head up, till he gave signs of returning animation.

“Oh, I think he will recover now,” exclaimed Digby, joyfully. So they put a pillow under his head, and watched him at a distance, till the natural colour came back to his face. Had he been alone with his half-tipsy friends, he would, too probably, have died. Not till he was apparently out of danger did the fuelling of hunger return; and then they got out their hampers and boxes, and set to work with right good will. They had plenty of good things; and it never occurred to them that it would be necessary to go upon short allowance, if they were to hold out for any length of time.

In the evening, there was a great cry out for tea; and though the beer-drinkers at first opposed the motion, the majority carried it. The fire was lighted, and large quantities of liquid—some said it was only sugar and water—was swallowed; and bread, and ham, and tongue, and jam and other preserves, were consumed.

Night came at last. Most of the fellows were very sleepy; but it was agreed that it would be necessary to keep guard, or they might be taken by surprise. Digby found that he was one of those selected, if not for a post of danger and honour, of great discomfort, and that he and three others were to sit up half the night to keep watch, while the rest slept. He suggested that they should be divided into proper watches; but a big fellow, Gray, who called himself Scarborough’s lieutenant, replied that he would not allow their arrangements to be interfered with.

“If I ever again join a rebellion at school, I shall deserve to be whipped for my folly, even more than for my disobedience,” thought Digby.

At last, all the fellows lay down. Digby and his companions walked about, and whistled, and sung, and tried to keep themselves awake by every means in their power; but it was very hard work. They had a few candles, but could only venture to burn one at a time; so that the light looked very dim and melancholy in the dense air of the large room.

“What donkeys we all are,” thought Digby, as he looked at the forms of his schoolfellows scattered about over the floor, many of them snoring, others talking in their sleep, and others tumbling about, evidently not enjoying quiet slumbers. At last, he lay down, but it was some time, even then, in consequence of the excitement he had undergone, and the hot and close atmosphere, ere he could go to sleep. Never, also, during his previous life, had his slumbers been so disturbed and uncomfortable.

Chapter Sixteen.

A Siege without Besiegers—heroism of Garrison—General Pike and the Army of Observation—Garrison Yields at Discretion—A New Schoolmaster, and great improvements in the school.

The morning at last came. Digby sat up and rubbed his eyes. At first he thought that he was in the smugglers’ cave; then on board the lugger, hurrying to her destruction; then in the sea-worn cavern into which he had been at last cast. At last he remembered where he was. All he had gone through on the above-mentioned occasion was trying enough, but he had not himself to blame. His present rather ridiculous discomfort he had been at least instrumental in bringing on himself. He tried to go to sleep again, for he had no pleasant thoughts to keep him awake; so he dozed on till the usual loud-sounding bell rang to call the boys up. That awoke him effectually, though some of the boys seemed to have a satisfaction in continuing to lie down in spite of the bell. Then the first school-bell rang, and the breakfast-bell, and the second school-bell—indeed, the day passed exactly as the previous one had done. No one came near them that they were aware of, nor were they able to hold the slightest communication with anybody without. Scarborough drank more beer than he had done the day before, and was more tyrannical than ever. He and his friends smoked and drank all day, and, they said, made themselves perfectly happy; but it was dreadfully dull work for all the rest. Oh, how they wished that matters could be brought to a satisfactory conclusion. They were not allowed to have dinner till late, as before. They managed to do pretty well at it, but at tea-time bread began to run short. They had laid in a smaller supply of that than of anything else. The night passed in thorough discomfort, but with no interruption from without. The next morning they were obliged to breakfast on biscuits and sweetcakes; they had potatoes, but they could not manage to cook enough of them properly; and at dinner they were very badly off for some plain article of food to eat with their pies and ham, and similar rich dishes. At tea they were still worse off; for though jam, and honey, and cheese, and tongue are all very good things with bread, they do not make a good mixture without some of the staff of life.

Still the more heroic declared that it would be a disgrace to yield for such a trifle; indeed, it was difficult to say to whom they should yield; for unless they had opened the door and sneaked out, there was no other course for them to pursue than to stay where they were. So they had another night to spend on the bare boards, without changing their clothes, or washing their hands and faces. They had to breakfast on ham, jam and honey, or bits of pie. Fortunate were those who found some scraps of plum-cake. Even Scarborough’s tobacco was running short, and the beer was nearly expended. This would have been fortunate in most respects; but the prospect of having to go without it made him more savage than ever.

“Never fear, old fellow,” said Julian, touching him on the shoulder; “I am up to a thing or two—look here!”

He showed him a couple of bottles of gin.

“There’s comfort for you.”

The wretched fellow’s eyes glistened. What was the comfort offered? To steep his senses in forgetfulness; to make himself like a brute. He did not think of that, though. The gin bottles were soon concealed, and Scarborough was again in better spirits. There was not much dispute about the time of dinner that day, as there was very little to eat. Those who could get them, had to chew the hard tops, and the roots of tongues, and the knuckles of hams, and the

kind of cheese, and to finish off with honey and marmalade; but even those who generally liked sweet things the best had very little fancy for them now. The water, too, had become very mawkish and vapid, and there was scarcely any tea left; what remained was used up that evening. Still no one proposed giving in. The bigger fellows dared not; the little ones did not know what to do; and the more daring still lived on in hopes of an assault being made on their stronghold, when they might have some excuse for yielding with honour, but to be starved into submission was most derogatory to their dignity. That night was the most unpleasant of any. Many of the fellows were very sick; bad air, no exercise, and a mixture of salt ham and sweet jam tended to disturb the economy of their insides. Several of the little fellows began to cry bitterly, and got books sent at their heads in consequence by Scarborough, whenever he woke up and heard them. The next morning the last drop of water in the jugs and basins was expended, the potatoes were all baked or boiled, and every scrap of ham, or tongue, or cheeseparing was consumed. Hunger not only stared them in the face, but was actually attacking their stomachs. Few before knew what very uncomfortable sensations it caused—how it could pinch; how sick and how low-spirited it could make them feel. Even Digby, Ranger, and Newland began to think that means must be taken to put an end to that state of things. Had they known who was the general commanding the forces opposed to them, they would not have held out so long. Not poor Mr Sanford; he was very ill, and knew nothing about the matter. Not Mr Yates; he had left the school, so had Monsieur Guillaume. The general was no other than Mrs Pike, and her whole army was represented by Susan, who was furnished with the garden steps, by means of which she was enabled to inspect at her convenience the proceedings of the heroic garrison. General Pike's spy and informant of the resources of the enemy was little Tommy Bray, who, as his reward, had as many muffins and cakes for breakfast and tea as he could eat, and a large supply of pudding for dinner. Through him General Pike knew the exact amount of the money collected and the provisions purchased with it; and with this data to go on, she sat down and calculated the exact time these provisions were likely to last. She thus knew perfectly well that by Thursday morning the garrison must yield at discretion, and she had arranged her plans accordingly. Susan, on returning from her daily reconnaissance, assured her that the garrison were not suffering from fever, or from any dangerous ailment, but only that they generally looked very stupid and dull, and that she was very certain that by the afternoon they would be too happy to yield to any terms she might choose to dictate.

"They have no fire, marm; and they don't seem to have a morsel of anything to eat for breakfast," said Susan.

Mrs Pike was not very hard-hearted, but she knew that a little starvation would do none of them much harm.

"We will wait till about an hour before dinner-time, and then we will go and see what they have got to say for themselves," she observed, rubbing her nose, which was a habit of hers when she was meditating on any subject. "By that hour Dr Graham will be here, and it is as well that he should receive the young gentlemen's submission."

Long and serious consultations were now held within the garrison. With the exception of Scarborough and his immediate companions, or his council, as he called them, all were unanimous that if terms were offered they must yield to them. Paul Newland, especially, was very strenuous on this point. "We have been great donkeys, of that there cannot be the slightest doubt; but we shall be still greater if we keep ourselves shut up here a moment longer than we can help," he observed. "We have spent our money, we have made ourselves thoroughly uncomfortable, we have lost many a jolly good game of play, and we have obtained for ourselves a no very enviable character in the eyes of our masters, while we shall all of us go home with black marks against our names."

"But we have been fighting for a great principle. We must remember that our honours were concerned," answered Digby.

"Fighting! We haven't fought at all," returned Newland. "A great principle! I have been thinking over that point also. Our great principle should be obedience; that is one of the things we were sent to school to learn. I forget when I found it out, but I now clearly remember it, and in adhering to that, depend on it our honours were involved much more than in insisting on going out when, for some very good reason probably, Mr Sanford thought fit to keep us in. All I can say is, that I wish he was well, and could have us up and flog us all round, and so settle the matter off-hand. I certainly don't like the thoughts of yielding to old Yates."

A few acknowledged the justice of these opinions. It was not to be expected that many should do so. The last sentiment was reciprocated by all.

"The sooner, then, we make preparations for opening the door the better," observed Farnham.

They possessed themselves of Spiller's tools. That worthy, with Julian Langley, Scarborough, and a few others, were sitting up in a corner, puffing away slowly at their clay pipes, and sipping away at something which they did not wish the rest to see. They were too stupified to observe what was being done. The bars across the doors were removed; their strength had never even been tried. Then Farnham took down a shutter, and in desperation threw open the windows to let some fresh air in. Oh, how delicious and sweet it was, compared to the poisonous atmosphere they had been so long breathing.

"I, for one, vote that we all march out in order, and walk up and down in the playground till some one comes to know what we want," exclaimed Digby, as if a bright idea had struck him. "Or, I will tell you what, I don't mind going with a flag of truce straight up to Mr Sanford, to tell him our grievances, and to ask what terms he will give us."

"Capital! grand! spirited!" shouted most of the fellows—at least they moaned out, for they were not in a condition to shout.

Not a moment was allowed him to recede from his offer. The largest and the least dirty white pocket-handkerchief they could find was immediately fastened on to the end of a broomstick. There was a little water remaining, in which Digby's hands and face were washed. His hair was combed with the only pocket comb to be found in the army, and his clothes were brushed with the broom above spoken of, and his shirt-collar smoothed down as much as was practicable. Independently of his spirit and discretion, he certainly looked fatter and less pale than any of the rest,

and was therefore the fittest envoy that could have been selected to give the enemy a favourable opinion of the garrison. They were, of course, not aware that Susan knew perfectly well all about them.

Digby was all ready, with his flag in his hand. He only waited for the door to be opened.

"Come," exclaimed Ranger, "Heathcote may go on ahead as a herald, but I do feel that it will be a crying shame and disgrace if we let him go alone. We ought all to fall in, and march out into the playground to support him if necessary. As for those boozing fellows up there in the corner, they have deceived and cheated us, that is very evident. We are not bound to them; they may follow if they like."

Perhaps Ranger was not quite right in this, though Scarborough and his set certainly did not deserve that terms should be kept with them.

The thoughts of fresh air and exercise, and the hope of bringing their present uncomfortable condition to a termination, made the great mass, without a moment's further consideration, yield to the proposal; and, falling in together, the moment the door was opened and Digby had gone forth, they hurried out after him.

No one was in the schoolroom, but it looked as if it had been swept, the desks scraped and polished, and everything put in good order.

Out into the playground they marched, following Digby so closely that he appeared to be at their head. Ranger, Farnham, Newland, and his other chief friends kept directly behind him.

They had just reached the playground, and were facing the glass door opening from the house into it, when the door was opened, and a tall, very gentlemanly, youngish-looking man appeared at it, with Mr Moore, their favourite master, standing behind him. The stranger advanced towards them,—

"I am glad to meet you here, young gentlemen," he said, in a very harmonious voice. "I understand that you have for some days past shut yourselves up in your play-room, in consequence, it is supposed, of your being dissatisfied with some arrangements which were made regarding you. My name is Dr Graham. I am now the master of this school, Mr Sanford having yielded his authority, with the sanction of your parents, into my hands. I shall at all times willingly listen to any complaints you have to make. Let me know the grievance which caused you to shut yourselves up as *you* have lately done."

Digby, in a manly and straightforward way, told him exactly why they had thus acted.

"It was done at my request," said Dr Graham. "I found, on inquiry, that most reprehensible practices took place on these occasions, and as I have a number of pupils of my own who will soon become the companions of some of you, I wished to stop all liberty till I could arrange how to deal with the culprits. My object, understand, is to have a school of happy, Christian, gentlemanly boys. There is no reason why all should not be very happy and contented; and I am resolved not to allow those of whom I have hopes of becoming so to suffer for those of whom I can have but very slight or no hope at all. Mr Moore, are these all the boys?"

"No, Sir, there are several absent, who, I fear, must be justly placed in the last category," answered Mr Moore.

"Where are they, then?" asked Dr Graham, looking at Digby.

"In the play-room, Sir," he answered, feeling as if he was acting a treacherous part towards them; but truly he could have said only what he did.

"We will go there at once, and see the state of affairs," said the Doctor. It is possible he might have guessed, though, from Susan's information. "Follow me, young gentlemen."

Guided by Mr Moore, he went direct to the play-room.

What was the consternation of the wretched tipplers when, looking up, they found themselves deserted by their companions, and saw a stranger, with one of their masters, at the door. Scarborough tried to get up, after gazing round at them in a stupid, idiotic way, but fell forward on his face; while the rest sat still, stupidly glaring up at him and Mr Moore. At last, when they attempted to rise, they fell down as Scarborough had done.

"I shall have little difficulty in settling how to deal with those miserable fellows," said the Doctor, pointing scornfully at them. "They are, I conclude, from what Mrs Pike tells me, the heads and instigators of this most sagaciously conducted and commendable rebellion. Happily, I am not bound to keep any boy with whose character I am not satisfied. Mr Moore, I must request you to take down the names of those I see in that corner of the room. I wish also to know those of the young gentlemen who met me openly in the playground, and especially of their leader, with the flag of truce. I accept it as a sign that they are sorry for what has occurred, and grant a full amnesty to all those who have followed it."

The boys, on hearing these words, spoken in a thoroughly kind, frank manner, gave vent to their feelings in a loud hearty shout. The expressions touched all their better feelings.

"Long live Dr Graham!" cried Digby.

"May he long be our master, and we be his obedient attentive pupils!" added Newland, who had the happy knack of giving the right turn to a sentiment.

The cry was taken up by the rest of the boys, and the Doctor turned round and said, smiling, "Thank you; I am well satisfied. I feel sure that we shall always be good friends. Now go up into your rooms and get ready for dinner."

The basins and jugs were carried upstairs, hands and faces were washed, and clothes changed, and when the dinner-bell rang, they went down into the dining-room, where Mrs Pike received them with a smile as if nothing had happened, and all declared that they never had had so good a dinner at the school—certainly, never had they been more hungry. And thus the mighty rebellion was concluded. Dr Graham had not promised that they should go out on a Saturday, so that they had gained nothing whatever by their movement.

Only Mr Moore and Mrs Pike superintended at dinner. The other three masters, they found, had gone.

“Before we separate,” said Mrs Pike, standing up when she had served out the last helping of pudding, “I have a few words to say to you. I am very sorry that you spent three days so unpleasantly as you must have done this week, because Mr Sanford had intended granting you, in consequence of his illness, half-holidays every day, and but slight tasks in the morning, till the arrival of Dr Graham, who has for some time arranged to take charge of the school. He had charged me to do my best to find you amusement. On Monday I had ordered carriages to take you to a pic-nic in Fairley Wood; Tuesday, a famous conjuror was to have come; and on Wednesday you were to have had a grand tea in the garden here, and fireworks afterwards. However, perhaps you thought yourselves better employed. All I can say is, that I am sorry for what has occurred, but intend to forget all about it; though, as those who win may laugh, I might be allowed, if I chose, to make fun of you.”

“Sold again—admirably sold!” exclaimed Farnham to Digby, as they walked into the playground. They were not much inclined to play, though, for never had they felt more weary and sleepy. Though the fresh air revived them, they heartily wished for bed-time.

It was soon whispered about that Doctor Graham had resolved on expelling Scarborough and all his set. Everybody acknowledged the justice of this decision, and rejoiced at it. The only one of the party who was allowed to remain was Julian Langley, in consequence of his having only so lately come to the school.

“Dr Graham,” repeated Digby, after he and his companions had been discussing the merits of their new master, “why, that is the very name of the master of the school to which Arthur Haviland was going. I wonder where he comes from. All I can say is, that he seems a first-rate man, and sensible and kind, and so Arthur said his master was.”

Two days after this, Dr Graham announced that the pupils from his former school were about to arrive. In the evening, four carriages full of them drew up at the door. Digby looked eagerly out, and there, sure enough, in the very first was Arthur Haviland. How delighted were the two friends to see each other. The surprise was mutual, for neither of them were certain that they were to meet. The Doctor, knowing how certain any change of this sort was to unsettle boys’ minds, had not told them till the last moment the arrangements which had been made. The two sets of schoolboys became acquainted with each other with great rapidity. The Doctor had won the hearts of nearly all his new pupils by his clemency and urbanity, while what was still more satisfactory, all his old ones spoke in the warmest terms of him.

A new system was at once inaugurated. A first master, a very gentlemanly man and a good scholar, took the place of the little-loved Mr Yates; Mr Moore kept his post as second master; the third, who took the place of the ill-conditioned Mr Tugman, was a very nice, quiet-looking lad, with whom at first the boys thought they could do anything; but they very soon found that beneath that calm countenance there dwelt a most determined spirit; that he had lately left a first-rate public school, where he had been praeposter of his house, and that he was thoroughly up to all the ways and dodges of boys. He had been for a short time at one of the Universities, which his want of means had compelled him to leave, and thus he had become an usher for the sake of saving money to take him there again. He worked hard himself, and he was determined that those under him should work hard also. The writing-master was also a gentleman, for Dr Graham felt the importance of having a good example set, even in minute points, to those whom he wished to see turn out gentlemen in every respect. He had explained to Mrs Pike his wish that all the provisioning and household arrangements should be established on the most liberal footing. I want the boys to have as much and as pleasant food as they would have at home, so that they may have no cause to regret coming here, because they are no longer to have the nice things to which they have been accustomed. Teacups and saucers, and spoons, and plates, and knives, were introduced at breakfast and tea, so that the boys might spread their own bread with butter, or honey, or marmalade. At dinner, too, the usual arrangements of a gentleman’s dining table were introduced—plated spoons and forks, and glass tumblers—and there were fruit tarts and puddings, and vegetables; indeed, an abundance of such things as were in season.

“These may appear trifles, Mrs Pike,” observed the Doctor, when that thrifty housewife ventured to expostulate with him; “but they have a considerable effect on boys. I doubt whether they will very much increase your weekly bills, and I am certain that they will assist to give the lads gentlemanly tastes, and assist me very considerably in managing them. It is, believe me, much easier to govern a school of gentlemanly boys than one full of those of an opposite character. My great wish is, to be able to place perfect confidence in their words. They will then require much less supervision and much less constraint. I explain this, because I think that you will aid in establishing those principles.”

“That I will, sir,” answered Mrs Pike, who was a very sensible woman, and saw at once the superiority of the Doctor’s system over that which had hitherto prevailed.

In a short time a marked difference was observed in the school, and the boys were generally infinitely happier and more contented. At the same time there were still grumblers and dissatisfied ones.

“It is all very well—a new broom sweeps clean,” said they. “Wait a little; we shall soon get back into our old ways.”

They discovered, however, that the new broom went on sweeping cleaner and cleaner, till only the bad had excuse for grumbling, because they found it difficult to indulge in their malpractices. Of course there were bad ones, even

though Scarborough and his set had been expelled. Some of those the Doctor brought with him were bad, and some of those who were already in the school were so, and they very soon found each other out.

Julian Langley had plenty of companions, but still he tried very hard to win back Digby's friendship. Had Arthur Haviland not been there he might have succeeded; but Arthur had gained a perfect insight into Julian's character, and considered him a very dangerous companion for Digby. Julian very soon discovered how much Arthur disliked him, and determined to have his revenge.

From the time of Dr Graham's arrival the whole system of the school was completely changed. There was a much stricter supervision, at the same time that there was much more real liberty. Bullying—that is to say, glaring tyranny and cruelty—was almost entirely put a stop to; only the would-be bullies and the very bad ones any longer could in any way complain. The Saturday excursions were once more allowed; but the boys were especially charged not to trespass, or to do any damage; and they had to pass their words that they would adhere strictly to the rules laid down. A monitorial system was established. Six boys of different ages were selected, for their general good conduct, discretion, temper, and acknowledged high principles, to act as monitors. They had a number of privileges as a recompense for the onerous duties with which they were entrusted, and which they were never known to neglect. When any distant excursion was made, one of the monitors was obliged to accompany the party, and to give a full account of all their proceedings. One of the other boys was also frequently called on to do the same. On all half-holidays they might obtain leave to go out where they liked, provided every two hours they came back and reported themselves, so that no one could go to any great distance; nor could, as before, an ill-conditioned fellow like Scarborough spend his time in smoking and drinking without being found out. Digby liked the change excessively; he was constantly with Arthur Haviland, and benefited much by his companionship; for, in truth, a high-principled boy has great power in influencing his friends and associates for good. Julian sneered, but sneered in vain, and at last ceased to try and tempt Digby to join him in his malpractices. Still Digby found it very difficult to keep altogether aloof from his former associate; there had been no cause of quarrel between them, nothing that he could well allege to separate them; and even the occasional remarks which Julian let fall, and the knowledge of the mode in which he spent his time, did harm, and might have had a serious effect on him, as it had undoubtedly on some of his other schoolfellows.

Chapter Seventeen.

Conclusion.

In a well-ordered school there is naturally less scope for adventure than in an ill-conducted one—such as Grangewood had become during poor Mr Sanford's illness.

Dr Graham was strict and regular, but the boys were far happier than they had ever been before. He encouraged games of every description, and all sorts of athletic exercises. He had gymnastic poles erected; a large swimming-place made, into which a stream of clear water, hitherto of little use, was conducted. He had also some boats built, and launched on a large lake in the neighbourhood, which became the constant resort of the boys during the half-holidays in summer. He did not allow them to boat, however, till they had learned to swim well, not only without their clothes, but in them. They were instructed also by an old sailor, who lived near Grangewood, not only in rowing, but in sailing a boat. Here Digby, from the knowledge he had gained from Toby Tubbs, found himself superior to nearly all the other fellows.

He soon gained as much popularity among the boys who had come with Dr Graham as among his former companions. This might have been a dangerous circumstance, had it not been for the good counsels of Arthur Haviland, who, whenever he could do so judiciously, entreated him not to assume on the popularity he was gaining.

"If you do, my dear Digby," said Arthur, "I shall almost wish that such a fellow as you describe Scarborough to be was here to bully you a little every now and then. I am certain a long course of prosperity is injurious to every one, unless he is reminded on how slight a tenure he holds it, and learns both to appreciate and be grateful for it."

Hard as this lesson was to learn, Digby acknowledged its importance, and did his best not to let pride get the better of him. Julian Langley, not intentionally, perhaps, was continually trying to counteract the good advice which Arthur gave him. Finding that he himself was sinking down in the estimation of his schoolfellows, he thought that he might help himself up again by clinging closer than he had for some time done to Digby. He had found that it did not answer to attempt to lead him directly to do what was wrong; so in order to regain his confidence, he set to work to flatter him in every way he could think of. He was continually saying, "My dear Digby, you know a popular fellow like you can do anything. I wonder you read so hard; you have talents enough to help you without that. Besides, what does an English country gentleman want with reading?"

Digby was not altogether insensible to flattery; and though he did not trust Julian, he did not exert himself to shake him off so completely as it would have been wise for him to have done.

Dr Graham was not influenced by any narrow-minded, foolish prejudices, and he took care that so strict a supervision should be exercised over the boys from one end of the twenty-four hours to the other, that no glaring malpractices could exist long undetected. Altogether, when the end of the half came, and Digby went home once more for his holidays, he gave so favourable a report of the school, that, supported in it as he was by Arthur Haviland, Mr and Mrs Heathcote resolved to send Gusty back with him. He had now, he felt, a very important responsibility thrown upon him, and he resolved to fulfil it to the utmost of his power.

Except for the sake of being with his parents and sisters, he could not help confessing that he liked school as much as home, and in high spirits, with little Gusty under his charge, he returned to Grangewood. They had not been there long before Julian Langley made a dead set at Gusty, as if he wished to establish himself as his protector and

counsellor. At first Digby scarcely perceived this; then, when he at length saw Julian frequently doing something or other for Gusty, he thought it was very kind in him to take so much pains about the little fellow. It did not occur to him, indeed, that Julian was doing his brother any harm, till one day Gusty made use of some expressions and uttered some sentiments which he felt sure must have been learned from Julian. Happily, his eyes were at once opened, and he felt that, if he would save his brother from the contaminating influence of his own former companion, he must withdraw him at once from his society. He knew enough of human nature to be aware that if he at once denounced Julian as a dangerous character, Gusty would, as the moth is to the candle, very likely be attracted towards him, and he would probably have answered—"Why may I not talk to him? He is a friend of yours, I thought, and you don't seem to fancy that he can do you harm."

In his difficulty he went to Arthur Haviland, who undertook to speak to Gusty, and to warn him against Julian.

Arthur did so at once. He was one of those people who feel that if a thing is to be done, the sooner it is done the better.

Gusty cried at first, and seemed very unhappy, but at last acknowledged that Julian had invited him to join some expedition or other, but that he had not promised, because he thought that it was not quite right, but that he feared he should, notwithstanding this, have ultimately done so.

"I will not ask you what it is," said Arthur; "but promise me that you will not be tempted to have anything to do with the matter."

Gusty easily promised this, and Arthur was thankful that he had not delayed speaking.

Gusty slept in his brother's room. Two nights after this, another boy in the same room was seen to leave it with his shoes in his hands. Digby was awake, but said nothing. He saw Gusty lift up his head. The other boy as he passed him whispered, "little Sneak," and went on.

Gusty answered, "I am not; you had better stay." But his advice was unheeded.

Digby could not conceive what was going to happen, but felt very glad that Gusty had refused to join the expedition, or meeting, or whatever it was which was taking place. He tried to keep awake to speak to Hanson, the boy who had gone out, to ascertain what he had been doing, and he was sorry that he had not attempted to stop him by dissuading him from doing what he had proposed. At last, however, he fell asleep, and as he did not awake till the bell rang, he had not time, after he was dressed, to speak to Hanson. The second bell rang, and the boys hurried into school.

After prayers Dr Graham stood up in his desk, looking very grave.

"I had wished," he said, "to abolish flogging in the school; but while any of the boys are guilty not only of ungentlemanly but dishonest conduct, I must retain the custom, as I fear that it is the only punishment which they are likely to dread. I regret to say that seven boys, of different ages, were guilty, last night, of going out of the house, and of robbing the orchard of a neighbour. He saw them, counted their numbers, traced them back here. He believes that he will be able to identify some of them. Instead of severely punishing them on the spot, as they deserved, he came here this morning and told me of the circumstance, that I may deal with them as I judge right. Those who were engaged in this notable exploit come forward and let me know what you have to say for yourselves."

The Doctor ceased. There was a pause, then a slight shuffling of feet, and six boys left their desks, and slowly, and with evident reluctance, walked up to the Doctor.

"I understood that there were seven. I hope the seventh will soon make his appearance."

The seventh, however, did not come up. The Doctor then asked the six who pleaded guilty what induced them to commit the crime.

One said, because he liked apples; another replied, because he had been asked by others; but four of them confessed that they did it simply because they liked the excitement and danger of the exploit.

"I believe that you have all told me the truth," answered the Doctor. "One I shall flog, to teach him that he must not allow his appetite to tempt him to commit a crime; the next, that he must not consent to do what is wrong because another asks him; and the other four, because they evidently require to have it impressed on their minds that taking that which does not belong to them is a crime both in the sight of God and man. After breakfast, you six come into my room. And now I wish the seventh culprit to come forward. I have given him time to consider what he will do."

No one moved.

"Julian Langley, why do you not come forward?" said the Doctor, in a stern voice.

"Sir, I know nothing about it," answered Julian, in a sharp, quick voice.

"Whose shoe is this?" asked the Doctor. "Come here, sir, and tell me."

Julian was now compelled to come forward. He walked with an unabashed air up to the Doctor's desk, casting a look either of triumph or scorn at the boys who had confessed their crime.

"If that is my shoe, somebody may have dropped it, wherever it was found," he observed, coolly.

"Did anybody carry away this knife, with your name engraved on it?" asked the Doctor; "and how was it that you had

only one shoe by your bedside this morning, the fellow of this one, covered with mud of the same colour?"

"Really, sir, those are difficult questions to answer just at present," replied Julian; "all I can say is, that I cannot account for the circumstances you speak of."

"I would fain not believe you guilty of a direct falsehood, and I must, therefore, conclude that the seventh thief who stole Mr Ladgrove's apples is yet to be found," said the Doctor, gravely. "But mark me, Julian Langley, I especially charge these six boys, if they have any respect for truth and honesty, and I also charge the rest of the school, not to speak to you, not to hold any communication with you, for at least a month to come, if they know you to be guilty of the crime which you now deny. I fix a month, because I hope during that time, if you are guilty, and are so punished, you will repent of the crime of stealing, as also of that of falsehood. Now, sir, go back to your seat."

The six boys who were to be flogged sat by themselves, and did not approach, or even look at, Julian Langley. Digby greatly feared that Julian was guilty. He watched them anxiously. Hanson was one of them. How grateful he felt that Gusty was not, and he resolved to watch over him with greater care than he had before done.

After breakfast, the boys went to the Doctor's room to be flogged. They came back into school looking very unhappy, as boys are apt to do who have been thus castigated. The play hours came round, not one of them went near Julian. He approached one of them after the other, but they all, even little Hanson, walked away from him. Others besides Digby were watching what would take place.

At length Arthur Haviland, Digby, Ranger, Newland and others called a council, and agreed to inquire into the matter. Although the guilty boys considered themselves in honour bound not to confess to any of the masters, yet when questioned directly by their own companions, they at once owned that Julian Langley had not only been with them, but was actually the very instigator of the expedition. The consequence was, that Julian was sent strictly to Coventry by the whole school.

During that whole month not a boy spoke to him. Every one knew him to be guilty. He tried to get them to speak to him, and constantly spoke to fellows, but no one would answer him. The Doctor considered that he was sufficiently punished, and those who had been flogged said that they would a hundred times rather be flogged and get it over, than undergo the punishment he had endured. He did not, however, appear to feel the disgrace, or the complete loss of his character. As soon as the month was over, he spoke to every one, and tried to enter into conversation with all who would talk to him. The Doctor, of course, knew all that had occurred, and though he hoped that Julian would have been sufficiently punished, he kept a very watchful eye over him.

At last the holidays again came round, and the Squire asked his boys if they would like to invite Julian Langley to spend some of the time with them.

"Oh, no, no," answered Digby, "on no account. I am sure Kate does not like him; nor do I as I used to do, and he is not a good companion for Gusty."

Digby was quite surprised how rapidly the holidays came round and round. Home was very pleasant, but so was school, and it was difficult to say at which the time passed the quickest. It had been intended that Digby should be sent to Eton, but Squire Heathcote was so pleased with Dr Graham's system, and the progress his boys made in every way, that he resolved to let them remain on at Grangewood.

"People say that boys ought to be sent to public schools to get their pride knocked out of them, to be taught manners, and to make acquaintances who are likely to be useful to them in their future life," observed the Squire. "Now, I may honestly boast that my boys have no pride to be knocked out of them, their manners are good, and I hope that they will make their own way without having to depend on others."

So Digby and Gusty remained on at Grangewood, Dr Graham did his utmost to merit the confidence placed in him. He devoted all his time and thoughts not only to the mental instruction of his boys, but to making them religious, and happy, and healthy, and true gentlemen, in the fullest sense of the word. Julian Langley did not long remain at the school. After the occurrence before described he had lost all influence, as well as respect, in the school. Still he contrived to lead some of the other boys into mischief, and was, at length, guilty of acts which induced the Doctor finally to expel him. Digby continued steadily and honestly to do his duty. He became very popular with the masters as well as with his companions—even Mrs Pike acknowledged that she little thought when he first came that he would turn out so well. He was one of the chief leaders at all games and sports, and few surpassed him in any of their athletic exercises, at the same time that no one read harder, or made better progress than he did. At length he rose to be the head of the school; and then, after a year spent partly with Mr Nugent, and partly travelling with Arthur Haviland abroad, he went to Cambridge, where Arthur already was. Here, though one of the most active boating and cricketing men, he read steadily and perseveringly, and finally, very much to his own surprise, when he took his degree, came out as a wrangler, though not so high up in the list as his friend Arthur Haviland had been the year before. (Note: a wrangler is a person at Cambridge University who has passed their finals in Mathematics with First Class Honours.) During the long vacation, just before his last term, he was reading with Mr Nugent, when, one evening, a knock was heard at the door, and the maid-servant came in to say that a person wished to see the Rector. Mr Nugent went out, and there he saw a stout, but pale-faced, ragged, altogether disreputable-looking young man.

"What is it you want with me?" asked Mr Nugent, looking hard at him.

"What, don't even you know me?" asked the stranger, in a hoarse tone.

Again the Rector scanned his features. "No, indeed I do not," he answered. "I think that you must be labouring under some mistake or other."

"Indeed I am not," answered the stranger. "I know you, Mr Nugent, perfectly, and you once knew me. If I was to tell

you my name you might be astonished, perhaps, for I was once a pupil of yours. My name is Julian Langley."

"Julian Langley!" exclaimed Mr Nugent, starting up. "Are you brought to this miserable condition? But would not your father—would not your friends assist you?"

"My father has discarded me, and I have no friends—no one who cares for me," answered Julian, bitterly. "I am suffering from hunger and thirst, and am but half clothed, as you see. I must die if I am not relieved. Will you help me?"

"I will. Come in; you shall have food at once," answered Mr Nugent. "You will find an old friend here who will afford you, I know, his sincerest sympathy, my nephew, Digby Heathcote."

"He will afford me his supercilious pity and contempt," muttered Julian.

"No, no, no," said Mr Nugent, kindly; "come in."

"Beggars must not be choosers," answered Julian, gruffly, following Mr Nugent into the study.

Digby, till Mr Nugent mentioned his name, did not recognise Julian. The moment he did, he sprang up, and putting out his hand pressed it warmly; but Julian, turning away his head, received the greeting with coldness and indifference.

"And how is it that you come to us in such a plight?" asked Mr Nugent, after supper had been placed on the table, and Julian had done ample justice to it. "I inquire, pray understand, not for simple curiosity, but that I may the better be able to help you."

"Thank you," answered Julian, filling a tumbler half full of brandy from a spirit-case which stood on the table, and tossing off the contents. "Oh, I have gone through all sorts of wonderful adventures. I have been out in Spain, fighting for the Constitutionists against Don Carlos, but I got more kicks than half-pence there; and then I was shipwrecked; and, finally, I have been leading a somewhat vagabond life about England. I turned actor for a time, but the characters given me were not very exalted, and I quarrelled with the manager, who was a brute, and left the company. Not a very lucid account of myself; but, at all events, here I am without a farthing in my purse, or rather, without even a purse to put a farthing in if I had one." And with a look of despair he turned his pockets inside out, and leant back in his chair.

Both Mr Nugent and Digby were silent. They felt sure that his own misconduct had brought him to his present condition, and yet they were unwilling to hint to him that such was the case. In the meantime he once more leaned forward, and again helped himself largely from the spirit-case. Mr Nugent and Digby looked at each other. They had no difficulty in guessing the cause of his present condition. Some conversation ensued with the unhappy young man, but they could scarcely hope that they were eliciting the truth from him. There was no bed for him in the house. He said that he infinitely preferred sleeping at the inn. Against his better judgment, perhaps, as he was leaving the house, Mr Nugent kindly put a five-pound note into his hand. The next day he did not appear, and Digby set off into the town to look for him. He was told that he was at the inn, in his room. He found him with a spirit bottle by his side, sitting on the floor, and perfectly unconscious. Digby, begging the people of the house, who were but too well accustomed to such events, to put him to bed, left the place, feeling that he could then do nothing for him. The next day, when Digby went back to the inn, the landlord said that he had left it altogether, because he had refused to supply him with more liquor. Digby, determining to make another attempt to rescue him from destruction, on inquiry, found that he had gone on to a neighbouring town. There he followed him, and there he found him in the same condition as before, having spent the whole of Mr Nugent's liberal gift. Digby waited till he had recovered his senses, spoke to him earnestly and kindly, entreating him to abandon his evil courses. At last Julian said that he had one aunt who would, he knew, could he reach her house, try and reconcile him to his father, and that he had resolved firmly to reform. Digby instantly offered him ten pounds, urging him to set off without delay to his relative's house.

Thus the former friends, who had started together in life with such equal advantages, parted.

Digby in vain waited to hear from Julian. He never reached his relative's house. Nearly a year after that, Digby heard of his death in a hospital, of *delirium tremens*, a most horrible complaint, brought on by excessive drinking.

A couple of years after Arthur Haviland left College, the papers announced his marriage with Katharine, third daughter of Digby Heathcote, Esq, of Bloxholme, etc.

"I am truly thankful that my dear, dear little sister Kate has married so excellent a fellow," wrote Digby to an old friend, when speaking of the event. "What a contrast to that wretched being, Julian Langley, whom my father and his had once intended for her. I have known Arthur for a number of years. He is, and he always was as a boy, a thoroughly high-principled, honourable fellow, a sincere, pious Christian, and as kind-hearted, sensible, and judicious as any person I have ever met. I am convinced of the truth of the saying that 'the boy is the father of the man.' I have had many proofs of it in my experience, and I should always strongly recommend my friends to reflect what their friends were as boys before they introduce them to their families, and especially to their sisters, whose jealous guardians they should ever endeavour to prove."

No one laboured harder to prepare the triumphal arches to welcome Miss Kate, as he called her, on her first visit to Bloxholme after the event mentioned above, than did John Pratt, and curious were the presents he had prepared for her, most of which might have suited her early tastes, but certainly not her present ones. Among other things were two young kittens, a litter of ferrets, four pigeons, a fitch of bacon—this was given, as he said, in advance—a puppy, and a nest of young owlets. He continues as active as ever, and the constant attendant on Digby in all rural sports whenever the young heir pays a visit to his home.

Toby Tubb, though grown somewhat fatter, still follows his calling on the river; and Digby, whenever he goes to Osberton in the summer, seldom fails to take a pull or a sail in his boat.

Though the companions of his boyhood are scattered far and wide over the face of the globe, he keeps up a frequent correspondence with many of them, and he has the satisfaction of finding that his honest, courageous, straightforward character has secured that sincere friendship and respect which neither distance nor time lessens or alters.

May all the readers of Digby Heathcote's early life endeavour to deserve and maintain the same character; and if his example induces any to imitate it who might otherwise have taken a different course, the author will be truly glad that he committed this history to paper.

The End.

[Chapter 1](#) | [Chapter 2](#) | [Chapter 3](#) | [Chapter 4](#) | [Chapter 5](#) | [Chapter 6](#) | [Chapter 7](#) | [Chapter 8](#) | [Chapter 9](#) | [Chapter 10](#) | [Chapter 11](#) | [Chapter 12](#) | [Chapter 13](#) | [Chapter 14](#) | [Chapter 15](#) | [Chapter 16](#) | [Chapter 17](#) |

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK DIGBY HEATHCOTE: THE EARLY DAYS OF A COUNTRY GENTLEMAN'S SON AND HEIR ***

Updated editions will replace the previous one—the old editions will be renamed.

Creating the works from print editions not protected by U.S. copyright law means that no one owns a United States copyright in these works, so the Foundation (and you!) can copy and distribute it in the United States without permission and without paying copyright royalties. Special rules, set forth in the General Terms of Use part of this license, apply to copying and distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works to protect the PROJECT GUTENBERG™ concept and trademark. Project Gutenberg is a registered trademark, and may not be used if you charge for an eBook, except by following the terms of the trademark license, including paying royalties for use of the Project Gutenberg trademark. If you do not charge anything for copies of this eBook, complying with the trademark license is very easy. You may use this eBook for nearly any purpose such as creation of derivative works, reports, performances and research. Project Gutenberg eBooks may be modified and printed and given away—you may do practically ANYTHING in the United States with eBooks not protected by U.S. copyright law. Redistribution is subject to the trademark license, especially commercial redistribution.

START: FULL LICENSE

THE FULL PROJECT GUTENBERG LICENSE

PLEASE READ THIS BEFORE YOU DISTRIBUTE OR USE THIS WORK

To protect the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting the free distribution of electronic works, by using or distributing this work (or any other work associated in any way with the phrase “Project Gutenberg”), you agree to comply with all the terms of the Full Project Gutenberg™ License available with this file or online at www.gutenberg.org/license.

Section 1. General Terms of Use and Redistributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

1.A. By reading or using any part of this Project Gutenberg™ electronic work, you indicate that you have read, understand, agree to and accept all the terms of this license and intellectual property (trademark/copyright) agreement. If you do not agree to abide by all the terms of this agreement, you must cease using and return or destroy all copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in your possession. If you paid a fee for obtaining a copy of or access to a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work and you do not agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement, you may obtain a refund from the person or entity to whom you paid the fee as set forth in paragraph 1.E.8.

1.B. “Project Gutenberg” is a registered trademark. It may only be used on or associated in any way with an electronic work by people who agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement. There are a few things that you can do with most Project Gutenberg™ electronic works even without complying with the full terms of this agreement. See paragraph 1.C below. There are a lot of things you can do with Project Gutenberg™ electronic works if you follow the terms of this agreement and help preserve free future access to Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. See paragraph 1.E below.

1.C. The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation (“the Foundation” or PGLAF), owns a compilation copyright in the collection of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. Nearly all the individual works in the collection are in the public domain in the United States. If an individual work is unprotected by copyright law in the United States and you are located in the United States, we do not claim a right to prevent you from copying, distributing, performing, displaying or creating derivative works based on the work as long as all references to Project Gutenberg are removed. Of course, we hope that you will support the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting free access to electronic works by freely sharing Project Gutenberg™ works in compliance with the terms of this agreement for keeping the Project Gutenberg™ name associated with the work. You can easily comply with the terms of this agreement by keeping this work in the same format with its attached full Project Gutenberg™ License when you share it without charge with others.

1.D. The copyright laws of the place where you are located also govern what you can do with this work. Copyright laws in most countries are in a constant state of change. If you are outside the United States, check the laws of your country in addition to the terms of this agreement before downloading, copying, displaying, performing, distributing or creating derivative works based on this work or any other Project Gutenberg™ work. The Foundation makes no representations concerning the copyright status of any work in any country other than the United States.

1.E. Unless you have removed all references to Project Gutenberg:

1.E.1. The following sentence, with active links to, or other immediate access to, the full Project Gutenberg™ License must appear prominently whenever any copy of a Project Gutenberg™ work (any work on which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” appears, or with which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” is associated) is accessed, displayed, performed, viewed, copied or distributed:

This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this eBook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you will have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

1.E.2. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is derived from texts not protected by U.S. copyright law (does not contain a notice indicating that it is posted with permission of the copyright holder), the work can be copied and distributed to anyone in the United States without paying any fees or charges. If you are redistributing or providing access to a work with the phrase “Project Gutenberg” associated with or appearing on the work, you must comply either with the requirements of paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 or obtain permission for the use of the work and the Project Gutenberg™ trademark as set forth in paragraphs 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.3. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is posted with the permission of the copyright holder, your use and distribution must comply with both paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 and any additional terms imposed by the copyright holder. Additional terms will be linked to the Project Gutenberg™ License for all works posted with the permission of the copyright holder found at the beginning of this work.

1.E.4. Do not unlink or detach or remove the full Project Gutenberg™ License terms from this work, or any files containing a part of this work or any other work associated with Project Gutenberg™.

1.E.5. Do not copy, display, perform, distribute or redistribute this electronic work, or any part of this electronic work, without prominently displaying the sentence set forth in paragraph 1.E.1 with active links or immediate access to the full terms of the Project Gutenberg™ License.

1.E.6. You may convert to and distribute this work in any binary, compressed, marked up, nonproprietary or proprietary form, including any word processing or hypertext form. However, if you provide access to or distribute copies of a Project Gutenberg™ work in a format other than “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other format used in the official version posted on the official Project Gutenberg™ website (www.gutenberg.org), you must, at no additional cost, fee or expense to the user, provide a copy, a means of exporting a copy, or a means of obtaining a copy upon request, of the work in its original “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other form. Any alternate format must include the full Project Gutenberg™ License as specified in paragraph 1.E.1.

1.E.7. Do not charge a fee for access to, viewing, displaying, performing, copying or distributing any Project Gutenberg™ works unless you comply with paragraph 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.8. You may charge a reasonable fee for copies of or providing access to or distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works provided that:

- You pay a royalty fee of 20% of the gross profits you derive from the use of Project Gutenberg™ works calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. The fee is owed to the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, but he has agreed to donate royalties under this paragraph to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. Royalty payments must be paid within 60 days following each date on which you prepare (or are legally required to prepare) your periodic tax returns. Royalty payments should be clearly marked as such and sent to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation at the address specified in Section 4, “Information about donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation.”
- You provide a full refund of any money paid by a user who notifies you in writing (or by e-mail) within 30 days of receipt that s/he does not agree to the terms of the full Project Gutenberg™ License. You must require such a user to return or destroy all copies of the works possessed in a physical medium and discontinue all use of and all access to other copies of Project Gutenberg™ works.
- You provide, in accordance with paragraph 1.F.3, a full refund of any money paid for a work or a replacement copy, if a defect in the electronic work is discovered and reported to you within 90 days of receipt of the work.
- You comply with all other terms of this agreement for free distribution of Project Gutenberg™ works.

1.E.9. If you wish to charge a fee or distribute a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work or group of works on different terms than are set forth in this agreement, you must obtain permission in writing from the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the manager of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark. Contact the Foundation as set forth in Section 3 below.

1.F.

1.F.1. Project Gutenberg volunteers and employees expend considerable effort to identify, do copyright research on, transcribe and proofread works not protected by U.S. copyright law in creating the Project Gutenberg™ collection. Despite these efforts, Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, and the medium on which they may be stored, may contain “Defects,” such as, but not limited to, incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

1.F.2. LIMITED WARRANTY, DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES - Except for the “Right of Replacement or Refund” described in paragraph 1.F.3, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, and any other party distributing a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work under this agreement, disclaim all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees. YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE, STRICT LIABILITY, BREACH OF WARRANTY OR BREACH OF CONTRACT EXCEPT THOSE PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH 1.F.3.

YOU AGREE THAT THE FOUNDATION, THE TRADEMARK OWNER, AND ANY DISTRIBUTOR UNDER THIS AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE LIABLE TO YOU FOR ACTUAL, DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.

1.F.3. LIMITED RIGHT OF REPLACEMENT OR REFUND - If you discover a defect in this electronic work within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending a written explanation to the person you received the work from. If you received the work on a physical medium, you must return the medium with your written explanation. The person or entity that provided you with the defective work may elect to provide a replacement copy in lieu of a refund. If you received the work electronically, the person or entity providing it to you may choose to give you a second opportunity to receive the work electronically in lieu of a refund. If the second copy is also defective, you may demand a refund in writing without further opportunities to fix the problem.

1.F.4. Except for the limited right of replacement or refund set forth in paragraph 1.F.3, this work is provided to you 'AS-IS', WITH NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR ANY PURPOSE.

1.F.5. Some states do not allow disclaimers of certain implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of certain types of damages. If any disclaimer or limitation set forth in this agreement violates the law of the state applicable to this agreement, the agreement shall be interpreted to make the maximum disclaimer or limitation permitted by the applicable state law. The invalidity or unenforceability of any provision of this agreement shall not void the remaining provisions.

1.F.6. INDEMNITY - You agree to indemnify and hold the Foundation, the trademark owner, any agent or employee of the Foundation, anyone providing copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in accordance with this agreement, and any volunteers associated with the production, promotion and distribution of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, harmless from all liability, costs and expenses, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following which you do or cause to occur: (a) distribution of this or any Project Gutenberg™ work, (b) alteration, modification, or additions or deletions to any Project Gutenberg™ work, and (c) any Defect you cause.

Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg™

Project Gutenberg™ is synonymous with the free distribution of electronic works in formats readable by the widest variety of computers including obsolete, old, middle-aged and new computers. It exists because of the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and donations from people in all walks of life.

Volunteers and financial support to provide volunteers with the assistance they need are critical to reaching Project Gutenberg™'s goals and ensuring that the Project Gutenberg™ collection will remain freely available for generations to come. In 2001, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation was created to provide a secure and permanent future for Project Gutenberg™ and future generations. To learn more about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and how your efforts and donations can help, see Sections 3 and 4 and the Foundation information page at www.gutenberg.org.

Section 3. Information about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)(3) educational corporation organized under the laws of the state of Mississippi and granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service. The Foundation's EIN or federal tax identification number is 64-6221541. Contributions to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by U.S. federal laws and your state's laws.

The Foundation's business office is located at 809 North 1500 West, Salt Lake City, UT 84116, (801) 596-1887. Email contact links and up to date contact information can be found at the Foundation's website and official page at www.gutenberg.org/contact

Section 4. Information about Donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

Project Gutenberg™ depends upon and cannot survive without widespread public support and donations to carry out its mission of increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be freely distributed in machine-readable form accessible by the widest array of equipment including outdated equipment. Many small donations (\$1 to \$5,000) are particularly important to maintaining tax exempt status with the IRS.

The Foundation is committed to complying with the laws regulating charities and charitable donations in all 50 states of the United States. Compliance requirements are not uniform and it takes a considerable effort, much paperwork and many fees to meet and keep up with these requirements. We do not solicit donations in locations where we have not received written confirmation of compliance. To SEND DONATIONS or determine the status of compliance for any particular state visit www.gutenberg.org/donate.

While we cannot and do not solicit contributions from states where we have not met the solicitation requirements, we know of no prohibition against accepting unsolicited donations from donors in such states who approach us with offers to donate.

International donations are gratefully accepted, but we cannot make any statements concerning tax treatment of donations received from outside the United States. U.S. laws alone swamp our small staff.

Please check the Project Gutenberg web pages for current donation methods and addresses. Donations are accepted in a number of other ways including checks, online payments and credit card donations. To donate, please visit: www.gutenberg.org/donate

Section 5. General Information About Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

Professor Michael S. Hart was the originator of the Project Gutenberg™ concept of a library of electronic works that could be freely shared with anyone. For forty years, he produced and distributed Project Gutenberg™ eBooks with only a loose network of volunteer support.

Project Gutenberg™ eBooks are often created from several printed editions, all of which are confirmed as not protected by copyright in the U.S. unless a copyright notice is included. Thus, we do not necessarily keep eBooks in compliance with any particular paper edition.

Most people start at our website which has the main PG search facility: www.gutenberg.org.

This website includes information about Project Gutenberg™, including how to make donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, how to help produce our new eBooks, and how to subscribe to our email newsletter to hear about new eBooks.