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The Rock of the Lion
, by Molly Elliot Seawell**

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Title: The Rock of the Lion

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Release date: December 26, 2014 [EBook #47785]

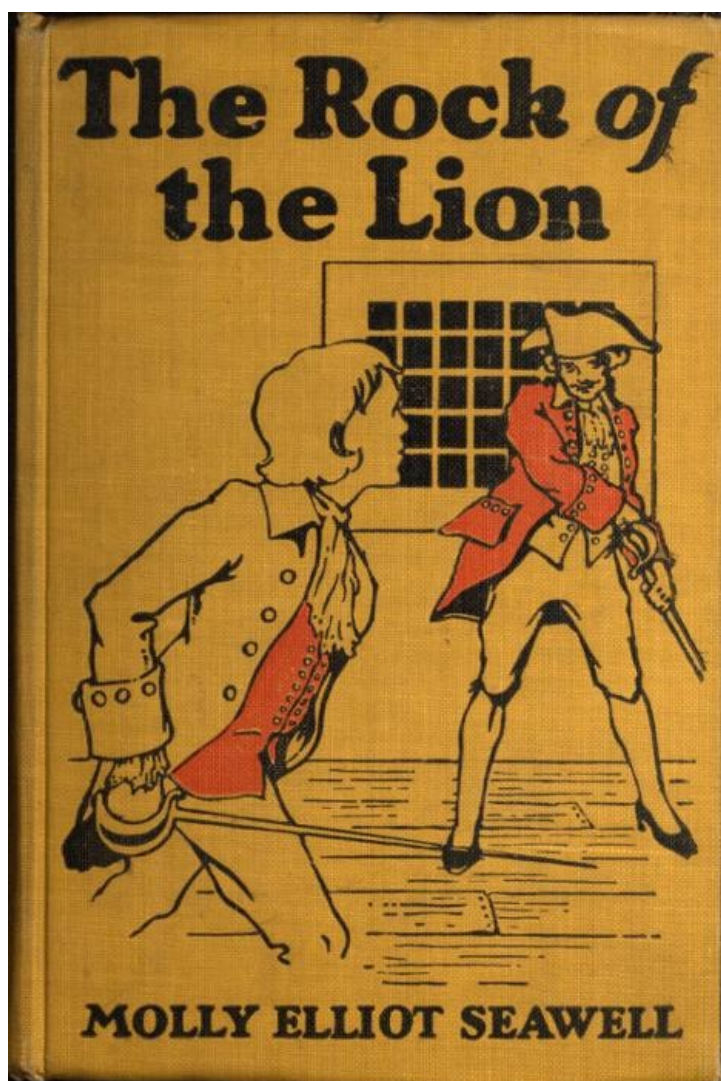
Language: English

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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE ROCK OF THE LION ***

Transcriber's Note:

A Table of Contents has been added.





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BASKERVILLE'S EYES FOLLOWED THE COURSE OF THE *SEAHORSE*

THE ROCK OF THE LION

BY

MOLLY ELLIOT SEAWELL

AUTHOR OF

"A VIRGINIA CAVALIER" "LITTLE JARVIS" "PAUL JONES"
"THE SPRIGHTLY ROMANCE OF MARSAC"
"CHILDREN OF DESTINY" ETC.

ILLUSTRATED

BY A. I. KELLER



NEW YORK AND LONDON

HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS

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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

AT GIBRALTAR.

*England, I stand on thy imperial ground,
 Not all a stranger; as thy bugles blow,
 I feel within my blood old battles flow—
 The blood whose ancient founts in thee are found.
 Still surging dark against the Christian bound
 Wide Islam presses; well its peoples know
 Thy heights that watch them wandering below;
 I think how Lucknow heard their gathering sound.
 I turn and meet the cruel, turbaned face.
 England, 'tis sweet to be so much thy son!
 I feel the conqueror in my blood and race;
 Last night Trafalgar awed me, and to-day
 Gibraltar wakened; hark, thy evening gun
 Startles the desert over Africa!*

—GEORGE E. WOODBERRY.

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PREFACE

The Rock of the Lion is not a history of the siege of Gibraltar, although the story of that immortal siege of 1779-83 has been closely studied and followed in preparing this book for young readers. The writer has used the romancer's just and inalienable right to introduce real persons and events whenever it would be of service to the story. Only one liberty has been taken with chronology; it refers to Paul Jones, and is unimportant in character.

MOLLY ELLIOT SEAWELL.

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THE ROCK OF THE LION

THE ROCK OF THE LION

[Pg 1]

CHAPTER I

The sun, a great orb of glory, hung low in the west, lighting up the sea and sky with a blaze of splendor. Long lances of rosy flame shot across the blue Mediterranean, even to the horizon, which was the color of pearls and opals. Afar off, in the dim distance, the Rock of Gibraltar, a huge, mysterious shadow, like a couchant lion, seemed to keep watch over sea and land. Vast and majestic, looming large in the clear obscure of evening, it dwarfed everything less great than itself into nothingness, except one—a magnificent ship of the line, the *Thunderer*, which swept along under a mountain of canvas. The ensign of England, which flew from her peak, seemed to kiss the skies, while the long pennant, signifying "homeward bound," that flew from the giant main-mast, touched the sapphire sea. A hundred and twenty guns armed her mighty hull, and she carried a thousand men to fight them. The rush of the wind through her tremendous rigging was like the roar of a cataract, and as she cleft the seas they bellowed under her bows with a reverberation like thunder.

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The crimson and gold rim of the sun still flamed angrily above the horizon, but the pearl and opal and ruby sky changed suddenly to a coppery red, streaked with green, and the wind rose steadily. Approaching the mighty battleship, on the opposite tack, was seen a small frigate, as perfect in her dainty way as the leviathan that was bearing down upon her. She, too, wore the colors of England. As soon as she got fairly within sight a signal-flag was broken out from her foretruck. In answer to it the ship of the line threw her maintop-sail aback and hove to. The frigate did likewise, and a cutter dropped into the water from her side. A midshipman and twelve men were in the boat, and another person—a lad of about sixteen, wearing a naval uniform, but different from the uniform of the midshipman. The boat was rapidly pulled across the blue water, now ruffled by the breeze, and soon lay rocking and tumbling like a cork under the huge hull of the ship of the line. The two lads rose and grasped each other's hand. They said nothing, being Anglo-Saxons, but their looks were eloquent, and in the eyes of both there were tears. The midshipman said a word to the men, and they brought the boat alongside, just under the main-chains. The younger one, taking off his cap, nodded to the men in the boat, and, without waiting for the Jacob's-ladder which was about to be thrown over the side, made a spring like a cat and landed in the chain-plates. The men, ever pleased with a show of daring and dexterity, raised a cheer, in which some of the sailors hanging over the *Thunderer's* rail joined. The young fellow turned and waved his cap again, and then disappeared through the nearest porthole, a sailor throwing a small bundle after him. Almost before he had seized the chain-plates the maintop-sail yard had swung round, and the great ship was again bounding over the sea.

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The boy threaded, with amazing swiftness, the gangways and ladders of the *Thunderer*, and soon found himself on the quarter-deck. An officer in an admiral's uniform stood alone on the poop, watching the boat as it disappeared rapidly in the distance, while the captain on the bridge looked anxiously towards the northwest, where clouds were gathering angrily.

The boy walked up to the Admiral, and, making a low bow, cap in hand, said, "This, I believe, is Admiral Kempenfelt."

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"Yes, sir," answered the Admiral.

"I have the honor to report to you, sir. I am Midshipman Baskerville, late of the Continental ship *Bon Homme Richard*, and afterwards in the *Serapis*. I was captured at the Texel, and am on my parole. This letter from Captain Lockyer, of the *Seahorse*, explains everything."

Admiral Kempenfelt took the letter which the little midshipman handed him, and read:

"DEAR SIR,—This will be handed you by Midshipman Baskerville, a young rebel lately in revolt against his Majesty, and lately acting midshipman with that traitor and pirate, Paul Jones. After Jones reached the Texel in the *Serapis*, we kept, you may be sure, a close watch upon him, and the *Seahorse*, with eleven other ships of the line and frigates, cruised outside waiting for him. But will you believe, my dear Admiral, that

this little midshipman is all the game we have bagged so far; and he was caught by his own imprudence in going off on a fishing excursion, when a boat's crew of the *Seahorse* nabbed him just as he got ashore? I received orders to the Mediterranean, and so hand this youngster over to you to take to England. He is the grandson and heir of your eccentric friend Lord Bellingham, of Bellingham Castle, Yorkshire. His father quarrelled with his grandfather, went to North America, and turned red-hot rebel. This boy, being left an orphan, was seduced by Jones to join him, although he swears he begged Jones to take him, and would follow Jones all over the world and beyond. You see, my dear sir, that it would be a very good thing if we could bring this youth to a sense of his duty to the King; and as he is a lad of parts and spirit, I would be glad to see him in his grandfather's good graces. I intended to send him to England on his parole at the first opportunity; but blast me if I have met a ship going home since I took him aboard in October until now. I venture to hand him over to you, having given him orders to report at once to his grandfather when you land. This has been an infernal cruise, and if we have ten shillings apiece prize-money, it will be more than I expect. With best wishes, believe me, my dear sir,

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"Your very sincere friend and obedient servant,
"RALPH LOCKYER."

While the reading of this letter was going on, Archy Baskerville stood in an easy but respectful attitude. There were a number of officers on deck who looked at him curiously, but he seemed to see no one. His eyes followed the course of the *Seahorse*, now growing rapidly smaller and fainter in the fading light, and again they filled with tears. He had been a prisoner, it is true, on board of her, but a prisoner kindly treated; and he had one friend—Langton, the midshipman, who had brought the boat to the *Thunderer*—whom he dearly loved. Should they ever meet again? He was roused from his reverie by Admiral Kempenfelt saying to him:

"Do you know the contents of this letter, sir?"

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"No, sir."

"I find you are the grandson of my old friend Lord Bellingham—his heir, so Captain Lockyer writes me."

Something like a grin appeared on Archy's handsome face.

"Hardly, sir. My father joined with my grandfather in cutting the entail, and I cannot get the estates; and I cannot use the title, as I am an American citizen."

"A what?" snapped Admiral Kempenfelt.

Now, this young gentleman, Archy Baskerville, had a reprehensible quality very common in youth. He liked to be as exasperating as he dared, and having devoted most of his time on the *Seahorse* to finding out how far he could presume on his position as a prisoner of war, he only smiled sweetly up into the Admiral's face and repeated, blandly:

"A citizen of the United States, sir."

The Admiral glared at him for a moment, and then, his countenance softening, he put his hand kindly on Archy's shoulder, saying, as if he were addressing a ten-year-old boy:

"Come, come, my lad; let us have no more of that. You are young; you are misguided; you have a splendid destiny before you in England, and the vagaries of a mere lad like you, exposed to the seductions of a plausible fellow like that pirate Jones, will be easily overlooked if you return to your allegiance to your King and country."

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During this speech a deep red had overspread Archy's countenance, but his quick wits had not deserted him.

"Sir," he said, straightening up his boyish figure, "a prisoner of war is subject to many temptations to betray his cause; but I did not think that Admiral Kempenfelt would suggest that I should turn traitor, and, what is harder to bear, should insult my late commander, Commodore Paul Jones, when I am not in a position to resent it."

If Archy had turned red the Admiral turned scarlet. His eyes and his teeth snapped at the same time, and, wheeling round, he abruptly walked to the end of the poop and back again, his heels hitting the deck hard and his hands twitching behind his back. The officers standing within hearing had difficulty in keeping their countenances, but Archy, smooth and unruffled, was like a May morning. The Admiral again turned and came back towards him. The notion of that youngster giving himself the airs of a post-captain! thought the Admiral. The masthead was the only place for him, and yet the brat was sharp enough to know all he was entitled to as a prisoner of war and to claim it.

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The Admiral made two more turns; then he came up close to Archy, and with the gleam of a smile said:

"May I have the pleasure of your company in my cabin at supper to-night, Mr. What's-your-name?"

"With pleasure, sir," replied Archy, promptly, "provided, of course, that you make no efforts to

corrupt my loyalty, and say nothing disrespectful of my late commander."

Had the great main-mast tumbled over the side at that moment, the Admiral could not have been more amazed. He opened his mouth to speak, and was too astounded to shut it. He looked at Archy carefully from the crown of his curly head to the soles of his well-shaped feet—for the boy was elegantly made and bright-faced and handsome beyond the common. Archy bore the scrutiny without flinching. As for the officers, who were on-lookers, a universal grin went round, and one midshipman giggled outright.

Suddenly there was a sharp order and a rush of feet along the deck. The light had died out as if by magic; sea and sky turned black, except a corner on the northwest horizon, where an ominous pale-green light played upon fast-gathering clouds, and the wind rose with a shriek. The men swarmed up the rigging to take in sail, and they were not a moment too soon. Every person on deck immediately found something to do except Admiral Kempenfelt and Archy Baskerville. The Admiral walked up and down, glancing coolly around, but making no suggestions. Archy leaned against the swifter of the mizzen-rigging, and his keen young eyes caught the last glimpse of the *Seahorse* as she disappeared—a mere speck in the darkness. The inky clouds came down like a curtain upon the lion-like Rock, and the air itself seemed to turn black. And then came the storm.

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The *Thunderer*, under storm canvas, did battle with the tempest for two days and nights. Driven by mighty blasts, she staggered upon her course, descending into gulfs and then rising mountain high until it seemed as if her tall masts would meet the low-hanging pall of clouds. Her guns broke loose, and on all three of her decks these huge masses of brass and iron were pitched about to the danger of life and limb. Her stout masts and spars bent like whips. Violent gusts of rain came with the scream of the tempest. Her men, drenched to the bone, nearly swept off their feet by the great hissing and roaring masses of water that fell upon the deck, knocked over, slipping up, falling down hatchways, sleepless and hungry, suffered all the dangers and miseries of one of the most frightful storms of the century; yet they never lost heart. The officers, from the captain down to the smallest midshipman, were cool, and apparently confident that the *Thunderer* could weather the storm; and as in the beginning, so to the end, there were but two persons on the ship who did nothing—Admiral Kempenfelt and the little American prisoner of war, Archy Baskerville; and in coolness and apparent indifference it is hard to tell which excelled—the seasoned Admiral or the young midshipman.

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Neither the boy's spirit, nor even his sly impertinence, had injured him in Admiral Kempenfelt's opinion, and Archy's courage during those terrible two days was not overlooked. The Admiral felt an interest in the boy, from his long acquaintance with Lord Bellingham, and he thought it a pity that the heir to a great title and noble estates should throw them away by what the Admiral considered rank rebellion; but it was Archy's own fearless spirit that won him the Admiral's respect. On that first dreadful night there was no pretence of serving supper; but, to the Admiral's mingled disgust and amusement, at seven o'clock Archy tumbled into the great cabin, where he found the Admiral seated with a soup-tureen between his knees, out of which he was ladling pea-soup into his mouth with great good-will, but indifferent success.

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"Ah, here you are, Mr. Baskerville," called out the Admiral, who knew what a midshipman's appetite was, and supposed that Archy had shrewdly calculated on a good supper. "Sorry I can't order my steward to help you; but in that last lurch the ship gave he was pitched head-foremost over the table, and knocked out three teeth and blacked his eye—so he is now under the surgeon's care. But if you will kindly help yourself to that bowl— Oh, Jupiter!"

The *Thunderer* nearly went on her beam-ends, and so did the tureen. Archy, showing a very good pair of sea-legs, secured the bowl from a mass of broken crockery in the locker, and, presenting it, the Admiral filled it with pea-soup, only spilling about half.

"Excuse me, sir," said Archy, and plumped down flat on the floor, where, with the greatest dexterity, he conveyed all the soup in the bowl to his mouth.

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"Any casualties on deck since I left?" asked the Admiral.

"No, sir. The fact is"—here the ship righted herself with a suddenness that threw Archy's heels almost into the Admiral's face—"I don't think it much of a blow."

The Admiral stopped his ladling for a moment and looked the boy in the eye very hard.

Archy felt emboldened to indulge in a little more boyish braggadocio, and remarked, airily:

"That is, there's nothing alarming in the blow, sir. It was blowing harder than this when we made the Texel in the *Serapis*."

"Young man," answered the Admiral, "you never saw it blow as hard as this in your life, and you never may again."

Archy, somewhat abashed, said nothing, and had the grace to blush; but spying a loaf of bread rolling under the transom, he crawled after it, secured it, and handed it to the Admiral.

"Informal, but very welcome," was the Admiral's remark as he divided the loaf and gave Archy half. "As long as this keeps up, Mr. Baskerville, you may as well accept the hospitality of my cabin, such as it is. I hardly suppose any one has thought of slinging you a hammock, and you couldn't stay in it if you had it; but there is the floor, and here is a pillow."

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"Thank you, sir," said Archy.

"Have you ever seen your grandfather, Lord Bellingham?"

"No, sir."

The Admiral gave a short laugh.

"I should like to see your meeting."

Something in the Admiral's kind face gave encouragement to Archy, and he replied, "I hope he will receive me kindly, but I ask no favors of him. As a prisoner of war, I am sure to be taken care of, since Commodore Jones has obtained for us sea-officers the rights of prisoners of war, such as the land officers have had all the time. Is my grandfather very—very—dreadful?"

"He is a man of sense and honor, but he is very eccentric. I have known him for forty years. Excuse me now, Mr. Baskerville, I am going on deck. I need not ask you to make yourself at home." The Admiral smiled at this—he thought Archy needed very slight invitation to do that.

All night the tempest raged. At midnight, when it was at its worst, the Admiral came below for a moment. There were no lights, but by striking his flint he saw a lithe, boyish figure on the floor, cunningly lashed to the transom, as was the pillow, and Archy was sleeping like a baby. [Pg 14]

"The little beggar is no coward," thought the Admiral, a smile lighting up his face.

Next day and next night it was the same. The Admiral noticed many things in that mortal struggle of the great ship with all the powers of destruction, and among them were the different kinds and degrees of courage displayed by the officers and men. Not one showed fear, although each was conscious of the immediate and awful danger, but some bore the strain better than others. There was not one who stood it more calmly, more debonairly, than the little American midshipman.

At sunrise on the third day, when the storm passed off to the eastward, they found themselves near a rocky headland that jutted out into the sea. The sun shone brightly, but the sea was still angry, and as far as the eye could reach was wreckage. One glance on the rocks showed them the wreck of the *Seahorse*. Her masts and spars were gone, and the hulk rose and fell helplessly with the violence of the waves. Archy was leaning sadly over the rail when he saw an object floating nearer that he recognized, with a sickening dread, as that of a man's body. It was swept shoreward under the very lee of the *Thunderer*. As it shot past, Archy uttered a cry. The morning light had revealed the pale face of his best friend Langton. Another cry went up from the men on the *Thunderer's* deck as they watched the ghastly sight. But at that very moment they had all they could do to claw off the land and save the *Thunderer* from the fate of the *Seahorse*. It was some days before the wind permitted them to return to the scene of the wreck, and they found not a vestige of the gallant ship or her brave company. [Pg 15]

CHAPTER II

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The Comet coach, from London to York, left the Angel Inn, on the borders of Yorkshire, at three o'clock in the November afternoon, on the last stage of the journey.

It was bitterly cold, and the low-hanging clouds held snow. Inside the tavern parlor the passengers huddled the fire and looked dismally out of the small-paned windows on the court-yard at the coach, to which the horses were being put, while the coachman, taking his last nip from a pewter pot at the kitchen window, chaffed the bar-maid and playfully flecked his whip at the postilion busy with the horses near by.

Among the passengers lingering around the fire was Archy Baskerville. He still wore his uniform, which had grown excessively shabby; but he was not without money. He had engaged the box-seat, and had paid for it in a lordly manner, showing, meanwhile, with boyish vanity and imprudence, a handsome rouleau of gold. He had a very handsome new cloak of dark-blue camlet, elegantly lined, and with a fur collar; and his seedy knee-breeches were ornamented with a costly pair of buckles. [Pg 17]

The singular contrast in his dress could not fail to excite remark. An individual known as a bagman began to chaff him, while the other passengers listened and smiled.

"Wot's the matter with your clothes, young man? Did you kill a French captain in that 'ere suit—as you won't change it?"

Archy disdained to reply to this, and, wrapping his handsome cloak around him, produced a pair of pistols—not the great horse-pistols of the day, but of the kind used by officers; then he tightened the belt of the sword he wore, according to the custom in those days—all with an air of nonchalance that would have suited a man of twice his age.

A pert young woman in a hat and feathers, and travelling alone, then began:

"La, me! Have we got to travel in company with them pistols? Sure, they'll go off, little boy, and then we'll all be weltering in our blood."

A flush of anger rose to Archy's cheek at this, but he wisely held his peace. His eye fell, however, upon a gentleman on the opposite side of the fireplace, who was wrapped in a cloak much larger and heavier than Archy's, and who, like him, was examining the flints of a pair of pistols—and the gentleman also wore a military sword. He was tall and thin, and had the carriage of a soldier. His face was sallow, and far from handsome, but his eyes were full of kindness and intelligence, and as they met Archy's a subtle sympathy was established between them. Archy guessed, shrewdly, that the military gentleman was an Indian officer.

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The bagman soon returned to the charge.

"Where's the footman as has charge o' you?" he asked.

"I had not thought of engaging a footman," responded Archy, coolly; "but if you are looking for a place, perhaps I might take you. What sort of a character can you get from your last master?"

A roar of laughter, in which the officer joined to the extent of a smile, greeted this, and the young woman called out:

"Bless 'is 'art! I knew he must 'ave a good 'art under that 'andsome cloak!"

The blowing of a bugle by the guard at the door broke up the conversation. The discomfited bagman made first for the coach, and the young woman with the hat and feathers bolted after him. A sweet-faced, elderly Quakeress and a handsome young Oxford student followed. Archy came next, and the officer held back a moment to speak to him.

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"I observe, sir," he said, politely, "you wear a blue naval uniform, but it is unlike that of our service—at least, any that I have seen, but I have been long absent from England."

"This is an American uniform, sir," responded Archy, politely. "I am a prisoner of war on my parole and entitled to wear it. I served with Commodore Jones on the *Bon Homme Richard*, and was captured through my own imprudence when we made the Texel on our return from the cruise in which we captured the *Serapis*."

At this a slight but marked change came over the officer, and after a moment he said, coldly:

"You will pardon me for saying there is very great imprudence, and even danger, in your wearing that uniform in England."

"Perhaps so," replied Archy, quickly adopting the same reserved tone, "but it is as honorable as any uniform in the world, and I shall continue to wear it. I observe that English officers on their parole in France wear their uniform and are not molested."

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The officer passed on without speaking a word, and, courteously assisting the Quaker lady into the coach, stepped in after her, while Archy climbed up on the box-seat. The steps were put up, the door banged to, the guard winded his horn, the coachman cracked his whip, the four horses dashed forward, and with a lurch and a roar little inferior to the *Thunderer's* in a gale of wind, the Comet started upon its journey.

The afternoon was dreary, and the wintry sun shone fitfully upon the vast moorlands through which the post-road, like a serpent, wound its way. The wind was cutting, and Archy shivered in spite of his great furred cape. The dreariness of the landscape affected him, and, as he had done many times since that unlucky day off the Texel, he felt sad at heart. He had left the *Thunderer* with regret at Spithead on her arrival. He had been kindly treated, especially by Admiral Kempenfelt, and, although he had made no friend like Langton, he had found good comradeship in the gun-room of the *Thunderer*. Before sending him ashore, Admiral Kempenfelt had talked with him kindly, and had advised him to go to his grandfather at Bellingham Castle and there await his exchange. The Admiral had strong hopes that, under certain influences, Archy would return, as the Admiral called it, to his King and country; but he forbore to urge it, seeing in the boy a spirit that was quick to resent any fancied dishonor. He had supplied Archy liberally with money, saying to him at the time: "This will not be too much in case Lord Bellingham refuses to see you; for, mark you, my lad, you have a queer case for a grandfather, and what he will do only himself and God Almighty know, so you had better be prepared for emergencies. However, I think you can take care of yourself. Good-bye, and good luck to you!"

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Those were the last kind words Archy had heard. In London, being no wiser than any other harum-scarum midshipman who found his pockets full, for the first time, Master Archy had treated himself with great liberality. The playhouses, several cock-fights, excursions by land and water, and a showy outfit had consumed Archy's week in London and Admiral Kempenfelt's money, except the one rouleau of gold, which he exhibited as if he had a bank vault full of them. The subject of his finances deeply engaged Archy's attention as the Comet plunged along the dreary road in the fast-gathering gloom. Occasionally they stopped to take up or let off passengers, but at the last stage—a small village where they changed horses—Archy observed that they had exactly the same complement with which they had started—the officer, the student, the bagman, the Quakeress, and the pert young woman.

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As they dashed up to the door of a small and uninviting inn about dark, the landlord bustled out with a candle in his hand, and, addressing the coachman in a loud voice meant for the passengers, began:

"Have you heard the news? The coach returning by Barham Heath was stopped last night about

this time and every single shilling taken from the passengers. If the ladies and gentlemen feels squeamish about going on to-night, I can give them good beds—excellent beds. The Bishop of Carlisle slept here a week ago, and his lordship was pleased to say he slept well. And I have lately brewed. His lordship liked the brew exceedingly—"

A shriek from the pert young woman interrupted this.

"O-o-o-h!" she screamed. "One of them dreadful highwaymen! I understand as they frequently kisses the ladies besides robbing them. Pray, Mr. Landlord, did you hear as any of the ladies was kissed?"

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"Don't know, ma'am," replied the landlord, with a grin, "but if you meets a highwayman, and axes him—"

"None of your impudence, sir," tartly responded the young woman. "My sister's husband is cousin to one of the aldermen at Carlisle, and if you don't behave yourself respectful to me I'll have your license took away!" At which landlord, passengers, postilions, and stable-boys united in laughing—the coachman only maintaining a stolid gravity.

While the horses were being put to, the passengers went into the tap-room to warm themselves, all except Archy and the officer. Just as Archy was stretching his legs in a brisk walk before the tavern door, to his surprise the officer stepped up to him.

"Sir," said he, "I perceive that, like myself, you have pistols. Now, the instant I put my eyes on our coachman I thought I recognized a man whom I had seen tried for robbery and acquitted at the Old Bailey for lack of evidence; and I am willing to credit him with being a rascal of the first water, and I should not be surprised if he proves it before we get to the end of our journey. We may have to look to our arms, perhaps."

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"Mine will be found in good order, sir," responded Archy, greatly pleased to be so addressed by a military man so much older than himself, and to whom he had felt a strong and instant attraction.

"May I ask how far you are going?" inquired the officer.

"To the village of Bellingham. My grandfather lives at the Castle."

The two were standing in the light of a lantern hung from the tavern porch, and Archy saw a start of surprise on the officer's part. He was silent for a moment or two, and, in spite of the habitual self-possession which was visibly a part of his nature, he did not recover himself at once; and when he spoke Archy felt a change in the tone and manner of his new acquaintance.

"All danger will be passed as soon as we reach Bellingham. Our young Oxford friend has a sword and the bagman a stout stick, but pistols are the weapons against highway-robbers. I am glad you have yours—and keep your eye on the coachman."

"Don't you think, sir," said Archy, eagerly, "that we had better keep our pistols out of sight as far as possible? For if they see we are armed they may not attack us."

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"My dear sir," answered the officer, petulantly, "you speak as if to be held up by highwaymen was a privilege to be sought, not a danger to be avoided. I am afraid you are a hot-headed young man."

"The fact is," was Archy's half-sheepish and half-triumphant reply, "I like to see life—and you know, sir, to be stopped on the road by a determined Claude Duval kind of a fellow is rather er—"

"Pleasant," sarcastically suggested the officer; "deuced pleasant. I have often observed of you youngsters that to tell you that a thing is dangerous is generally to put a premium on your doing it. And when it is foolish, besides—zounds, there's no holding you back! But let me tell you, Mr. Midshipman, when you have had my share of hard knocks you will be a little more willing to keep out of them than you are now. For my part, I hope this tattling landlord is lying, and this rascally coachman has turned honest man. Meanwhile, keep your eyes open."

By that time the horses were put to, and the guard's horn summoned the passengers to get in, and the Comet started off.

The first few miles lay through the same flat, moorland country they had previously traversed, but presently they entered a straggling wood, with a hedge and ditch on both sides. It was now perfectly dark, except for the moon occasionally struggling through the clouds. Within the coach, the Oxonian, a waggish fellow, was amusing himself with telling blood-curdling tales to the gentle Quakeress and the young woman, which last took refuge in groans and smelling salts, and vowed if she ever reached Carlisle again she would never more trust herself on the road. The officer, who had been vexed by Archy's light-hearted seeking of danger, was still more annoyed by the young Oxonian's malicious amusement, and he therefore turned courteously to the placid Quakeress, saying:

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"Pray do not be alarmed, madam; we can take perfectly good care of ourselves and of the ladies, too."

"Friend," mildly answered the Quakeress, "I thank thee, and I am no more frightened by the tales this young gentleman is telling than by the shadows that children make upon the wall to divert themselves, and sometimes to annoy their elders."

The Oxonian took this rebuke in good part, while the bagman burst out with:

"I am glad the military gentleman thinks us safe; not that I be afeerd. I have travelled the roads of England for ten year with nothing for arms but this stick with a loaded handle, and I believe it has frightened off more robbers than any pair of pistols in England. You see, ladies and gentlemen," he continued, flourishing his stick under the officer's nose, to that gentleman's intense disgust, "it is all to nothing how you meets robbers. Seeing a bold, determined feller like me—I have been took for a officer, I have, many a time—they'll lose heart at the sight and screech out—oh, Lord! oh, Lord!"—for at that moment the coach stopped with a jerk, a dark figure rose up from the ground on the other side of the coach, and the cold muzzle of a long horse-pistol was within an inch of the bagman's nose, who instantly began to bawl for mercy at the top of his lungs. At the same moment a man on horseback leaped the hedge, and, rushing at the coach, levelled another pistol at the guard's head, who immediately tumbled off on the ground and threw up his hands. The robber, seeing there was no fight in the guard, while the coachman sat quite passive, promptly turned his attention to Archy. But a surprise was in store for him. The pistol was knocked from his hand and he himself was looking down the muzzle of one—not so large but quite as effective—in the hands of Archy Baskerville.

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"Dismount!" said Archy.

The robber, with a rapid motion, threw himself from his horse on the side opposite to Archy, and, with a spring, tried to regain his pistol. But Archy, tumbling off the box, was too quick for him. He kicked the pistol into the ditch, and still covered the highwayman with his own weapon. The horse in the meantime had broken away for a short distance, but, apparently well trained, stood in the half-darkness trembling in every limb, but holding his ground. The highwayman, with a glance behind him, made a dash for the horse and bounded into the saddle. Archy was at him in a moment, and as a shot rang out from the other side of the coach, Archy fired straight at the highwayman at short range. But, close as he was, he missed fire. He ran forward and fired again just as the horse was rising to take the ditch, but the highwayman, bending down to his horse's neck, took both hedge and ditch at a leap and disappeared in the darkness.

Chagrined and excited, Archy ran to the other door of the coach, where a scuffle was going on. The bagman lay on his back bellowing like a calf. The young woman added her shrieks to the uproar. The Quakeress sat in the coach as calm as a summer evening, while the officer, the Oxonian, and the guard, who had come to his senses, were struggling with a gigantic fellow, who seemed more than a match for all of them. Archy, however, coming up behind, laid hold of him, and in a few moments he was disarmed and his hands securely tied. The officer then turned his attention to the coachman, who had sat unconcerned all through the mêlée.

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"You infernal scoundrel!" was the officer's first words to the coachman. "I shall deliver you up along with this fellow for highway-robbery. You are plainly in league with them and by far the worst of the lot, as you took pains to save your own skin while assisting these men to rob and perhaps murder us."

The coachman, trembling and stammering, attempted to defend himself; but the officer cut him short by directing Archy to mount the box and keep his pistol ready. The Oxonian gave the bagman a kick.

"Get up, you great calf! the danger's past, and you can now boast more of the prowess of that stick of yours."

The bagman very meekly scrambled up, but showed, when least expected, a capacity to make himself useful. The young woman had continued screaming in spite of the earnest assurances of all the passengers that the danger was over, and the obvious fact that only one highwayman remained, and he was tied hand and foot.

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"Thee has nothing to fear, young woman," cried the Quakeress, leaning out of the coach.

"Murder! murder!" was the answer yelled at the top of a pair of stout lungs.

"If it is disappointment, madam, that no attempt was made to kiss you—" began the Oxonian, with grave impertinence.

"I'll shut her potato trap," suddenly remarked the bagman. And, seizing her by the back of her neck, he shouted in her ear:

"Be quiet, hussy! You haven't no sister married to an alderman's cousin in Carlisle, and now I remembers I heerd you last month cryin' 'Eyesters' in Carlisle streets, and that's where you got that fine voice o' yourn, and it's enough to wake the dead."

The young woman responded by giving the bagman a clip over the ear; but she was effectually silenced, and climbed in the coach to the accompaniment of a general smile, the bagman thrusting his tongue into his cheek and winking all around.

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The coach now started, the coachman maintaining a frightened silence, and, after travelling a few miles more, reached the village of Bellingham, where the officer handed him and the captured robber over to the constables. A crowd of people surrounded the coach, the bagman and the young woman volubly describing the dangers through which they had passed, while the Oxonian, engaging a chaise, soon disappeared on his way to his destination, and the Quakeress retired to her room at the inn. But the first to be out of the way were the officer and Archy

Baskerville. As soon as the constables had taken charge of the prisoners, the officer came up to Archy, and, pointing to a huge, dark, unlighted stone pile on a hill, set in the midst of a great park, said to him, "Yonder is Bellingham Castle."

Archy expected him to say something more, as in parting from the Oxonian he had offered his card and expressed a wish to meet again, coupled with a handsome acknowledgment of the young student's courage; but apparently the officer thought he had said enough.

"Thank you, sir," replied Archy, and then, with a forced smile, he said, "I am by no means sure of my reception. I may be going London-ward to-morrow morning." [Pg 32]

But the officer had turned away, and Archy, his usually light heart not so gay as he would have wished, struck out towards the park-gates, which he saw in the distance by the glimpses of a cloud-obscured moon.

He trudged along in bitterness of spirit for a time; but before he gained the crest of the hill and entered the broad carriage-drive that led to the great arched entrance his spirits had recovered themselves. After all, he was seeing life—a consolation which never failed to console him whenever he fell into adversity. He had almost persuaded himself that it would be a serious disadvantage to be acknowledged by his grandfather by the time he reached the door, when he pulled a huge bell that echoed and re-echoed through the great stone building. He was deeply engaged in examining, by the light of the emerging moon, the square towers at the corners, and the ancient windows, and all the peculiarities of a castle half modern and half mediæval, when the great door opened with a crunching and banging as if the hinges had not turned for a hundred years—and there, in the open doorway, illuminated by a single candle, whose rays only revealed the vast cavern of the hall beyond, stood the officer with whom Archy had just parted. [Pg 33]

"Come in, nephew," said he.

CHAPTER III

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Without a word Archy entered the vast hall. He was even self-possessed enough to help in dragging the great doors back to their places and securing them with chains and bars. Then, coolly folding his arms, his eyes travelled around the hall, gloomy but magnificent. Great gilt chandeliers hung from a noble roof; antlers and hunting trophies adorned the walls; rusty armor was plentiful, and close to him, looming up in the darkness pierced by the candle's single ray, was a manikin in armor, mounted on horseback. With lance in rest, and ghostly caverns in the casque where the eyes should be, he seemed to stand guard over that ancient place.

After a moment the officer spoke.

"Did your father never tell you of his half-uncle, near his own age—Colonel Baskerville, of the Indian service?"

Archy shook his head.

"My father told me as little as possible of his family in England. I do not even know what his quarrel with them was—only I know he felt a deep resentment against them." [Pg 35]

"He had cause," responded Colonel Baskerville. "My half-brother, Lord Bellingham, objected violently and unreasonably to your father's marriage, and it cannot be denied that he ill-treated your mother under this very roof."

Archy, whose temper was quick, and who knew how to make a prompt resolve, and then to act upon it, stood still and silent for a moment; then, turning to the door, began to fumble at the intricate fastening of the chain, saying, quietly,

"How do you get out of this place, sir?"

"Highly-tighty," replied Colonel Baskerville, good-humoredly; "what are you trying to do?"

"To get away from here," said Archy. "I think, sir, that when a man has ill-treated my mother, I ought not to stay one moment in that man's house."

"But wait. Lord Bellingham ill-treated every member of his family who dared to marry without consulting his lordship. His only daughter married Captain Langton, a gentleman of character and fortune; but Lord Bellingham, who wanted to marry her off to a duke in his dotage, never forgave her."

"That is another reason why I should not stay in the house of such an old curmudgeon," responded Archy, with spirit. [Pg 36]

"But you will, one day, be Lord Bellingham."

"No, I won't—or, rather, I can't—for I am an American."

Colonel Baskerville's first impulse was to say "Pooh." Luckily, he refrained—for if he had, Archy, whose hand was on the heavy door-knob, would have bolted out, and never, probably, would have set foot in those regions again. But Colonel Baskerville, seeing he had a hot-headed and

impetuous fellow to deal with, only said in response to this:

"Listen. I have lately heard, from a safe quarter, that my brother is deeply repentant of his treatment of his son and daughter, and would be glad to atone to their children for his injustice to their parents. No human being has the right to refuse another human being the privilege of redressing a wrong—if a wrong may ever be redressed. Therefore, I insist that you shall see your grandfather."

Archy stood silent for a moment, while the idea took lodgment in his mind that generosity and forgiveness were not the mere indulgence of an impulse, but should be a fixed principle of action. He was intelligent enough to grasp Colonel Baskerville's meaning, and presently he said:

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"You are right, sir. However, I never can benefit by my grandfather's estates, as I know that my father united in cutting the entail. As for this old rookery, it must take a fortune to keep it up."

"This old rookery, as you call it, is one of the finest specimens of the feudal age left in England. But let that pass. You are young and necessarily ignorant. No doubt my brother hopes that the family may be continued through one of his two grandsons. The other is Midshipman Hugh Langton, of his Majesty's sea-service."

"Trevor Langton!" cried Archy, breathlessly. "Of the *Seahorse* frigate?"

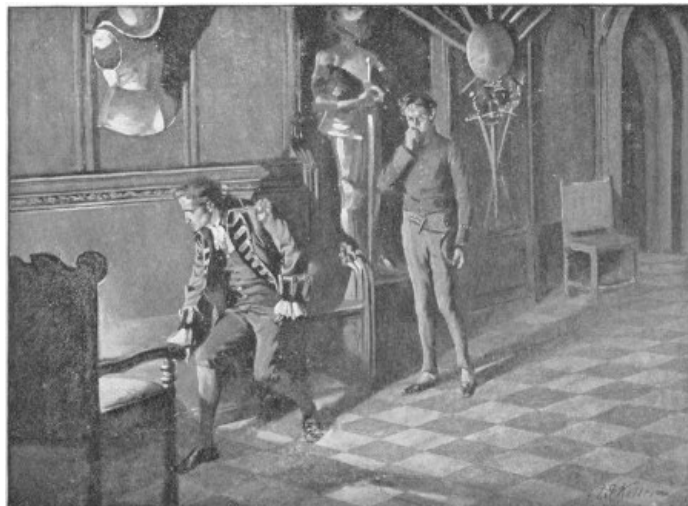
"The same. He is a gallant lad, I hear."

"Sir," said Archy, after a painful pause, "it was by a boat's crew of the *Seahorse* that I was captured—and Langton and I became great friends. I never knew we were cousins—and the *Seahorse* was lost off the coast of Spain in January, the very day I left her—and I, myself, saw Langton's body—"

Here he faltered; he could say no more.

Colonel Baskerville's grim face paled, and, putting the candle down with a shaking hand, he dropped upon the great oaken settee that was placed against the wall.

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"HE PUT THE CANDLE DOWN AND DROPPED UPON THE SETTEE"

"Poor lad! poor lad!" he said, brokenly, "and his poor mother—she was the sweetest creature. I had looked forward to seeing her again with so great happiness, and I already loved her boy."

"He was worthy to be loved," answered Archy, feeling a great sob rising in his throat. "He was the manliest fellow—"

Then there was a long silence. How strange it all was! Archy, who had lived the quietest and most prosaic of boyhoods in an American clearing on the Chesapeake Bay, seemed, from the day of his father's death, to have fallen into an odd, new world, and sometimes the strangeness of it all staggered him.

The silence continued. Colonel Baskerville, leaning his head on his hands, seemed quite overcome by the terrible news that Archy had given him.

"It will be a dreadful shock and grief to my brother," he said, after a while.

"If he had known dear Langton as I did, his grief would be greater. When I was first captured, it was not very comfortable for me in the gun-room of the *Seahorse*. You know, sir, the extreme prejudice of your naval service to Commodore Paul Jones—and the fact that I had served with him was against me, although I protest I think it the greatest honor in the world to serve under that great man. I did not let the midshipmen have it all their own way"—here the ghost of a smile came to Archy's face—"but Langton stood my friend, and I never loved any companion I ever had half so well. Perhaps, sir, after all, blood is thicker than water."

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"All that you tell me makes me grieve for him the more. Lord Bellingham, though, has a special disappointment in his death, for you, with your youth and inexperience, can scarcely understand the overwhelming desire a man like Lord Bellingham feels to transmit his title and estates to his

descendants; and he has none, except you—and I foresee he would have a hard task to make you adapt yourself to his views."

"Poor old Lord Bellingham!"

"Poor, indeed, he is, in spite of his rank and estates. I have drawn no nattering portrait of him—but, like other men, he has his good points. He is a bundle of contrariety. He is generous and cruel. He is profuse and parsimonious. He lives in two rooms in luxury, and shuts up the rest of the castle. His unkindness drove his children away from him, and he has spent thousands of pounds in trying to get information about them which one line from him would have brought. He is the finest gentleman and the most overbearing social tyrant that ever lived. He is a courtier one minute, a ruffian the next. For my part, as a younger brother with a pittance besides my pay, I early showed my independence of him—with the result that he has always treated me with kindness, and I am here now because an express met me when I landed from India, begging that I come to him at once. He is very old and feeble. But we are talking too long. You want food, and fire—and, egad! so do I. There was once a bell here—" Colonel Baskerville groped along the wall until he came to the huge cavern of a fireplace, where there was a bell-handle, but the bell-rope was broken.

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"Humph! Well, I know the way to a little breakfast-parlor, where the servant who let me in told me something would be prepared in a few minutes. So, come with me!"

Colonel Baskerville made his way out of the great hall into a long corridor, where, after innumerable windings and turnings and going up and down stairs, they came to a little, low room, where a servant in livery opened the door. A bright fire blazed upon the hearth, and some cold meat and bread and cheese and ale were set out, with splendid plate, upon a table lighted with wax candles. Archy, who had a robust young appetite, would cheerfully have dispensed with the plate and the wax candles for more luxurious fare. Nevertheless, he made great play with his knife and fork, and Colonel Baskerville was not far behind. Meanwhile, the elder man watched the younger one intently, and every moment he felt more and more the stirrings of affection in his heart—the more so when he remembered that Langton being gone, this boy was all that remained to maintain the family name and repute. Nor was he less prepossessed in Archy's favor by observing a strong family likeness to the Baskervilles. Without being so regularly handsome as the old lord, Archy was singularly like him, and Colonel Baskerville believed that when the youth's angular face and form had developed, the resemblance would be still stronger. Many little personal movements, the air and manner of speaking and walking, recalled Lord Bellingham, but Colonel Baskerville concluded it would be a rash man who would point out to the old gentleman how like him was this young rebel.

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"And for such a fine fellow to belong to the American rebels—it is not to be thought of," reflected this Royalist gentleman. "We must win him back, but we must be careful, very careful—for he is nice on the point of honor."

After Archy had devoured everything on the table he stopped eating. When supper was over the servant who waited upon them—a quiet, well-trained butler—led them to an upper floor, where two great bedrooms, with canopied beds, like catafalques, stood in the middle of each.

"I prefer this one," said Colonel Baskerville, when the servant opened the door of one, a little less vast and sepulchral than the other, but he accompanied Archy to the door of the next one.

"This, sir," began the servant, "is one of the finest bedrooms in the castle. It was occupied by the Duke of Cumberland on his return from the North after the 'forty-five.' It was for him that my lord had these purple silk bed-curtains and plumes at the corners of the tester put up."

"Did he?" said Archy, curiously eying the bed. "Well, my man, I think my lord behaved deuced unhandsome to the Duke of Cumberland in putting him in this old hearse, and I don't choose to be served the same way; so you will please 'bout face and show me the way back to the room with the fire, where I will stick it out till morning. Now, march!"

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The man, open-mouthed but dumfounded, turned to lead the way back.

"Good-night, uncle," cried Archy, gayly. "The Duke of Cumberland may submit to sleep in a hearse with feathers, but I'll be shot if an American midshipman will. So, good rest to you, and we'll beard the lion in his den to-morrow morning." And off Archy walked.

Colonel Baskerville, with a smile on his keen, intelligent face, continued looking after him.

"Ah," he said, aloud, "had your father possessed a tithe of your spirit, he would not have lived and died a morose exile in a foreign land. You'll do, my lad; you'll do." And, still smiling, he turned to his room and locked the door.

Archy lay down before the fire in the little parlor, and, wrapping himself in his fine cloak, began to think of all the strange things that had lately befallen him. His mind turned to Langton—so brave, so chivalrous. He smiled, while the tears came unbidden to his eyes, when he remembered their first meeting in the cockpit of the *Seahorse*—each stripped for a rough-and-tumble fight over the merits of the quarrel between King George and the American colonies. The fight had been a draw, but some way, without either knowing why, it had never been renewed. He and Langton had suddenly become friends, and within a week they were laughing over their scrimmage, and, in friendly bouts, testing Langton's greater weight and height against Archy's agility and ability to stand hard knocks. And then came the farewell in the boat—and afterwards,

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Langton's white face as the boiling breakers dashed him towards the rocks. With this thought in his mind Archy suddenly fell asleep, and did not awake until next morning when the sun was pouring brightly into the little room.

Breakfast was served in the same room to Colonel Baskerville and Archy—and a slim breakfast it was. Archy's face grew three-quarters of a yard long when Diggory, the servant of the night before, with a great flourish removed the silver covers to show a little toast and a few rashers of bacon in the dishes. Colonel Baskerville burst out laughing.

"Look, Diggory," he said, "you are not catering now for a gouty old gentleman like his lordship, but for an old campaigner like myself and a midshipman like Mr. Baskerville; and go you and bring us some eggs, and whatever you can lay your fingers upon, and remember to stock the commissary for dinner."

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Diggory went out, and presently reappeared with some additions, and they made a tolerable breakfast; but Archy remarked that he was not surprised at his father leaving Bellingham Castle, if that was the fare he was fed upon.

"And now," said Colonel Baskerville, "I shall go to my brother, and he will probably send for you shortly. And I—as I particularly wish you to make a good impression on him—I advise you to send to the village for your portmanteau and put on some other clothes, for my brother will be sure to resent violently your wearing the American uniform."

"He appears to have resented violently what all of his family did, without considering the clothes they wore; but, uncle, I tell you I will not take off this uniform. I have my parole, which protects me; and if I ever give this uniform up, to anybody's threats or persuasions, I give up my character as a prisoner of war—and that, seems to me, would be a great blunder—so, if Lord Bellingham does not like my clothes—well, I have some money left, and I can get to France on my parole; and, in short, uncle, I am, like you, independent of my grandfather."

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"You are a very rash and headstrong young man," was Colonel Baskerville's reply, "but you will learn to be less so if you have any brains at all. You will not be sent for, I am sure, before noon, so you will have time to examine the castle and park, if you like."

Colonel Baskerville went out, and Archy, nothing loath, began his examination of the place. As he knew that he and Colonel Baskerville would have to go to the village later in the day to give their evidence of the attempt at highway-robbery, he chose rather to examine the interior of the castle. He spent hours going over it—later on he was to spend days in the same employment—and every moment his respect for the "old rookery" increased. First he went to the great hall. Built in the reign of Henry VIII., it was a noble specimen of sixteenth-century architecture. The beauty of the groined roof was clearly visible by the morning light, that streamed in the long, narrow slits of windows. On every side hung dented armor and helmets that had evidently seen service, and Archy felt a natural thrill of pride at remembering that these sturdy fighting men were his forefathers. Besides the armor, there were on the walls every conceivable variety of ancient weapon—the long arquebuse of Elizabethan days, claymores taken from the Scottish knights and gentlemen who defended Mary Stuart at Langside, the huge swords carried by Cromwell's Ironsides—and all, Archy felt, with a stirring history attached to them. That motionless knight in armor, with his iron-bound legs sticking stiffly out from the sides of his stuffed horse, tremendous spurs fastened to his boots of Spanish leather, and his lance in rest, seemed to stand watch and ward over this storehouse of dead and gone valor. Archy could scarcely tear himself away; but a door in the distance, half open, gave him a glimpse of a long, low picture-gallery, its walls glowing with color, and he walked nimbly towards it. Yes, it was very, very beautiful. It was much less sombre than the hall, and girandoles placed thickly along the wall showed that it could be illuminated by night as well as day. If the arms and accoutrements of these people pleased him, how much more did their counterfeit presentments! The first portrait on which his eye fell was "Sir Archibald Baskerville, Baronet, 1620-1676, general in the army of the Commonwealth, concerned in battles of Edgehill and Marston Moor, and in the capture of Charles I. Voted in Parliament for the King's release on parole, and on the execution of the King retired to his seat, Bellingham Castle, where he was arrested by Cromwell's order and imprisoned for several years, but was finally released and his estate restored to him by Charles II."

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Well, that Archibald Baskerville was a brave and successful rebel, thought Archy, and perhaps his descendant may have even better fortune.

"Rather a hard-looking beggar, though—looks like the highwayman I knocked down last night. I certainly have the advantage of him in having the air of an honest fellow and a gentleman," was Archy's inward comment. But there were scores of others besides Sir Archibald. There were grave judges and frowning admirals, and a bishop or two, besides many red-faced country gentlemen—and the first Lord Bellingham—a laced and powdered dandy of the days of Queen Anne. And there were staid old dowagers, and round-faced matrons, and groups of quaint children, and my Lady Bellingham in farthingale and hoop, and some fair young girls, now, alas! but dust and ashes. As in the hall, Archy would have lingered, but still ahead of him he saw a pair of beautifully carved doors of black oak, and examining them, and turning the wrought-iron handles, he entered a great square room, as large as the entrance-hall, and all books from top to bottom. Archy paused, actually awe-stricken, for, although he had lately given but little time to books, he loved and respected them from the bottom of his heart, and he respected the people who had spent such vast sums on learning.

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The room was low-ceiled, and the many windows were from the roof to the floor; and over and above all was that air of quiet, of studious retirement, which is the very aroma of the true library.

As Archy's eyes travelled around this charming apartment, he noticed there were some busts and a few pictures, and as he advanced into the room he saw, just over the door by which he had entered, a picture with its face to the wall. It did not take Archy long to scramble up by the door and get a good look at the picture, and after a glimpse he deliberately, and with some trouble, turned it face outward, wiped it off carefully with his handkerchief, slipped down from his perch, and, advancing to the middle of the room, stood gazing at it with moist eyes, in which a gleam of anger shone, too, for it was his father's portrait. There was no mistaking it, although it represented a youth of about Archy's age; but the clear-cut, melancholy face, with the deep eyes and thin lips—it was life-like. Whatever the elder Archibald Baskerville's failings were—and they had been many, a violent and morose temper among them—his only child had loved and respected him. One determination had dwelt in Archy's heart ever since he could remember, and that was never to let any one cast, even by implication, a slur upon his father without resenting it as far as he could. Perhaps a dim, instinctive knowledge that his father was, in truth, a very faulty man was the mainspring of this feeling. But Archy was by nature loyal, and not afraid to show his loyalty; and the same spirit which had made him, when a little lad, fly furiously at other lads who dared, with childish cruelty, to taunt him with his father's silence and moroseness and singularity, made him now promptly show that he thought his father's picture worthy of a place of honor.

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While Archy was looking at the portrait with earnest eyes he heard a step behind him, and there stood Major Baskerville.

"What do you think of the old rookery now?" he asked.

"I never dreamed of anything like it," was Archy's sincere reply.

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Colonel Baskerville smiled, and then said:

"Lord Bellingham wishes to see you in his own room, and," he added, with a smile, "I wish he had asked me to be present at the meeting. It will be rare sport."

"Do you think so, sir?" answered Archy, airily, and flushed with his achievement regarding the picture.

"I know it. He has never been defied in his life. I did not defy him. I simply went my own way as a younger half-brother with little to hope or fear from him. But you are his natural heir, and, although he can keep you out of the property, he can't keep you out of the title if you want it."

"But I don't want it, and can't use it, sir; and as to his keeping me out of the property, some of that would be precious little use to me. What would I do with a castle? I am a sailor, sir, and I would rather have a seventy-four than all the castles in England. So here goes."

And Archy marched off to meet Lord Bellingham, not wholly unprepared what to say and do.

CHAPTER IV

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As Archy entered a room adjoining the library corridor, Lord Bellingham rose to receive him.

The boy's first impression was that his grandfather was the handsomest old man he had ever seen. Not very tall, but perfectly well made, with beautiful, pale, unwrinkled features, and a pair of the darkest, clearest, brightest eyes imaginable, Lord Bellingham might well be believed the handsomest man of his day. He was elegantly dressed in black satin coat and knee-breeches, with black silk stockings and black shoes with diamond buckles on his delicate, high-arched feet. His hair was powdered, although it was in the morning, and the dandy of the Court of George II. was still a dandy, even in his Northern fastness.

The day was mild, but a bright fire burned upon the hearth, and a black velvet cloak, thrown over the chair, was evidently for use then and there.

The impression made upon Archy was great and immediate, and Lord Bellingham had no reason to find fault with him for any want of deference when he advanced and shook his grandfather's hand in silence, and then waited to be addressed.

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"Grandson," said Lord Bellingham, in a musical voice with no touch of the tremor of age, "I had, some weeks ago, a letter from my excellent friend, Admiral Kempenfelt, telling me of you."

"The Admiral was most kind to me, sir." There was a pause, and then Lord Bellingham suddenly asked:

"May I inquire your plans for the future?" Archy studied a moment or two before answering, and then said, quietly:

"I propose to await an exchange of prisoners which will shortly take place in France. Then I shall join Commodore Jones again."

At this a deep-red flush overspread Lord Bellingham's face; he clinched his hands, and seemed about to burst into a torrent of wrath, but restrained himself. When he spoke, it was to say, in a cold voice:

"I had a grandson—Trevor Langton—who was in his Majesty's service, and a loyal officer of his Majesty. It has been my hard fate to lose him—and to find you!"

"Sir," said Archy, firmly, "although you have found me, you are not obliged to keep me. I came here on the recommendation of Admiral Kempenfelt. I have some money, and when I get my share of the *Bon Homme Richard's* prize-money I shall have plenty—the *Serapis*, sir, was a very valuable ship, and worth a hundred of our poor old *Richard*. I am ready to go away to-day—now, this moment, if you wish me."

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Lord Bellingham's reply to this was to seize the fire-tongs and vigorously attack the sea-coal fire. The tongs, however, becoming interlocked in some way, he suddenly threw them violently across the room, where they struck a marble bust of the philosopher Plato—the apostle of mildness—and smashed the nose off. So far from agitating Lord Bellingham, this accident seemed to compose him, and he calmly remarked:

"I feel relieved. My temper is peculiar, and I find that by giving it vent in some noisy but harmless manner I am soonest calmed."

Archy's response to this was to burst into a suppressed guffaw of laughter, which his grandfather perceiving, he also smiled.

"Rebellion seems to sit lightly on you, boy," he said, presently. "I have had some experience of what rebellion means. During the rising in '45 I was suspected of disloyalty. I had known the Young Pretender in Rome when I was on the grand tour, and we were much together—ah, they were wild days! After my return I was for some years at Court, although I disdained any appointment. At the time of the rising I happened to be here, and entertained the Duke of Cumberland on his way to the North. When everything was over, and the prisoners from Culloden were being marched southward, what was my surprise to find myself among them, mounted on a horse whose bridle was led by a foot-soldier, with orders to shoot me dead if I attempted to escape. When we reached London I had no difficulty in clearing myself from suspicion without a formal trial, and the King was pleased to admit me to his levee immediately after my release. The Lords Bellingham had been counted as among the Tory nobility, and that was one reason that suspicion fell on me; and my enemies magnified some former acts of civility to Charles Edward into complicity with him."

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"But, sir," asked Archy, very earnestly, "did you really—er—a—I mean—did you not in your heart wish him to succeed?" It was now Lord Bellingham's turn to smile.

"If I had, I should be now probably dwelling in a cave in America."

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"We are not cave-dwellers, sir. We have excellent, good houses. But you had better luck when you were captured than I when I was captured at the Texel, for I was chased along the sand and marshes by the *Seahorse's* men—and knocked down, and flung into their boat as if I had been a lame puppy—and when I tried to cry out, I was choked by a great monster of a boatswain's mate, and told they would chuck me overboard if I did not choke my luff—and they would have done it, too, sir! And then," added Archy, slyly, "you would have been spared the finding of me."

"Young man, you have a gift of repartee. Be careful how you use it."

"I did not know, sir, until now, that I had any such gift. But when a man enters the naval service"—Archy was barely sixteen, but he swelled out his breast and stretched up his lithe, handsome figure as much as he could—"he is forced to learn to take care of himself. If he does not, certainly nobody will take care of him."

"I suppose," said Lord Bellingham, "since, articles of exchange have been agreed upon, it would be best for you to remain here until you are regularly exchanged. Then I hope you will be persuaded to return to your allegiance to your King and country."

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"Pardon me, sir," replied Archy, rising at once, "it is not customary for officers on parole to listen to such propositions."

"Not from their own families, eh?"

"My family has not been sufficiently kind to me to warrant them in advising me in a matter so delicate. My father gave me permission, before his death, to enlist in the naval service of the colonies—and with his warrant I need no other."

"Your father was not so respectful to the wishes of *his* father. But, be seated again. I am now an old man—childless, for my only remaining child, Trevor Langton's mother, has long been estranged from me. Had her son lived, we might have been reconciled—I deserve some indulgence. Stay here for a time at least."

It seemed to Archy that Lord Bellingham did not have much claim to indulgence, judging by what those who knew him best said of him. But, in truth, Archy was fascinated by his grandfather's interesting personality. He wanted to see more of so odd a character—and the consciousness of having at least enough money to get back to London whenever he wished, and last, but not least, some faint awakening of the tie of blood, determined him.

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"I will stay, sir," he said, presently. "I think my father would perhaps wish me to—and my mother—I do not remember her, but—" he paused suddenly. Ought he to stay?

"For your mother, I can only say that I had no fault to find with her except that she married my son. My ebullitions of temper were mistaken as insults to her—but it has always been my misfortune to have these trifling and inconsequent faults magnified and mistaken."

Lord Bellingham's novel view of himself nearly caused Archy to explode with laughter again—but he had begun to want to stay a while at Bellingham Castle, and, like most people, he had but little difficulty in persuading himself that what he wished to do was the best thing to be done, so he presently agreed.

Lord Bellingham then began asking him questions about his life in America, and Archy, nothing loath, plunged into a description of it, telling of the abounding plenty of the colonists, his own pleasant boyhood on the Chesapeake, the splendors of the viceregal court at Williamsburg—these splendors did not become the less in the telling, and Archy was not without gifts as a story-teller.

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Lord Bellingham listened with the deepest interest. The story of this new, free, fresh life beyond the seas was fascinating to the old man, reared in courts, and spending his later days in luxurious and eccentric solitude. And without in the least suspecting it, Archy was every moment growing in grace in his grandfather's eyes. Here was no hobbledohoy, but a handsome stripling, already with some knowledge of the world, fearless, frank, and quick of wit. Before either of them realized how time was flying, the shadows grew long, and Diggory, appearing at the door, announced his lordship's dinner.

"Request Colonel Baskerville to dine with me to-day. You, grandson, will remain."

As Archy had an idea that his grandfather's dinner was considerably better than what Diggory chose to provide for his uncle and himself in the little parlor, he agreed with alacrity, and in a few moments the three were sitting around a small round table glittering with plate, where an elaborate dinner was served.

Every moment that Archy passed with Colonel Baskerville he felt more and more drawn towards him. He had been through stirring scenes in India with Lord Clive and Warren Hastings, and when questioned by Lord Bellingham, he told of them so interestingly that all three forgot the hour, and they were interrupted by a message from the village asking them to come and give their testimony at the inquiry about the attempted robbery.

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When they returned it was night, and there was no invitation to join Lord Bellingham at supper; but Diggory, acting under secret instructions, provided them with an excellent supper. Scarcely were they through when a request came from Lord Bellingham that Colonel Baskerville wait upon him in his own room. Archy, left alone, provided himself with a book from the library, and, mending the fire and trimming the candles, seated himself for a long and delightful evening of reading. But presently the book fell from his hand, and he began thinking over the rapid events of the last year, and then his mind turned towards Langton. So young, so brave—Archy thought he had never met a more gallant fellow—and so quiet withal—the favorite alike of officers and men. He began to wonder how, in their many long talks, nothing had ever revealed to each other their relationship. But he remembered that he instinctively avoided all mention of his family, a trait learned from his father, who had never even told him of any relations named Langton. And Langton's mother had probably, for the same melancholy reason, kept him in the dark also. While these thoughts were passing through his mind, hours slipped away. The candles were burned to their sockets when Colonel Baskerville appeared.

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"I have spent the evening with my brother, talking about you," he said to Archy, seating himself. "You seem to have politely defied him, and thereby conquered him."

"If he thinks I mean to give up my country—" began Archy.

"Tush! You can do nothing until you are twenty-one. But I think I can promise you that nothing will be left undone to charm you with England, and with your place as Lord Bellingham's heir. He asked me about your clothes, and I explained about the uniform—ha! ha!"

Colonel Baskerville laughed outright at the recollection.

Next morning Archy went to the library for another look at his father's portrait. To his indignation, he found it turned to the wall again. Archy then, locking the door to be secure from interruption, carefully and deliberately turned every picture in the library to the wall. Then, with an air of triumph, he met Diggory's eye when that functionary came to him with a message that Lord Bellingham desired to see him. At that interview Lord Bellingham mentioned that he had sent to York for a full supply of clothes for Archy, for which Archy thanked him politely.

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That very night, on going to his room—not the Duke of Cumberland's, but a smaller and less splendid one—he found two large boxes of clothes. Archy, who was by nature a dandy, examined them with pleasure. There were three very elegant suits, two of them laced, a quantity of linen, and a fine flowered dressing-gown.

When he rose next morning he was surprised and annoyed to find that his shabby continental navy uniform had disappeared mysteriously, and in its place lay a handsome cloth riding-suit. He remembered that Diggory had come into the room to make the fire, and he suspected the clothes had gone out under Diggory's arm. A shout in the corridor brought Diggory—but he stolidly

protested that he knew nothing about the clothes.

"He is lying," thought Archy; "but I will be even with him, and my grandfather too." So, dressing himself, but putting on his gay dressing-gown instead of a coat and waistcoat, he coolly walked down to breakfast. Colonel Baskerville laughed at the apparition, and he laughed still more when Archy afterwards gravely paced up and down the terrace in full view of his grandfather's windows. After a while he started off, through the park, towards the village. A window was flung up behind him, and Colonel Baskerville's voice called out:

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"Lord Bellingham desires to know where you are going?"

"To the village, sir."

"In that rig?"

"I have no other, sir. My clothes have been stolen." And off Archy marched, the dressing-gown flapping about his knees.

Just as he reached the park gates he heard some one pursuing him at a quick trot. It was Diggory.

"Lord, sir, here are your clothes! His lordship is near having a fit at home, swearing most awful, and Colonel Baskerville laughing like to kill—and I ran and fetched the clothes."

"Next time you take my clothes, you impudent lackey, I will break some of your worthless bones for you," was Archy's reply. And with Diggory's assistance, in the middle of the roadway, he put on his well-beloved, shabby blue uniform, and went calmly on his way to the village.

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CHAPTER V

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Several weeks passed by and, as Colonel Baskerville had predicted, nothing was left undone to make Archy feel how desirable a position Lord Bellingham's grandson and heir would hold. Every afternoon his grandfather sent for him, and talked long and interestingly to him, telling of the early days at the court of George II., describing splendid court functions to him, and impressing upon him with great art the important position that the Baron of Bellingham would always hold, both socially and politically—for Lord Bellingham had the disposal of three seats in Parliament.

Archy listened attentively enough, but the effect of much that he heard was directly the contrary of what his grandfather expected. Archy was quite sharp enough to realize that many of the usual advantages of rank did not appeal to him, while its restrictions were almost intolerable. He saw that the possession of a great name and estate, and all the vast privileges of a peer in the eighteenth century, had only intensified all of his grandfather's faults, his violent temper, his dictatorial disposition—and had neutralized his talents, which were considerable. The sight of an irritable, eccentric old man leading a life of perfect solitude, estranged from all his family except his half-brother, and using every art of cajolery to make himself tolerable to his only grandson, was not an inspiring one to a boy of Archy Baskerville's high and daring spirit and inborn love of adventure.

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Nevertheless, Lord Bellingham showed signs of softening, which were more surprising to Colonel Baskerville and the rest of his household than to Archy, who had seen really the best of him. He seemed to take a melancholy interest in hearing of Langton's many fine qualities and personal charm—and one day, after a long conversation with Archy, Lord Bellingham said, almost as if talking to himself:

"My poor daughter—what misery to lose such a son!"

A day or two after that Colonel Baskerville said to Archy, in his usual kind but curt manner:

"You have done a good thing in speaking of Langton to your grandfather. He has this day written to his daughter—the first time for twenty years. He is really becoming quite human."

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Lord Bellingham, however, seemed to be ashamed of any soft or generous impulse, and harangued Archy upon the subject of his daughter and her son as if the real sorrow was not Langton's death, but the loss of a possible heir to the Bellingham estates—and as for the title, he seemed to regard Archy's indifference to it as something sacrilegious.

"All titles are not honorable, sir," said Archy. "There is Sir Henry Clinton, the British commander at New York. He is called the Prince of Blunderers. Nothing pleasant about that, sir."

Lord Bellingham showed his appreciation of this news about Sir Henry Clinton by giving a savage kick to a chair near him, which in its turn knocked over a table with candles on it, and only Archy's quickness prevented a fire on the spot. When quiet was restored, this young American, in perfect good faith, and thinking himself rather a clever fellow for hitting upon a solution of the question of the estates, came near bringing a hurricane of wrath down on himself.

"There are two girls, sir. Langton has often told me of his sisters, and you could give the estates to them."

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"Girls!" almost shrieked Lord Bellingham, and then relapsed into a state of silent fury at the idea that Bellingham should go to two girls. Archy looked deeply hurt at the way his remark had been received, and left his grandfather's presence with an air of haughtiness ridiculously like the old man's, which caused Colonel Baskerville to laugh heartily at the scene. But Archy made no more suggestions as to the disposition of the Bellingham estates.

At the end of December the assizes were held at York, and Lord Bellingham, as Lord-lieutenant of the North Riding, was to attend them in state.

"And I should be glad, my dear Archibald, to have your company in the coach," said the old gentleman, in a tone of dulcet softness, having forgiven Archy his maladroit speech.

Archy, who would walk ten miles any day to see a fine show, readily agreed. Nothing was said about clothes; but when Archy carefully examined his blue uniform that night, he found that it was indeed on its last legs. His elbows were out, his knees were but little better, and, worse than all, he was shooting up so tall and filling out so fast that he had completely outgrown both jacket and trousers. There was no help for it; Archy laid his beloved shabby uniform away carefully, and next morning appeared at breakfast in the handsome brown riding-suit.

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Colonel Baskerville noted it with an approving nod.

"I fully reckoned on your getting a broken head, sooner or later, for wearing your American uniform. It was foolhardy; but I perceive, nephew, you are inclined to be foolhardy."

"The French, sir, called Captain Jones foolhardy when he sailed into the narrow seas with the *Ranger* sloop, and they had fifty-five sail of the line holding on to their anchors at L'Orient; but he came back all safe, and brought the *Drake* with him. And they said he was worse than foolhardy when he went out in the poor old *Bon Homme Richard*; but he came back again, and that time he brought the *Serapis*—huzza!" Here Archy got up and cut a pigeon-wing, nearly upsetting Diggory with a tray full of cups and saucers.

"Let me tell you one thing, young man," remarked Colonel Baskerville, coolly; "you have a very clever trick of always having the last word, but don't imagine for a moment that it proves you are always right. Clever tricks count for but little in the long-run."

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Archy went into a brown-study at this remark, and at the end of ten minutes came out of it to say:

"Uncle, I believe you know a great deal, one way and another."

"Hear! hear!" said Colonel Baskerville, sarcastically. "A young gentleman not yet seventeen gracefully admits that a man three times his age actually knows something! You amaze me, nephew."

"I don't admit that I don't know anything," stoutly protested Archy.

"Far from it, my dear boy. You know more now than you ever will, if you live to be a hundred. Every year of your life you will know less—in your own estimation, that is. But at present you have nothing to learn."

At which Archy laughed rather sheepishly, and went on with his breakfast.

Immediately after breakfast the splendid coach-and-four, with outriders, was drawn up at the main entrance, and Lord Bellingham appeared, magnificently dressed, with his breast covered with orders, and a diamond-hilted sword on his hip. He entered the coach, taking the middle of the back seat, while Colonel Baskerville and Archy sat facing him.

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It was a beautifully clear December morning, and when the horses took the road through the park at a rattling gait, it was exhilarating in the highest degree. Colonel Baskerville's plain but kindly face lighted up, and even Lord Bellingham seemed to feel a briskness in the blood. But Archy grew unaccountably grave. He had an indefinable feeling that he was leaving it all for the last time, and caught himself involuntarily looking around at the gray old castle on the hill, the slopes of the park on which the red deer stood peacefully feeding, the low chain of blue hills in the distance, as if he were saying farewell to them—nor could he shake off this singular impression during the whole drive.

At the park gates they were joined by the mounted yeomanry, and every parish they passed through sent its quota, until, when they reached the old minster city of York, they had a great cavalcade behind them. The venerable town was in holiday garb. The trainbands were out, with fife and drum; the sheriffs and lord-lieutenants of all three ridings were present in state; and the judges in their robes awaited the forming of the procession to the assize hall.

The life, the color, the masses of people who filled the picturesque streets of the beautiful old town, were captivating to Archy—but what amazed him most was to see a number of man-o'-warsmen about. He was not long in finding out that there was a large fleet at the mouth of the Humber, and these were liberty men who had come to York in wagons to spend their few hours of shore time.

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But Archy was himself a sailor, and he began to consider that captains were not wont to allow men so far inland merely for a day's holiday, and the presence of several officers threw a flood of light on the question.

"They are press-gangs," he thought to himself. "The fleet, I have heard, is short-handed, and they

have selected some of the trustiest fellows and sent them here with their officers, and many a stout countryman will sleep to-morrow night on one of his Majesty's ships."

But Archy soon became so taken up with the splendid pageant of opening the assizes that he forgot the sailors for the time. The highwayman and his accomplice, the coachman of the Comet, were to be tried at that term, but Archy soon found that the trial would not come off until the next day, and his testimony would not be wanted until then. All was grand and imposing until the prisoners were brought in, but the sight of so much misery and wickedness smote the boy to the heart, and he quickly left the favored position he occupied in the hall, and went out and walked about the streets.

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The sitting of the Court was unusually prolonged, and the short December day was rapidly closing in before the procession was again formed, with something less of state, to return to the grand dinner served to the judges and all the great functionaries. In the evening there was to be a splendid assize ball, and while wretches were bemoaning the sentences of death or transportation they had received, and trembling prisoners waited in anguish the coming of their turn of trial, a splendid company assembled for the ball. But the same strange feeling of oppression still hung upon Archy. The sights he had seen were very brilliant, but there was something in the very word Assize that sobered him.

After dinner he slipped quietly away from Colonel Baskerville, and joining the crowd outside the noble building where the ball was to be held, watched the assembling of the guests. Among the last to come was his grandfather. Never had Lord Bellingham looked more superb than when he descended from his coach, bowing right and left to the cheering crowd. He was an unpopular man, a hard landlord, and overbearing to his equals—but he was noble to look at, and the unthinking crowd cheered him because of that.

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Archy felt no inclination to enter the ballroom then, and wrapping his cloak around him, he sauntered away into the distant streets, now silent and deserted under the quiet stars.

He was thinking deeply and rather sadly—trying to imagine how his father had walked those streets twenty years before—recalling Langton, and pitying his grandfather's coming loneliness when both he and Colonel Baskerville left him—for he had made up his mind to go to London with Colonel Baskerville shortly, and to see what his prospects of exchange were. He wandered on and on, until he found himself in a remote corner of the town, opposite a quaint, old-fashioned inn, its spacious tap-room opening on a level with the street.

Inside were a number of sailors and countrymen, and slightly separated from them, in little box-like compartments, were two or three naval officers. Archy was surprised at this at first, but he soon reasoned it out for himself.

"It is a regular raid they are planning," he thought, "and the officers are there to quietly direct. Oh, there will be a love of a scrimmage!" and this notion proving very enticing, Archy entered, and calling for bread and cheese and ale, seated himself in one of the little boxes by the fire.

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The landlady, a handsome, middle-aged woman, and her three buxom daughters, he soon guessed were in the plot with the officers, who spent their money freely, and kept the landlord and all his assistants on the trot. One party at a table particularly attracted his attention. There were half a dozen sailors who let on, in their characteristically imprudent way, that they had lately been paid off at Plymouth, and being north-country men, were on their way home to see their relatives instead of spending their money in riot and dissipation in Plymouth and London. One of them, a hale, handsome, well-made man of about fifty, particularly struck Archy's eye.

"You won't stand much of a chance, my fine fellow, with a press-gang," thought Archy, admiring the old sailor's brawny figure and fine, sailor-like air, "nor your mates either, and if I were out on a press for men I don't know but I would be as quick to nab you as anybody."

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Besides the main door, there was another door opening upon a corridor that led to the courtyard, and through this corridor passed the landlord and his wife and daughters, and the waiters, serving the guests. Presently Archy saw an officer get up nonchalantly, open the door slightly, then close it, and the landlady quietly barred and locked it. Archy, however, had a momentary glimpse down the corridor, and he caught sight of a huge covered wagon, with four horses, drawn up in the court-yard.

Five minutes afterwards every light went out like magic, leaving only the half-light of a blazing sea-coal fire; the front door was clapped to, and as if by a preconcerted effort a dozen sailors dashed at the seafaring men seated at the middle table, others made a rush for several countrymen quietly munching bread and cheese, and a general mêlée was in order.

After the first moment of surprise, the sailors did not have it all their own way, and a tremendous uproar followed. It seemed to be quite free from any of the enmities of a fight, though, and the landlord, standing off impartially, grinned, while the landlady and her three daughters seemed to consider it the height of a frolic. The three officers on the edge of the struggling crowd shouted out orders, and several brawny countrymen were secured after a hard scuffle. But the sailors at the middle table were used to that sort of thing, and it was plain that the press-gang had its work cut out to capture these men. The next thing they did, after fighting off the first onslaught, was to throw themselves like a battering-ram against the door leading to the corridor, the main door being much too heavy and too securely fastened for them to break it down. The corridor door gave way with a crash as they hurled themselves against it, but a dozen sailors rushed to it, and

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fought them back step by step. The men, led by the handsome old fellow that Archy had admired, held their ground stoutly, but they were slowly driven back from the door, only to intrench themselves behind the long tables, where, brandishing chairs, shovels and tongs, sticks, and anything else they could lay hold of, they jeered at the sailors with cutlasses, and dared them to come on.

"Catch that old fellow, my lads—he's the best topman in the service," bawled one of the officers, and in response to this half a dozen men surrounded the old sailor, who, armed with the kitchen poker, made it fly around like a flail. During all this uproar and confusion Archy had sat still in his corner, a perfectly disinterested observer; but when he saw a young sailor suddenly begin to crawl under the table to seize the old man by the legs, Archy could not remain neutral another minute. He made a dash at the young fellow, and, seizing him by the legs in turn, immediately found himself in the thick of the fight.

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The men who were to be pressed, encouraged by their new recruit, who yelled out, "Stick to it, my lads! Don't let 'em take you against your will!" made a sortie from behind the table, valiantly led by Archy with his sword; but this rash proceeding proved disastrous—they were quickly overpowered by numbers, and every one of them finally captured. They made a desperate fight for their new ally, and protected him to the end, the old sailor being the last to succumb; but when Archy's fortunes seemed most desperate, he suddenly found a friend in the landlady.

"Hey, there!" exclaimed this sturdy Amazon. "Let the young gentleman alone. He ain't no man for a press-gang!" And with that she pushed her way between the struggling, shouting men, and, planting herself firmly before Archy, cried out, brandishing a canister of snuff she had snatched off the mantel-piece, "The first man as lays hold on this here young gentleman gets snuff in his eyes. And you, Hizzy, Betsy, and Nancy, come here and help me to keep this sweet young gentleman out o' the way o' them murderin' ruffians, bad luck to 'em!"

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THE LANDLADY STOOD BETWEEN ARCHY AND THE OFFICER

Hizzy, Betsy, and Nancy, three great, strapping girls, each bigger than Archy, ran forward at this. Hizzy, pulling out a table-drawer and handing a rolling-pin to Betsy and another to Nancy, armed herself with a tremendous pair of shears, and, marching to her mother's side, prepared to defend "the sweet young gentleman."

The officers and men, disconcerted for a moment by the sudden move on the part of the women, fell back, laughing.

"Please, sir," said one of the sailors, with a broad grin, to the officers, "we knows how to fight men, but we ain't used to handlin' women—and we leaves 'em to our betters."

The landlady, who had heretofore made no objection to the rumpus going on, now suddenly discovered that it was a very outrageous proceeding, and began to harangue at the top of her lungs.

"Nice goings on, this, for a respectable tavern! Next thing we'll be up afore a justice and have our license took away! And arter takin' away our customers, peaceable men as pays their score, you wants to nab with your beastly press-gang a beautiful young gentleman, with a handsome cloak and silk stockings. But never you mind, my darlin', we'll keep them murderin' ruffians off and send you home to your lady mother"—this last to the hero of this tale, who, in his heart, somewhat resented the language of his rescuers.

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"Madam," explained one of the officers, in a tone of the mildest argument, "we are exceedingly sorry to cause your ladyship and your ladyship's lovely daughters any inconvenience, but that young gentleman we mean to have, to serve as we please, for his insolence in daring to resist the King's officers; so here goes"—and at this he made a dash forward, and, seizing the landlady round the waist, attempted to drag her away. But the Amazon, as good as her word, gave him a

shower of snuff in the face. His two brother officers, coming to his rescue, were so unmercifully whacked on the head with the rolling-pins in the hands of Betsy and Nancy, while Hizzy jabbed at them with the shears, that they soon found it prudent to retire amid the roars of laughter of both victors and vanquished. They presently returned to the charge; and now beheld Mr. Archibald Baskerville, late midshipman on the continental ship *Bon Homme Richard*, dodging back and forth behind the women's petticoats, and always managing to keep the buxom form of one of their ladyships, as the officer had called them, between him and his assailants. Meanwhile, what with the scuffle, the sneezing from the snuff which the landlady had so freely distributed, and the roars of laughter with which the combat was witnessed, the cries and shouts, there was a noise like Bedlam; but Archy, anxiously dodging hither and yon, found nothing to laugh at in his somewhat grotesque circumstances. The fight was desperate, the manœuvring masterly—but, at last, a young lieutenant with a long arm seized Archy from behind Hizzy's skirts, and giving him a clip on the ear, he suddenly fell over, and the world became a blank to him; he heard not another sound and knew nothing more of the fight with the press-gang.

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CHAPTER VI

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When Archy came to himself he was lying in a comfortable berth in a cabin on board ship. This much he dimly realized when he waked as if from a long and dreamless sleep. It took him a little while to understand this. At first it seemed quite natural; he thought he was on the old *Bon Homme Richard*; and when the faint memories of Bellingham Castle and his grandfather and Colonel Baskerville floated into his mind, he thought it was a half-forgotten dream. But by degrees his clouded intelligence grew clear, he remembered everything—the fight in the tavern, the blow that deprived him of consciousness—and, suddenly raising himself in his berth, he began to bawl, "Halloo, there! Halloo!"

A quiet man who had been sitting just outside the cabin door came in at this.

"I wish to be put ashore instantly," said Archy, angrily. "I was carried off by a lot of villains in a press-gang last night, and I demand to see the captain and to be sent ashore immediately—immediately, do you hear?"

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The quiet man grinned exasperatingly. "I reckons, sir, 'twill be a good while afore your foot touches dry land. We are now in the Bay of Biscay, latitude 47 degrees, longitude 3 east from Greenwich, as I hearn the sailing-master tell the cap'n just now—and he'd be mighty willin' to oblige you, but I hardly thinks as he'll be able to set you ashore immediate."

"Where am I?" asked Archy, in a dazed way. "What ship is this?"

"This here ship, sir, is the *Royal George*, flag-ship of Rear-Admiral Digby, Cap'n Fulke, and we are carryin' all the sail that dratted convoy will let us for Gibralt, with the rest o' Sir George Rodney's fleet—good luck to 'em."

It took several minutes for Archy to digest this. He was too staggered by what he had heard to make any further inquiries, but his quiet friend proved communicative enough.

"You're in the sick-bay of the *Royal George*, sir, and I'm the sick-bay nurse. It seems as how the officers thought as they'd git a good press at the York Assizes. We was layin' off the mouth of the Humber, waitin' for the rest o' the convoy from Ireland, and some o' the men deserted, though we had left Plymouth o' purpose, as soon as we got our complement, to keep the men aboard. But they got away in spite o' our keepin' a sharp lookout, and the officers, as I say, went to look after some others to fill their places. You took a hand in a scrimmage, sir, in a tavern, and the officers wanted to nab you just to git even with you; but that blow on the head was unexpected sharp. Just as you dropped they heard the constables coming. York ain't no seaport town, and the constables don't know enough to let a press-gang alone while it is mindin' its own business; so our men had to cut and run, and they brought you off with 'em, sir, thinkin' you'd peach on 'em if they left you behind. But they meant, as soon as daylight come, to leave you at some village on the road and let you make your way back to York, for they see you was a gentleman, sir. When daylight come, though, you was still layin' like a log, and they was right at the place where the boat was to meet 'em; and when they got down to the mouth o' the Humber there lay the *Royal George* with the bluepeter flying, so they just had to hustle you on board and turn you over to the surgeon, or else leave you to die on the shore. So they brought you off, and that's six days ago, and this is the first time, sir, you have opened your peepers since, and I must go and tell the surgeon."

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Archy lay there alone for a few moments, feeling strangely weak. The reaction of his first awakening was upon him. Presently, a tall, raw-boned, red-headed surgeon entered, and introduced himself in a manner not unkind.

"I am Dr. MacBean—at your service, sir. Glad to see you so much better. You have had a close shave in more ways than one"—Archy put his hand to his head to find that every hair had been shaved off, and his head was as bare as a peeled onion—"but we have pulled you through. I suppose you remember the circumstances of your finding yourself with our men."

"I remember the fight with the press-gang, but I got a blow that stunned me, and don't recollect

anything more."

"We saw that you were a gentleman, sir, as soon as you were brought aboard, and we regretted the anxiety your family and friends must feel on your account. No doubt Admiral Digby will take the first opportunity of acquainting them with your situation, and if we meet a ship homeward bound, you will be transferred."

"But England is not my home," explained Archy, in a troubled voice. "I am an American midshipman on parole. I was merely visiting my grandfather, Lord Bellingham, when I went to York—and—my name is Archibald Baskerville, and—" Archy stopped through weakness. [Pg 86]

"There, there; you have talked enough," said Dr. MacBean, thinking his patient was off again into vagaries.

But when he went to report to the captain, who happened to be on deck conversing with the Admiral, he had reason to know that Archy was entirely sane in the account he had given of himself. Admiral Digby had heard of the young rebel, grandson of Lord Bellingham, and brought home by Admiral Kempenfelt in the *Thunderer*. He knew that Lord Bellingham's seat was in Yorkshire, and that, as Lord-lieutenant of the East Riding, he would be present at the York Assizes, and he had no doubt that Archy was just what he represented himself to be.

"I'll go below and see the youngster myself," said the Admiral, and off he marched. As he entered the little cabin Archy opened his eyes languidly, but the very sight of Admiral Digby was interesting and inspiring. A perfect type of the British sailor, his kind though firm glance and his cheery manner were like a breath of the strong salt air. [Pg 87]

"Well, Mr. Baskerville, you have had ill-luck," began the Admiral, cordially; "but never fear, sir; you will be sent home by the first chance, and meanwhile we will have the pleasure of your company. I understand you were with my old friend Kempenfelt?"

"Yes, sir," replied Archy, now feeling quite bright and strong, and every inch Archy Baskerville, "the Admiral was very kind to me. He knew my grandfather, and he lent me some money—oh, Jupiter!" exclaimed Archy, suddenly, "how will I ever return that money!"

Admiral Digby roared out laughing at this. "No doubt Lord Bellingham will see to that; but when we lend money to midshipmen in our service we feel that it is casting our bread upon the waters."

"I dare say it is the same with us, sir," replied Archy. "But there is nobody to lend us any on this side of the water. Even Commodore Jones has often wanted money for a dinner, and that, too, in France, where they profess to be our allies."

"Mr. Baskerville," said the Admiral, seating himself on the one stool in the cabin, "I should like, when you are able, to hear the story of that remarkable man. I do not share the prejudices of my countrymen towards him." [Pg 88]

"Then you can understand, sir," replied Archy, "the devotion that his own officers feel for him."

"Perfectly. Now tell me if anything has been done towards your exchange, for you are indebted to Jones for a system of exchange."

"Nothing has been done, sir. I was reported to the Admiralty when I was captured, and when I landed at Portsmouth from the *Thunderer* I went up to London and reported myself. Then I went to my grandfather's, Bellingham Castle, and expected to hear pretty soon from the Admiralty. I know that exchanges have been made, but my name has not been among them."

Something like a smile flitted over Admiral Digby's face at this, and Archy's sharp wits interpreted it.

"I have been thinking, sir," he continued, "that my grandfather, instead of helping forward my exchange so I can return to France, is rather preventing it."

"I understand that you are Lord Bellingham's heir," responded the Admiral.

"No, sir. Heir only to the title I can't use. The entail is cut." [Pg 89]

"Your grandfather, no doubt, is anxious for you to live in England with him. In that case you would have a splendid future before you."

"If you had tried living with Lord Bellingham—" began Archy; then stopped. His grandfather had certainly been very kind to him, and the shovel and tongs and boot-jacks and other impedimenta which Lord Bellingham so freely distributed in his rages had never flown in Archy's direction. Admiral Digby laughed outright.

"There are very few persons in England or Scotland who don't know about Lord Bellingham," he said. "But to return to yourself. As soon as you are able to leave your berth you will become the guest of the gunroom mess, and then I shall hope to have the pleasure of your company occasionally in the great cabin. As soon as we meet a homeward-bound vessel you shall be put aboard of her, whether it be before or after we reach Gibraltar. And now good-day to you, and may you soon be on deck again."

After the Admiral left him Archy lay there a little time longer, when it suddenly occurred to him that he was hungry. He bawled for the sick-bay nurse, and when the man came ordered him to [Pg 90]

bring him some of everything that was served in the galley. The man followed these directions, and Archy, finding his midshipman's appetite returning in full force, devoured everything in sight. Just as the last scrap of pudding disappeared Dr. MacBean entered.

"It is just time, my young friend," blandly remarked the surgeon, "that you may have a light meal of gruel served you, but nothing solid—nothing whatever of that kind."

"Much obliged, sir," answered Archy, "but I have just finished a glorious meal—pea-soup, salt horse, potatoes, and pudding—and I feel about a hundred times better."

"Very well," said the surgeon, dryly, in his broad Scotch accent. "I have always said that the only way to kill a midshipman is to cut off his head and throw the head away; otherwise he will come to life, sure. There is a young man on board now who was shipwrecked, had an arm and three ribs broken, survived a Spanish doctor, and is apparently as good as new. You two must be first cousins."

Dr. MacBean did not know he was a prophet. When the doctor left him Archy got up quietly, and, dressing himself as fast as he could, made for the deck. He found himself weaker than he expected, and as he reached the top of the main-hatch he sat down awhile to rest himself. It was a sunny afternoon, mild for the season, and the vast deck of the great ship of the line was alive with men as she ploughed her way majestically over the waters. As far as the eye could reach the sea was flecked with sails. The "dratted convoy," as the sick-bay nurse called it, consisted of a great number of store-ships containing relief for the starving but indomitable garrison at Gibraltar, under General Sir George Eliot. A huge fleet, under Sir George Rodney, escorted it, and the men-of-war, compelled to carry reduced sail, so as to keep up with the slow supply-ships, were formed in double column in the rear of the convoy. The *Royal George* led the left wing.

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Presently, in the bright afternoon, they saw a ship approaching them on the opposite tack. The *Royal George* was in advance of the rest of the squadron, and as the stranger neared them it was plain, from the squareness of her rig, that she was a ship of war and she flew the Union Jack. When she was nearly abeam of the *Royal George* she kept her topsails shaking and broke out a signal flag. The first lieutenant, who was on the bridge, then called out to a young officer who was running up the ladder:

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"Mr. Langton, stand by for signals!"

Every eye was fixed on the advancing ship except Archy's. The name, called out in the lieutenant's clear voice, had thrilled him, and when he looked up there was Langton, risen from the dead, as it were, standing in full sight and hearing of him—Langton, whom he had seen drowned before his eyes, as he thought.

The shock and surprise of it, in his weak state, stunned Archy. His brain reeled, he instinctively threw out his arms to keep from falling over, and for a few minutes lay, rather than sat, on the step of the companion-way, only half conscious of his surroundings. But joy is exhilarating, and suddenly a great wave of life and happiness seemed to flow upon him. Not only was he deeply attached to Langton, but the joy that would be given to so many persons—to Langton's heartbroken mother and sisters, to Lord Bellingham, to Colonel Baskerville—when they knew that he was alive, was like the breath of life.

After the first few moments Archy became preternaturally alert to what was going on. The two ships moving slowly, all the signals of the new-comer could be easily read, and in the perfect silence, the wind being in the right direction, every word that Langton uttered as he spoke to the Admiral and captain could be heard.

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"The garrison at Gibraltar is in a very critical state. The Spaniards have besieged it hotly since the 12th of September. The Rock is impregnable, but the garrison is near starvation. It has heard of the relief on the way, but if it does not come soon it will be too late."

The stranger then signalled "Good-bye," filled her sails, and proceeded on her way. On board the *Royal George* the painful impression made by the news they had just heard was obvious. The officers collected in groups about the quarter-deck, while forward the men talked over what they had seen, as several of them could make a shift to read the signals.

In a few moments Langton came stepping briskly and gracefully along the deck amidships. As he approached Archy rose to his feet and steadied himself. When they were not more than a yard apart their eyes met.

They stood staring at each other for a full minute, and then Archy—the gay, the debonair, the impetuous—was the first to show weakness. He trembled like a girl, and when Langton put both hands on his shoulders he almost had to hold Archy up.

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"I thought you were drowned!" gasped Archy.

"So I thought myself, and a great many other persons too. But you—you are as white as a sheet; and where is your hair? and how, in Heaven's name, came you on the *Royal George*?"

"I am the fellow that was carried off by the press-gang. No one knew my name until an hour or two ago. I have many things to tell you—things that will surprise you. But do you tell me first how you came to life, for I swear I saw you dead."

"I was very near it when I came to myself, thrown high and dry on the rocks where the poor

Seahorse went to pieces. Some fishermen in the tunny fisheries found me, and I was a month between life and death in a hut near those very rocks, with a Spanish doctor who spoke no English or French, and I spoke no Spanish. I suppose, as Dr. MacBean would say, if it were possible to kill a midshipman by ordinary means I should not be here now; but I escaped with my life, in spite of the doctor. It is a long story how I got to Barcelona and from thence to England; and within a week from the time I landed at Plymouth I was ordered to this ship. As there is fighting before us, I could not ask for leave, even to see my dear mother; but I wrote her, and I hope she knows by this time that I am still alive to love her and plague her."

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"Can you come below with me? I have something important to tell you."

"My watch is up, but I must go below on an errand. I am as anxious to hear as you are to tell. I will be with you in five minutes."

And Langton ran below, leaving Archy almost doubting whether, after all, he had really seen his friend in the flesh.

CHAPTER VII

[Pg 96]

Archy went below, and in a few minutes Langton bounded into the little cabin. Archy, who was of a demonstrative nature, seized him and hugged him hard, and Langton seemed equally as overjoyed to see him.

"Langton," were Archy's first words, "do you know who you are?"

Langton looked at him keenly instead of replying. He thought perhaps Dr. MacBean had let his patient out of bed too soon.

"I say," said Archy, earnestly, "do you know that you are my first cousin?"

Langton was sure then that Archy's brain was still unsettled by the clip over the ear he had got.

"Yes, yes, I know it," he answered, soothingly; "it's all right. Don't vex yourself about it, though."

"But, Langton, I know that you are Lord Bellingham's grandson," cried Archy.

A deep flush overspread Langton's handsome face.

"I know it, too; but he drove my mother out of his house for marrying my father—an honorable soldier, an honest gentleman, and a better man than Lord Bellingham."

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"I believe you."

"And as he treated my mother so ill and insulted my father, I have no desire for the world to know that I am his grandson."

"But he did the same by my father and mother. My father was his only son, and he went to America, and that is how I came to be an American."

"I did not know that. My mother told me she had an only brother; that he had left England, and had given up all communication with his family. It is true that when I heard your name—Baskerville—I remembered that it had been my mother's name; but as you never spoke of any English relatives, I was no prophet to discover that we were first cousins. Why," continued Langton, saying what everybody else did, "you are the heir!"

"No, I am not. You are much more likely to be master of Bellingham than I. Do you suppose Lord Bellingham would ever make an American his heir? Oh, you don't know him. But you ought to know our uncle, Colonel Baskerville—glorious old chap. Did you never hear of him?"

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"Yes, but he was in India; and you forget that I left home when I was eleven years old, and I did not much care for family histories then. Why, however, did you never mention to me that Lord Bellingham was your grandfather?"

"Because my commodore, the great Paul Jones, advised me that the less I said about it the better as long as I was in the American Navy; and he warned me if I were captured at any time that it might go the harder with me if it was known that I was of an English family. The day I left the *Seahorse*, when I went into the cabin to say good-bye to Captain Lockyer, and get his letter to Admiral Kempenfelt, he had an open 'Peerage and Baronetage' before him. He asked me one or two questions about my father's and mother's names, and then quietly wrote, before my face, that I was Lord Bellingham's grandson. Foolishly enough, I thought when I got to England that my grandfather might help me to get exchanged. But Commodore Jones was right—it went the harder with me on that account, and I don't propose to trust myself shortly within reach of the Admiralty. I shall take my chances at Gibraltar."

"You always were, and always will be, a fellow for adventure. Now, tell me all that has befallen you—and, by George! how comical you look without any hair!"

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Archy plunged into his story. He told it with fire and energy. Langton listened, deeply interested, and only interrupted the recital occasionally by gusts of laughter when Archy told of some of the

peculiarly odd circumstances that had happened to him. Then Langton told his story. There was nothing to laugh at in that; it was only a modest history of his sufferings since they had parted, not the least of which was the cruel disappointment of leaving England without seeing his mother and sisters.

"There is not much money at home to spare," he said; "so, besides that I could not ask for leave when ordered for active service, I thought I could benefit my mother most by going where there was likely to be prize-money. And that gave me heart to come cheerfully—as I had to come anyhow. By the way, do you know we have a royal prince on board—Prince William Henry, second son of your friend King George III., otherwise known in the mess as Billy. He is a tolerably good sort of a chap, not very bright, but takes what comes, along with the rest of us, like a true-born Briton. You will see him at the mess."

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"If I go to the mess. But, look you, Langton, I do not budge to the mess unless I am invited in due form, just as you invite a French midshipman. As Commodore Jones said of Admiral de la Motte Piquet, 'I can show a commission as respectable as any the French Admiral can produce'; and so can I."

"I will see to it that your high mightiness is invited in form. But let me ask you—how is it that you Americans, who preach liberty and equality and republican simplicity, and all that sort of thing, are invariably haughty and punctilious to the last degree?"

"Only with benighted Europeans, my dear Langton. With each other we are like the Spanish grandees, who, I have heard, call each other Nick and Jack and Rob—or their Spanish equivalents—and are all ease and familiarity among themselves. But when they meet another less great than themselves, they are careful to give him all his names and honors and titles."

Langton went off laughing at this, and left Archy congratulating himself on having given a clinching reason, until he recalled Colonel Baskerville's remark, that to have the best of it at repartee was by no means to have the best of it in reason and common-sense. Dear old chap! Archy meant, the very next day, to write him a long letter, telling him the events of every moment since they parted.

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Presently a note was brought in, addressed to Midshipman Baskerville, late of the continental ship *Bon Homme Richard*. It was an invitation to be the guest of the midshipmen's mess. Archy examined it carefully and critically. Yes, it was in due form, although neither the writing, the spelling, nor the grammar was above reproach. He accepted the invitation, and signed his name and rank in a large, bold hand, and was glad enough to do so.

Before supper was ready Archy went on deck again. Lounging on the rail was a little midshipman who, Archy speedily discovered, was the scion of royalty, Prince William. A more harmless, quiet, common-place reefer he had never seen. The twilight was fast melting into night, and Archy was watching with interest the movements of the fleet and convoy, larger than anything of the kind he had ever seen before, when the ship's bell clanged out suddenly for "Fire!" Archy suspected that it was merely a fire-drill, and so evidently thought Prince William, for, rousing himself and seeing Admiral Digby near him unconcernedly studying the stars through his glass, the young Prince walked leisurely to his station, and was the last midshipman to take his place at the head of his division.

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The Admiral's eyes flashed—that was not the sort of discipline he proposed to allow. He glanced up at the bridge, where stood Captain Fulke; but the captain either did not see the young Prince's dilatoriness or else he did not choose to see it. Archy watched with interest what the Admiral would do. As soon as the drill was over and the men had left their quarters, the Prince passed close by the Admiral, who spoke sharply to him.

"Your Royal Highness will remember that this is his Majesty's ship *Royal George*, and not a hayfield at harvest time. Masthead, sir."

Prince William, whose rosy face instantly grew a picture of woe, nevertheless made his way aloft with much greater alacrity than he had made his station. The men grinned slyly at each other, and a midshipman behind the Admiral made a motion as if to pat him on the back. Archy opened his eyes wide—this was discipline, indeed.

Presently the Admiral passed near him. Archy saluted him respectfully, and hoped the Admiral would speak to him, and was not disappointed.

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"I hear that you and young Langton have found yourselves to be first cousins, Mr. Baskerville," he said.

"Yes, sir; and the best of friends we were from the day we met."

"You have had considerable experience as a prisoner on British ships, eh? First, on the *Seahorse*, then on the *Thunderer*, and now on the *Royal George*."

"I have always been well treated, sir. That is, if I wasn't well treated in the beginning, I was in the end."

"That speaks well for you, sir. It is sometimes difficult to get our young officers to treat Americans with respect; but I, among others—notably Admiral Keppel—have always insisted that they be accorded all the consideration of prisoners of war, even before the late formal agreement

was made."

"I, for one, will remember it with gratitude, sir. But, may I say to you, sir, that since our conversation this afternoon I have been reflecting upon my circumstances, and I think my chances of exchange will be better at Gibraltar than if I were to be returned to England, as you kindly offered. No doubt the Spaniards will soon raise the siege, and then I can easily get to France on my parole."

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"No doubt—no doubt—the Spaniards must soon give it up, and you would probably be nearer your object."

The Spaniards were never farther from giving it up than at the very moment these words were uttered.

As the Admiral walked on, Archy was left alone. He made no move towards speaking to the number of officers that he saw standing or walking about; but Admiral Digby's example and well-known wishes were not lost on them, and presently two or three came up civilly enough and talked with him, and then it was suppertime, and Langton coming after him, the two went below to those regions, in the depths of the ship, which were thought good enough for the midshipmen. Archy was politely received, though not with the cordiality that would have been extended to a French midshipman. But Langton was a prime favorite in the mess, and the story of his connection with Archy, and their identical relationship to Lord Bellingham, had spread over the ship like wildfire. Therefore, the temperature of Archy's reception was sensibly raised when Langton announced:

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"Gentlemen, Mr. Baskerville is my cousin, and we were chums before we knew we were cousins. Mr. Baskerville is heir to a peerage if he wants it, but he swears he had rather be an American, which at least shows that he has a spirit of his own. So, I say, pity it is that all such are not Englishmen."

"Agreed," piped up a very small midshipman, which caused a roar of laughter that covered the youngster with confusion.

Archy observed that Prince William was not at the table, and some one asking what had become of him, one of the older midshipmen said:

"Poor devil! When my relief reported I managed to bring in a remark to the first lieutenant about Billy, but the hint was not taken, so I fancy he is still in the cross-trees."

Just then, however, Billy walked in. He was greeted with a chorus of jeers and cheers, with inquiries how was it aloft, and was he going to tell his father, and did he intend, in the event he came to the throne, to make Admiral Digby a peer, under the title of Lord Masthead, and other remarks of a facetious nature. Billy took all this with perfect good-nature, and called for boiled beef and potatoes, but grew decidedly sulky when he heard there was no pudding.

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Archy laughed as much as anybody at the chaff going on, and, as he had a peculiarly rich and ringing laugh, it attracted Billy's attention, who, without minding the banter of his comrades, seemed to feel himself deeply injured by the amusement he afforded the young American. He growled out something, of which the only distinct words were "American traitors and rebels."

There was a dead silence, and Archy felt that upon his conduct at that very moment depended the opinion of every person in the ship. He looked the Prince squarely in the eye, and said, quietly:

"Perhaps you do not know that I am an American, and late midshipman on the continental ship *Bon Homme Richard*."



"PERHAPS YOU DO NOT KNOW THAT I AM AN AMERICAN"

"Yes, I know it, and damned if I care," was his Royal Highness's reply to this.

The silence was continued. Langton, without speaking a word, smiled slightly. He knew that a firm bearing, and that alone, would establish Archy's position in the mess, and, having considerable knowledge of that young gentleman, he had no doubt of the attitude he would take.

"I might, if I chose, report you to the Admiral for insulting a prisoner of war," said Archy, in his most nonchalant manner, "but reporting is considered a deuced ungentleman-like thing in our service. So I will give you a drubbing, if you will fight me, as soon as I am able. I am just out of the sick-bay." [Pg 107]

"Oh, Lord!" cried Billy, "I'll fight you with all the pleasure in life, but as for the Admiral—bad luck to him—he will skin me, sure, if he finds out what I said."

"Don't be afraid," answered Archy, "and take a few boxing-lessons if you can; it will not save you a drubbing, but it will be more sport to the by-standers."

"Mr. What's-your-name," said Billy, advancing and holding out his hand, "you are a gentleman, and I say so, and I shall be happy to give you satisfaction whenever you want it."

At which, the British sense of fair-play being touched, the reefers roared out a cheer. Billy stood, blinking and smiling, while Archy assumed the air of a modest hero. Great interest was aroused in the steerage by this prospective battle of the giants. Archy, who regained his health with a bound, was extremely anxious to force events, but Langton, who was his backer, would not hear of it; he meant his client to be in full fettle when he tackled the scion of royalty. Meanwhile, Archy had no fault whatever to find with his treatment in the mess, and Billy proved himself to be one of the kindest-hearted and most generous and unassuming creatures in the world, in spite of being rather dull and foolish. [Pg 108]

At last, one morning, at the mess-table, after an unusually jolly supper the night before, when Billy and Archy had chummed together after the most approved fashion among midshipmen, Billy remarked, sagely:

"I've been thinking, Baskerville, what is the use of our fighting? I hate fighting. I always get the worst of it. But I can do it, you know."

"Of course. So can I. You are as game a fellow as I ever saw—and the object of fighting among gentlemen is to prove they are game. If the mess says so, let us consider it off."

"Why not?" replied Billy, with a grin, looking around. "They know I can fight—I have fought 'em; but there ain't any use in fighting unless one is obliged to."

"Not a bit," said Langton. "So, if you please, I shall be happy to consult with your friend as to the possibility of coming to an honorable arrangement."

"Good!" was Billy's remark; "and let me tell you, it looks to me"—here Billy cocked his eye with great knowingness—"as if we will have some fighting to do with powder and ball before long. The Admiral has not had the ships kept cleared for action ever since we began to approach Cape St. Vincent for nothing." [Pg 109]

And then there was heard resounding through the great ship the boatswain's pipe calling all hands on deck, and a voice was heard shouting in the gangway:

"The Spanish fleet is sighted!"

CHAPTER VIII

[Pg 110]

Archy ran on deck as fast as his legs could carry him, and the sight that met his gaze was both splendid and terrible. They were off Cape St. Vincent, and the weather had been somewhat thick all the morning; but, a little while before, the sun suddenly blazed out, showing them Admiral de Langara's fleet of nine ships of the line and two frigates, not more than three miles off. A smart breeze was blowing, and the Spaniards, who seemed to have known first of their own danger, were under press of sail trying to weather the headland before they would be cut off by Admiral Rodney's fleet of nineteen sail of the line and four frigates. The wind was carrying the British fleet so fast towards the Spaniards that the signal for the formation of the line of battle was already shown from Admiral Rodney's ship, while the convoy kept together in the rear.

Admiral Rodney had no fool to play with in Admiral de Langara, who, although prepared to fight if compelled to, justly declined the unequal combat as long as he could. [Pg 111]

In Archy's brief experience of naval warfare he had never seen the manœuvres of a great fleet, and he watched with breathless interest the steadiness and precision with which the British fleet spread out in a great semicircle, with the fast frigates at either end of the line, and the convoy secure behind them. The ships were already cleared for action, and a single tap of the drum was all that was necessary to call the men to quarters. There was no slowness in Prince William's response this time. He was at his station among the first, and if he had a wholesome awe of Admiral Digby, he showed a manly indifference to the Spaniards.

Admiral de Langara had the weather-gage at first, and was able to keep it for over two hours; and in that time the Spaniards were slowly but steadily creeping away from their enemies. Admiral Rodney maintained his line of battle, and showed a perfect willingness to fight, with an unknown and frightfully dangerous shore under his lee. But the wind increasing every moment, the line

began to straggle, in the effort to claw off shore.

Archy Baskerville, a deeply interested observer, managed to establish himself just aft the bridge, upon which stood Admiral Digby, with Captain Fulke and the first lieutenant. Archy watched Admiral Digby, alert and sailor-like, as he paced up and down, keeping his eye on Admiral Rodney's ship, from which the signal for the line of battle flew steadily. Langton presently passed Archy and whispered to him:

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"Watch the old man. He is in a boiling rage. This is the fastest ship of the line in the fleet, and if the signal for chasing were given he'd be alongside one of those big three-deckers in half an hour. But here he is, under easy sail, to keep up with the slow coaches. No wonder he is in a stew."

And the Admiral proved it by dashing his glass down angrily after a prolonged stare at Admiral Rodney's signal. The men seemed to understand this well enough, and when the wind continued to rise, and they were obliged to shorten sail as much as they dared, they gave a loud groan when the order was shouted out. The wind seemed to blow from all points of the compass at once, while the sky became black and lowering. The Spanish flag-ship, the *Phoenix*, was falling behind a little, and as the rocky promontory of the Cape loomed nearer, the chances of this ship weathering seemed less than that of the rest of the fleet. Her great draught forced her to keep well out from the rocky shore, and she lay almost in the path of the *Royal George*, not more than two miles to windward. Archy, watching Admiral Rodney's ship, saw by the dull and clouded light a change of signals, and above him, on the bridge, it was greeted by something like a shout of joy from Admiral Digby.

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"We can carry all hard sail now, captain; there is the signal for chasing!" cried the Admiral to his captain; and, as if by magic, the sailors sprang into the rigging, and, with a rousing cheer, everything that would draw was shaken out, and the *Royal George*, like a horse under the spur, dashed forward, ahead of every ship in the fleet.

Within half an hour she was near enough to the Spanish Admiral to fire her quarter-guns, to which the Spaniard replied promptly; but in both cases the shot fell short.

"Never mind, my lads!" called out the Admiral, jovially, "we must exchange compliments before we get down to work. There's no real pleasure to be had until we are alongside!"

The *Phoenix*, having a choice of dangers, and seeing the *Royal George* gaining upon her, then quickly changed her course and stood inshore, where the coast was fringed with mountains of rocks, as if some giant hand had strewed them there for the destruction of ships. The *Royal George* did not hesitate to follow her, though, and tacked inshore too. From the manœuvres of the Spaniard, it was plain that she had an experienced pilot aboard; but on the *Royal George* they had no better assurance of water under the keel than could be found by continually heaving the lead.

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From the rest of the fleet a smart cannonade was now begun as the faster ships got within range of the Spaniards, who, caught and surrounded by superior force, yet prepared to defend themselves gallantly.

The short afternoon was now closing in, and the increasing wind and the wraith of storm-clouds driving across the pale and wintry sky showed all those brave men that they would be called upon to combat waves and tempest as well as shot and shell.

The *Phoenix*, finding it impossible to weather the headland in the face of her enemies, prepared to fight in a large bay, which, dangerous enough in all weathers, yet gave her enough sea-room to save her if skilfully handled.

The *Royal George*, undaunted by the hazardous circumstances in which she was forced to attack, followed her antagonist. At the same moment each ship thundered out her broadside; but the wind and water rose so high that most of the shots were ineffective, although fired at short range. The howling of the wind and the dashing of the waves on the shore were soon drowned in the roar of the batteries on thirty-four fighting ships, for the engagement soon became general. As night came on neither storm nor battle abated. The clouds poured forth rain and wind as they were swept across the wild night sky. The only light visible was the flash of the guns and the red glare of the battle lanterns. The Spanish were outnumbered more than two to one; but they were favored by the storm, and stood stubbornly to their guns.

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On board the *Royal George* the slaughter began to be serious. The ship required the most constant manœuvring to keep her off the rocks, and there was enough to do, and more, even for the enormous crew of a thousand men she carried. Archy was not one to sit idly by and watch when he could help, and when the bearers to carry the wounded below began to be few, he ran forward, and, taking one end of a stretcher, did yeoman's service in helping. About midnight, having a few minutes to himself, it occurred to him that he was hungry, and probably others were who could not leave their stations. He went below, and, getting some bread and cheese from one of the stewards, returned to the deck and distributed his provisions liberally among the midshipmen, not forgetting Prince William.

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"Thank'ee," said Billy, gratefully. "I wish I was in your place—nothing to do but to watch how the Spaniards take a beating, instead of having to fight this beastly battery. And I don't like fighting—that I don't."

Archy passed on, laughing. There was no doubt that Billy possessed the courage of all the Brunswickers, and was exactly the same Billy under fire as sitting around the mess-table.

Langton was near by, and Archy was troubled to see how pale and exhausted he looked. His former terrible experience on the Spanish coast had not been without its effects, and Archy saw that nothing but Langton's determined will and anxiety to do his duty kept him from dropping at his station. Just as the last piece of cheese and last slice of bread were about to be disposed of, Archy saw the Admiral crossing the deck towards him. He held out the bread and cheese, and the Admiral seized it with enthusiasm.

"Thank you, Mr. Baskerville. Those rascally stewards seem to have forgotten us up here. We'll give them a keelhauling for it as soon as the wind lulls! Hanged if I don't think it deuced unhandsome of Admiral de Langara to make us fight in this awkward cubby-hole of a place! Did you ever see anything like this, sir?" [Pg 117]

"I was on the *Bon Homme Richard*, sir, when she took the *Serapis*. We had good enough weather, but we were locked together two hours, and at it hammer and tongs all the while."

"Um—ah—hum—I say, lieutenant, I think number four in the starboard battery is doing remarkably fine work. Mr. Langton in command? I shall remember him when we are through with these persistent Spanish gentlemen."

The fire from several of the Spanish ships slackened as the night wore on, and soon after midnight the *Monarca*, a seventy-gun ship, blew up with a terrific crash that drowned both tempest and battle. Her topmasts and sails flew skyward, and the wreckage from her great masts and spars was tossed like corks over the black waters. In the red illumination from sea and sky the bodies of men, dead and living, were seen floating, and the cries of the unfortunates were responded to by several of the British ships lowering their boats in the teeth of the gale, and pulling about in the line of fire, picking up the half-drowned sailors. [Pg 118]

One by one the Spanish ships were disabled and forced to strike their colors, but the flag-ship still fought on. As a gray and pallid dawn broke over the stormy ocean and the drenched and forbidding-looking land, it was seen from the *Royal George* that her antagonist was in desperate straits. Her main-mast had gone by the board, carrying the mizzen-mast with it, and both cumbered the deck and hung over the side, entangled in a mass of canvas and rigging. Many of her guns had burst, and her decks were strewn with the dead and wounded. The Spanish Admiral, however, was still on the bridge, but the two officers with him were evidently juniors, showing that he had lost his captain and first lieutenant. The fire of the *Phœnix* was gradually lessening, and about daybreak it entirely ceased, and the Spanish colors were hauled down amid loud cheering from the *Royal George*. The Spaniards had made a good fight, and the *Royal George*, although not so badly crippled as her opponent, was much cut up aloft, and had several shot-holes in her hull.

A boat was immediately lowered, and Prince William was given the command of her, both as a compliment to himself and to the brave Admiral de Langara, who would be escorted on board the *Royal George* by a king's son. It was uncertain whether the Spaniard would need boats to bring the prisoners aboard, or whether his own boats were in condition to do so. [Pg 119]

Six of the Spanish ships of the line had struck, one had blown up, while in the distance the remaining two were making off under a press of sail. In Admiral Rodney's fleet the losses in men were not very great, but the terrible disadvantage at which he had fought, and the bad weather, left them still battling for their lives on an unknown and dangerous coast, with six damaged ships to take care of, and thousands of prisoners. No ship had suffered more than the *Royal George*, and the perilous situation in which she was placed became more evident by daylight. The wind was blowing directly on shore, and it became necessary to put on all the sail the ship could stand in order to keep her from going on the rocks; but her masts and spars were so cut up that it seemed every moment as if they would all come down at once.

Archy watched with anxiety as an effort was made to set the main-sail. He said to himself, out aloud: [Pg 120]

"The mast can never stand it."

But the mast did stand it, although bending and quivering under the strain when the full force of the wind struck the sail, and the ship, gathering headway, moved a little farther off from the menacing shore, on which the roar of breakers could be distinctly heard.

Prince William's boat was now approaching, and Archy could see the erect figure of the Spanish Admiral sitting in the stern-sheets. The boat came alongside, but poor Billy gave the order "Oars" too soon, and she drifted off just as the line was thrown to her. Instead of making another effort to bring her up to the lee gangway, Billy breasted along the side until he caught the stern-ladders, and was just about to pass the Spanish Admiral through the quarter-gallery when Admiral Digby, who was waiting with the captain at the gangway, with marines and side-boys to receive the Spaniard, bawled out:

"Avast, there! What are you doing, sir?" Billy needed nothing more to convince him of his mistake, and he immediately made for the gangway. In a little while Admiral de Langara came over the side.

As soon as the Spaniard's foot touched the quarter-deck, Admiral Digby advanced with uncovered [Pg 121]

head. The Spaniard also uncovered, and, making a low bow, was about to offer his sword.

"No," said Admiral Digby, with much dignity, "I cannot take the sword of so brave a man. It will yet do great things for your country."

De Langara's eyes filled with tears, as, in broken English, he said something of which few comprehended the words, but all understood the meaning.

Poor Billy then came over the side, and Admiral Digby, to make sure that the Spanish Admiral knew that no slight was intended by bringing him to the forward gangway, said sternly to the unlucky scion of royalty:

"How, sir! have you not yet learned to bring a boat alongside properly? I shall not forget this, and, when time serves, I will give you a lesson that you will remember."

Admiral de Langara looked in amazement from the angry Admiral to the trembling midshipman.

"No wonder," he remarked to Admiral Digby, "that the English rule the seas, when the son of the sovereign is made to submit to discipline as any other midshipman in the ship."

Admiral Digby then escorted the Spanish Admiral to his cabin. There was work for everybody to do, and Archy soon found himself pressed into service again. Powder was precious, and it was necessary to save what had already been hoisted on deck, and to get the fuses and cartridges and everything else in place. [Pg 122]

The wind increasing in violence prevented the transfer of the prisoners, and it was with great difficulty that a prize-crew was thrown aboard of the *Phœnix*. And then, in spite of the vast concussion of hundreds of guns, which usually deadens the wind, it became a hurricane. For two days and nights the *Royal George* battled for her life, and every time the *Phœnix* disappeared from view it was thought she had gone to the bottom. If they made sail, everything was blown from the bolt-ropes, while if they stripped the ship of her canvas she would seem to be rushing headlong to destruction. But at last they succeeded in bending sails that stood the terrific strain. The officers and crew nobly maintained the name of British seamen. Cool, courageous, skilful, never losing heart, they struggled on, in mortal danger every moment, and from the Admiral down to poor Billy the Prince every officer did his whole duty, as did every man. It was two days before they were in deep water again; but on the third day the morning broke in splendor, a golden sun shining down upon a sapphire sea. And the same afternoon the British fleet, with six great Spanish ships on which the Union Jack was hoisted over the Spanish colors, sailed past Europa Point, and the Rock of the Lion, from all its hundred guns, thundered out a welcome worthy of such mighty guests. [Pg 123]

CHAPTER IX

On the 21st of June, 1779, had begun the fourteenth and last siege of Gibraltar. On the 12th of September the gates had been closed, and from that on never, in all the annals of war by land and sea, had there been such a struggle for the possession of a single spot of ground as for that mighty Rock. General Sir George Eliot, with a few more than five thousand men, had resisted for five months the assaults of an army three times as numerous, and a strong fleet, which proposed, by fighting and starving the British garrison, to reduce it. Already there had been three months of scarcity before September, and five months of famine since; but the spirit of the garrison was still unbroken, and when, on that brilliant morning, Rodney's fleet was discerned rounding Cabrita Point, the gaunt crowds of soldiers, officers, ladies, servants, Jews, and Genoese poured out upon the face of the Rock, wept and laughed and prayed and went wild with joy, as sufferers do when relief is in sight. For seven days they had alternated the agonies of despair with the transports of hope. They had heard that Admiral Rodney, with a convoy, was coming to their relief; but a little English brig which had made its way in brought news of Admiral de Langara's squadron, and the besieged people knew nothing of the numbers of the ships or the result of the battle that must follow. As day succeeded day, with no news of the fleet, they began to fear that it had been defeated—and that meant submission or starvation, and they had starved since September. Every hour of the night there were half-despairing creatures watching and waiting on Europa Point for the longed-for succor; and every morning had brought them nearer to despair, until, at last—at last—the fleet was coming, their white sails shining in the morning light, and bringing with them life itself to the brave men and dauntless women on the Rock. [Pg 125]

Never, in all his life, did Archy Baskerville forget that day when he first set foot on Gibraltar. The *Royal George*, her masts and spars braced and refitted, and her shot-holes plugged, could still leg it faster than most of the ships in the fleet, and led the second division. Her decks had been cleaned up and her injuries repaired as far as possible, and although she showed marks of her warfare with the Spaniards and the storm, yet was she ready at that moment to go into action if necessary. Next her came the *Phœnix*, larger than the *Royal George*, and clumsier, but a noble trophy; and beyond them were other great ships of the line, smart frigates, captured Spanish ships, and a fine convoy loaded with provisions for the famishing garrison. [Pg 126]

As they neared Europa Point they heard the shouts of joy from the people who swarmed to meet them. From the old convent on the hill, which was the Governor's residence, General Eliot, the

commandant, was issuing with his staff. A band was playing "God Save the King," which was taken up by the ships in the fleet. Admiral Digby was on the bridge, waving his hat at General Eliot, who, with his hat in his hand, bent his gray, uncovered head as if returning thanks, while he walked towards the mole, where a shouting crowd of soldiers, civilians, women, and children were gathering.

Nearly every one of the wounded officers was on deck, and so was Langton, who had not been wounded at all, but who was weak and ill beyond any of them. He had not fully recovered from his injuries in the shipwreck, before the battle off Cape St. Vincent, and after doing his duty like a hero he had completely collapsed. Nevertheless, with Archy's aid, he had crawled up on deck, and both of them watched, with shining eyes, the stirring and inspiring scene as the ships came to anchor. The *Royal George* stood quite close in, and almost before the anchor kissed the ground the Admiral's barge put off and joined the crowd of boats containing officers that were making for the landings. They saw the people crowding around the officers, shaking hands, and even embracing them, while General Eliot stood silent and apparently overcome with emotion, as admirals, captains, and lieutenants grasped his hand and wrung it. Pretty soon a boat with provisions put off from the *Royal George*, for the necessities of the people were so great that they had to be supplied before the cargoes of the storeships could be broken. Archy, who always had to be in the thick of everything, basely deserted Langton as soon as the boats began putting off, and, going up to Captain Fulke, asked permission to go ashore. The young prisoner's conduct on board ship had made him to be highly popular, and Captain Fulke at once agreed.

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"Good-bye!" cried Archy to Langton. "Somebody will take care of you, I dare say," and skipped over the side.

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As the boat drew alongside the Rock the scene was thrilling. Before them towered the mighty Rock, with its grim batteries ready for defence, while just across the neck of land connecting it with the mainland, no more than a mile from the barrier gate, the Spaniards had erected two mighty lines of fortifications, from the Punta Mala on the bay of Gibraltar, across to the Sierra de Carbonera, or Queen of Spain's Chair. Two great forts were at either end of this line of fortifications—San Felipe, on the bay of Gibraltar, and Santa Barbara, on the eastern beach. San Felipe was faced by a frowning fort, almost as strong as the Spanish fort at the end of the Old Mole, while three strong batteries and the powerful defences of the Land Port defied the Spanish line of attack. In the golden afternoon light these grim and warlike features were singularly clear, the Spanish colors were in plain view, while the distant roll of the Spanish drums and the silver notes of the bugles were perfectly audible.

On the mole the people seemed beside themselves with excitement—the rapture of relief, the anxiety for news from home, the story of sufferings half told, the pain, the joy, the pale mothers with the paler children, the officers and soldiers with uniforms hanging loose upon their famished bodies, the Jews and Genoese chattering and gesticulating wildly, and a few Moors and Arabs standing silent and stoical amid the tumult. One of these men—an Arab—Archy noticed the instant he stepped ashore, close to a group made up of General Sir George Eliot, Admiral Rodney, Admiral Digby, and some other officers of high rank. This man was of a bronze color, tall and well formed, with the full black eyes of the Arab tribesmen, and wore his white burnouse and his snowy turban with an imperial air. General Eliot, a soldierly but austere-looking man, spoke to him.

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"Come here, Musa."

Musa advanced with perfect dignity, and bowed to the officers; each returned the salutation by lifting his hat.

"This man, gentlemen, has been our only mode of communicating with the outside world for five months past. Through him we have communicated with our consuls on the African side, and they have returned us, by him, the only news we have had of anything outside this Rock in all that time. The Spaniards have found out that Musa is clever enough to elude their smartest cruisers, and have repeatedly offered him money to betray us, but he has steadily refused."

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"This shall be known in England, Musa," said Sir George Rodney.

Musa slightly inclined his head, and, without the faintest change of countenance, withdrew, and walked off by himself.

General Eliot then turned to a small, slight man, in naval uniform, and said, "I have had as much assistance from Captain Curtis as from any officer in the garrison, and Mrs. Curtis fired the first shot of the defence on the 12th of September, the order for firing being, 'Britons, strike home!'"

Archy glanced around, and saw by Captain Curtis's side a pretty, pale-faced woman, holding a little girl of ten years by the hand, and by her blushes and the child's smiles he knew that the lady was Mrs. Curtis. But the next moment the child said something that went to his heart.

"Mamma," she whispered, "when do the sailors mean to give us something to eat? I am so hungry!"

This was more than Archy could stand, and, making for the boat, he very unceremoniously seized a bag of potatoes and was walking off with it, when an officer, superintending the unloading, called out to him, sternly:

"Hold, there! What are you doing with that bag of potatoes?"

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"Taking it to feed a half-starved woman and her little girl."

"Put it down. The provisions must be distributed according to orders."

"Unluckily, this case can't wait," answered Archy, making a dash towards the group where Admiral Digby stood.

"Sir," said he, "I want these potatoes for Mrs. Curtis and her little girl, and—"

"By George! you shall have them," whispered the Admiral. "Run, sir, for your life. There is Mrs. Curtis going up the path towards Europa Point, and as soon as you have delivered them, come back to me and I will reprimand you."

Archy waited for no further orders, and, laughing, started as fast as his legs could carry him after Mrs. Curtis. In a minute or two he reached her, toiling painfully up the steep path, Dolly, white and faint, clinging to her hand.

"Madam," said Archy, taking off his hat, "I believe I have the honor of addressing Mrs. Curtis. Admiral Digby gave me permission to bring this bag of potatoes to your house."

"I have no house any more," replied Mrs. Curtis, with a faint smile. "The officers' families have long since abandoned the houses in the town, on account of the bombardment. My husband has had a rude shelter put up for us under the rocks at Europa Point, and there my child and I live, with a faithful old servant of my husband's. I thank you more than I can express for your kindness in bringing us something to eat—I knew you had a kind heart as soon as I saw your bright face. Tell me who you are."

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"I am Midshipman Baskerville, late of the continental ship *Bon Homme Richard*, a prisoner on parole, and entirely at your service, madam—and this young lady's," added Archy, who dearly loved children, looking at Dolly.

Dolly smiled at him, and when he offered her his hand to help her up the steep incline she gave it him with the sweetest confidence. Archy had never practised carrying bags of potatoes on his back, and was considerably out of breath when they reached the shelter that stood for a house for Mrs. Curtis.



"ARCHY MAKES AWAY WITH A BAG OF POTATOES FOR MRS. CURTIS"

There was an open space between two huge boulders which had been roofed over, and in it were spread some rugs, two mattresses for sleeping, cushions and blankets, and in a large chest were a few necessaries for living, and clothing. This was the home of an officer's wife and child.

But some one was there before them—a tall, well-made, hard-featured, elderly man, in the uniform of a sergeant of marines, who had promptly kindled a little fire, and immediately set to work briskly peeling the potatoes.

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"This is Judkins," said Mrs. Curtis to Archy. "He was formerly my husband's orderly, but was retired on account of wounds; but he has become *our* orderly, and is cook, butler, nurse-maid, and lady's-maid to Dolly and me. We are in his charge while Captain Curtis is on his ship, the *Enterprise*."

Judkins had been hungry for eight months; but he did not abate a jot or tittle of his dignity on that account, and stopped peeling the potatoes, and stood bolt-upright at "attention" while Archy courteously saluted him.

While they were still standing there, Archy quite fascinated with the sweetness of Mrs. Curtis and Dolly, Captain Curtis arrived. Mrs. Curtis at once introduced Archy, and told of his action in such a way as to make it seem more than it really was.

"Kindness to my wife and child is a very good recommendation to me, Mr. Baskerville," said Captain Curtis, cordially, "and I would like to know by what scheme you got the potatoes first."

"Nabbed them, sir," replied Archy, with a grin; "and I am now going back to be hauled over the

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coals by Admiral Digby, who told me to run away with the bag, and then come back and be reprimanded. Good-bye! good-bye!" and he was off.

When he again reached the mole the scene was even more animated. There was a procession of boats passing back and forth from the ships to the mole, and provisions were being unloaded with extraordinary rapidity under the eyes of the officers. All were working hard, and none harder than Prince William, who, with a red face and a dusty jacket, was doing his duty among the other midshipmen just as if his father did not sit upon the greatest throne on earth. Admiral Digby, who was everywhere at once, noticed Billy's energy and industry, and spoke some words of praise to him, at which the young Prince's honest, simple face glowed with pleasure.

Many of the poorer persons hung about, begging for food before it could be taken to their houses. Admiral Digby, his hands behind his back, was walking up and down the mole, watching with pity the efforts of the starving people to carry away what was given them. He was looking at an old woman who had been given a basketful, but was tottering along under it, almost falling under her load, when Archy appeared before him.

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"I have come for my reprimand about the potatoes, sir," he said, respectfully.

"That's right, sir," chirped the Admiral; "never neglect reporting yourself when a reprimand is expected, or you may have worse luck. You cribbed a bag of potatoes, didn't you? Very reprehensible—very reprehensible, indeed. You should be severely reprimanded. Stealing potatoes is clearly against the articles of war. Consider yourself reprimanded—severely reprimanded, sir; and if you have a chance of stealing a few more for that old woman yonder, don't hesitate, but do it, and come and be reprimanded again. You might help her and some others of these poor, weak, helpless creatures to carry away what is given them—you have a fine pair of shoulders, and legs like a London chairman—so be off with you—and, stay—eh—I say—dine in the great cabin with me to-night—Gone, with a duck of his head for answer to an admiral's invitation! Presumptuous young dog! But a fine fellow, if ever I saw one."

Nevertheless, Archy was not one to scorn an invitation to a better dinner than he was likely to get in the usual course of events, and at dinner-time he presented himself in the Admiral's cabin. He thought himself especially fortunate in having a chance to talk about his scheme of staying at Gibraltar, and was delighted when Admiral Digby said, "I have mentioned to General Eliot your preference for remaining here, and as the place is plentifully supplied, and will be kept supplied in the future, there is no objection made to it. General Eliot was most considerate, and readily granted my request."

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"Thank you, sir," replied Archy, "and to-morrow morning I will call and pay my respects to General Eliot, and express my thanks. May I ask, sir, if you have not told the General that I am Lord Bellingham's grandson, that you will not? I—"

"Too late, sir. I felt obliged to tell General Eliot every particular concerning you. I fear," said the Admiral, looking sharply at Archy, "that you have imbibed some false and demagogic notions about rank. Surely, it is of solid advantage to you to be known as the grandson of a peer."

Admiral Digby, without the slightest cringing towards the great, yet respected rank, as it was everywhere respected in the eighteenth century; and he could not but hope that his kind attentions towards Archy might result in bringing back this strayed lamb to the fold of the British peerage.

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"In some ways, sir, it is to my advantage," said Archy, "but in others it is not. I am sure if I had been the grandson of John Smith, or Jones, or Brown, that I should have been exchanged long ago, and I cannot help thinking that my grandfather is using his influence against me at the Admiralty. Commodore Jones warned me to keep quiet about Lord Bellingham."

"Oh—Commodore Jones! Recollect, you engaged to give me some account of him. He is a man of remarkable character and achievements."

Archy plunged into a history which was one long eulogy of Paul Jones. Admiral Digby smiled at his enthusiasm; but he was too good a judge of human nature to disesteem, or even undervalue, enthusiasm. Archy gave him every particular concerning the fight between the *Bon Homme Richard* and the *Serapis*, and their perils at the Texel.

"Where I was bagged, sir," he said, regretfully, "by my own carelessness and rashness, after having been repeatedly warned by Commodore Jones; and here I have been a prisoner of war for more than three months in consequence!"

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"Very sad—very sad!" condoled the Admiral, all the time thinking that it might turn out the luckiest thing in the world for Archy. "And, may I ask, Mr. Baskerville, to return to Lord Bellingham, how you and he—coincided?"

Archy rubbed his ruddy cheek thoughtfully before answering:

"Better, sir, I believe, than most people coincide with my grandfather. He seems to consider himself a much injured person, although I never could see where his injuries lay. As I do not want the title, and cannot have the estates, I believe my cousin, Mr. Langton, will be his heir. My grandfather was terribly cut up when he heard the false report of Langton's death."

"And is it possible, Mr. Baskerville, that you can regard such splendid prospects as might be

yours with indifference?"

"I do not know, sir, whether that word describes my feelings. I regard those splendid prospects as impossible for me. My grandfather, no doubt, desires me to give up my country, but I cannot; nor will I give up my profession. It is the height of my ambition to have a command in the American Navy."

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"You speak as if you were quite sure that the revolted colonies will be successful. Now, while the present war is undoubtedly very unpopular in Great Britain and in Parliament—the whole force of such gigantic men as Mr. Burke and Mr. Fox is thrown against it—yet the fight will be continued, and, for my part, I think the issue of the struggle more than doubtful for the colonies."

"Then, sir, every American must, as a point of honor, maintain his nationality when his country's cause seems most in peril. We cannot admit that we are whipped before our adversaries think so."

"True enough, Mr. Baskerville. I see in you the spirit of determination common among your countrymen, which, to my mind, is the one thing that makes it a question whether we can reduce the colonies or not. Oh, that we should be compelled to fight such men! But we must do our duty. I cannot approve of Admiral Keppel's course in declining the command of the fleet for North America because he did not believe in coercing the colonies. I desire to have them back, and, by George!" cried the Admiral, bringing his fist down with a thump that made the glasses ring again, "I am so deuced anxious to have them back that, if they won't come for the asking, I would hammer them with men and ships until they were driven back, begad!"

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CHAPTER X

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When Archy went below, after dining in the Admiral's cabin, he was distressed to find that Langton had grown worse instead of better during the day, and was in a high fever. As the night wore on it increased to delirium. His injuries in the shipwreck began to trouble him again, especially his three broken ribs, and the mere motion of the ship at anchor gave him poignant pain. Towards morning Dr. MacBean, who had watched him, with Archy, all night, said:

"Mr. Langton must be taken ashore immediately, and there will be no more cruising for him for a good long time."

Archy heard this with mixed pleasure and regret. He was truly distressed at Langton's sufferings. But the idea that he would have his friend's company at Gibraltar, for what he thought would be a short and rather interesting period, was undeniably pleasing to him. They got Langton ashore early that morning and established him in the old stone building which served for a hospital, and there Archy nursed him faithfully, but very awkwardly, for many days. Langton was desperately ill; and, although it was known that he would probably recover, it was out of the question that he should leave with the fleet, which was to sail the first fair wind after the 10th of February.

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Archy's sole recreation in those dreary days of watching Langton's sufferings, when the issue might be life or death, was a solitary evening walk up to Europa Point and back. He did not forget his new friends, the Curtises, and their kindness and sympathy were grateful to him. One of the first things Captain Curtis said to him was:

"The Spanish lines are advancing so rapidly that I make no doubt they will soon get the range of the hospital, and if your friend has to be moved you could not do better than come up here. It is safe, and it is healthier, I think, than the spots lower down."

Archy thanked him warmly, and immediately went to work to have a hut set up, like Mrs. Curtis's, and very close to it. He got some blankets and mattresses from the ship, and in a day or two he had a place to take Langton whenever the hospital shared the fate of most of the buildings in the lower town, and began to fall about their ears.

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On the morning of the 13th of February, the wind being fair, Admiral Rodney's fleet picked up their anchors, and, amid a roar of cheers and the thunder of guns, the ships took their way towards the open sea. The garrison, refreshed and encouraged, and with supplies for many months, yet with sorrow, saw them go; and as Archy, standing on the mole, caught sight of the *Royal George* rounding Cabrita Point in her usual grand style and leading the fleet, as she always did, his heart gave a great thump of regret—vain as most regrets are. He had been a prisoner on her—he had not been a free man for many long months—but he had been kindly treated, he had made friends, and it seemed more natural to him, sailor that he was, to be afloat than ashore. But he had readily adopted the sanguine view of the officers of the fleet, and most of those of the garrison, that the siege was nearing an end; nor was this pleasing delusion shattered until sunset of the day that had seen the British fleet sail away.

Just as the sun was sinking he left Langton in charge of a nurse and climbed to the top of Jacob's-ladder. When he found himself on the highest point of the Rock, he thought he had never seen a lovelier sight, except on that evening, four months before, when he had caught the first glimpse of Gibraltar from the deck of the *Seahorse*. Deeply blue and deliciously calm lay the Mediterranean, spread before him in the soft glow of evening. The little British squadron which was stationed at Gibraltar lay motionless at anchor, the work of the day done. From the batteries

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below him he could hear the faint commotion of relieving the guard, and the mellow notes of a single bugle floated up. Then the sunset gun boomed over the waters, and the salute was sounded on the ships; but the exquisite silence, the hour, the scene, the distance, made it all seem like the music of a dream.

Archy was of a nature susceptible to these charms, and from impetuous actions and uproarious spirits he often fell into moments of soft and not unpleasing melancholy. He was thinking of the history of the Rock—the valor that had won it, the patriotic anguish of the Spaniards that another nation should possess it, the gallant lives laid down on either side in the effort to take it or to keep it—when he heard a step behind him, and Captain Curtis was standing near him.

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"Good-evening, Mr. Baskerville. I see we have the same taste in selecting this spot for an evening walk. Usually, I find it quite deserted at this time of day."

"I find my only chance of air and exercise is at this time, when I can leave my friend and cousin, Mr. Langton, for an hour or two. He is better now than he has been, and I hope in a week or two I may be able to leave him and get through the Spanish lines, on my way to France."

"Do you think the Spaniards will let you through?"

"Of course," cried Archy, amazed and disconcerted at Captain Curtis's tone.

"I hope so, for your sake, but I question it. You can undoubtedly get to the headquarters of the Spanish commander, Don Martin de Soltomayer, at any time you like, under a flag of truce; but I have very little expectation that they will let you through their lines—certainly not now, when the fortress has just been revictualled, and you would probably represent to the outside world that we are in no danger of starvation for a long time to come. It is the Spanish policy to make their people think that we are on the verge of surrender. Besides, they will at once suspect you to be a spy, and it takes a long time to remove suspicion from the Spanish mind. And what object have they in letting any one out of here? Not the smallest. So, Mr. Baskerville, I think that your anticipation of getting away, like that of some of our military and naval friends here and abroad, who believe the siege will shortly be raised, is a mistake. You are in for a good long term—that you may depend upon."

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Archy was staggered by this, and walked along in silence by Captain Curtis's side, wondering at his rash presumption that he could get out of Gibraltar as easily as he had got in. Suddenly he burst out:

"What folly was mine! I should have remained with the fleet!"

Archy's heart sank lower and lower as Captain Curtis continued:

"I know the temper of the Spanish people, and they mean to take Gibraltar if it is in the power of mortal man. They will soon have the assistance of the French; and a French engineer is a very dangerous person to his enemies, I can tell you. The garrison is relieved at present—but I look for an attack by land and sea that will test our mettle. Luckily, we have a Governor who does not know the meaning of the word surrender. He set the example to the garrison of having his own horse killed and distributed for food, and has lived, for some time past, on a few ounces of rice a day, and the little fish we catch, that are no larger than sprats."

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Archy was silent with disappointment and consternation after this. At last he said, determinedly:

"At all events, I shall do my best to get Don Martin de What's-his-name to let me out."

"Come," said Captain Curtis, feeling sorry for him, "let us go up to my hut and see my wife and little girl. You are a prime favorite with them both already."

As they neared the hut they heard the sound of singing—a man's barytone, full and rich, and a child's treble, shrill but sweet.

"That is my little girl," said Captain Curtis, with a smile, "and my man Judkins. He carried Dolly in his arms when she was a baby, and, I believe, loves her better than anything on earth. Her first playthings were his cap and belts, and he is still her favorite playfellow. He has a fine voice, as you can tell, and has taught Dolly every song in the British army, but none of the navy songs; for Judkins was in the army before he was a marine."

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"I understand," replied Archy, laughing. "There is no love lost between sailors and marines."

Presently they could distinguish the two companions—the old marine and the little girl—sitting together on a rock, Dolly wrapped up in a huge cloak of Judkins's, and both of them singing, at the top of their voices, the fine old song "The British Grenadiers."

"Whene'er we are commanded to storm the palisades,
Our leaders march with fuses and we with hand-grenades;
We throw them from the glacis about the enemy's ears.
Sing tow, row, row, row, row, row, row, for the British Grenadiers."

Just then the singers became aware of their audience. Judkins stopped short in the midst of a "tow, row, row," and jumped as if he were shot, while Dolly ran and swung around her father's legs, and then turned her attention to Archy.

"I haven't been hungry since you came," she said, "and Judkins and I can sing a great deal louder and better when we aren't hungry—can't we, Judkins?" [Pg 149]

"Yes, miss," replied Judkins, standing rigidly at "attention," and deeply embarrassed.

Archy begged them to continue, and Dolly quite readily, and Judkins blushing very much, evidently enduring agonies of sheepishness, yet obeyed orders, and gave "The Lincolnshire Poacher," "The Dashing White Sergeant," and other famous songs of the British army.

Nothing could exceed the kindness and sweetness of Mrs. Curtis towards Archy. In some way she at once divined that he was motherless, and his tenderness to Dolly showed that he had a good heart. As for Archy himself, in spite of his fondness for "seeing life" and his adventurous disposition, he felt all the sweetness and charm of domestic life, and was quite happy to be even a chance partaker in the home circle that was yet to be found in the rude shelter to which the Spanish cannonade had driven his new-found friends. He remained until it was time for Captain Curtis to return to his ship, and after a cordial invitation from Mrs. Curtis to visit them often, and an affectionate good-night from Dolly, Archy returned to his quarters at the hospital.

He lay awake that night, troubled by what Captain Curtis had told him; but in the morning his irrepressible spirits reasserted themselves, and he began to think that, after all, he might get away. [Pg 150]

That day Langton was much better in health, but low in his mind over the departure of the fleet, and Archy very indiscreetly let out Captain Curtis's opinion as to the length of the siege.

"Then we shall lose Gibraltar, I am afraid," said Langton, sadly.

"What are you talking about?" cried Archy. "It takes a lot of beating to whip an Englishman—we know it to our sorrow. But, nevertheless, we will soon chase all of your beggarly redcoats out of America; then you can turn your whole attention to the Don Spaniards; and then—Lord help 'em! And you will be going back to England and be adopted by Lord Bellingham in lieu of me, while I shall be captain of a smart little frigate under the American colors, and I'll call and see you at Bellingham Castle. Oh, great guns, what fun I'll have! You ought to know your venerable grandfather, my boy; you'll often wish, when you are rolling in splendor at Bellingham, that you were at Gibraltar living on rice and salt fish. Uncle Baskerville is a trump—as fine an old chap as I know, if he would but leave off his sermons to me about returning to my allegiance to my king and country, and taking my place as the prospective heir and head of the Baskerville family. But our grandfather—oh, ye gods!" [Pg 151]

Langton laughed feebly at this, and Archy, hauling a letter out of his pocket, said, "Here is a copy of the letter I sent by the fleet, and I shall send this copy by the first expedition to the African coast, in hopes that in one way or the other it may reach Bellingham Castle. This is to my grandfather." And Archy read with a great flourish:

"HONORED SIR,—I take the first opportunity of communicating with you and my uncle, after my singular disappearance from York, at the Assizes. The story of my adventures is briefly this: A press was organized at York, and I, happening to be in the tavern when it took place, got my head cracked, and knew no more until I found myself aboard of His Majesty's ship of the line *Royal George*, in Biscay Bay, bound for Gibraltar, in Rodney's fleet, with a convoy for the relief of the garrison. And here I am, sir, on Gibraltar Rock, preferring to take my chances of getting to France from here than with the fleet, which goes to the Leeward Islands. This place has been hotly besieged, and some think we have not seen the worst of it yet; but my expectation is that Great Britain will shortly abandon her hopeless attempt to coerce the independent American colonies—'

"The footstool will fly, and everything else handy, when the old gentleman reads this paragraph," interrupted Archy in his reading. [Pg 152]

—"and then the fortress will be relieved. But no one dreams of surrender, and all reports of that kind reaching England must be discredited.

"You perhaps know by this time, from the *Gazette*, that your grandson, Trevor Langton, Esq., was saved, and not lost, at the wreck of the *Seahorse*, and behaved with the greatest gallantry in the action of the 16th of January with Admiral Juan de Langara's fleet. An old wound, reopened, has given him great pain, and he was in grave danger for a while, but is now convalescing. Being unable to sail with the fleet, he is now here in hospital, and there is no immediate prospect of his getting away. We are better friends than ever since finding out our relationship, and he is so fine a young gentleman, and so good an officer, that I think you could not do better than to make him your heir in lieu of my unworthy self.'

"My boy, I am afraid I have murdered all your chances by that sentence, for our respected grandfather goes by the rule of contrary.

"Please present my uncle with my most respectful compliments, and assure him of my warmest affection. I shall endeavor to remember and profit by all his kind counsels except one—to abandon my country; but I was born an American and I mean to die one."

"You could not help putting that in, could you?" languidly remarked Langton. "You are a great fellow for proclaiming what everybody knows, and thereby showing yourself very, very young." [Pg 153]

"And you are so prudent and oyster-like that you appear very, very old," retorted Archy, good-naturedly, "but not so very, very wise. However, see how respectfully I end my letter:

"With sincere good wishes for your lordship's health and happiness, and high appreciation of your lordship's extreme kindness to me, I beg leave to subscribe myself your lordship's affectionate grandson and obedient servant,

"ARCHIBALD BASKERVILLE,
"Midshipman in the Continental Navy."

The cannonade from the Spanish lines had been booming all the time Archy and Langton were talking, but it sounded strangely near just then; and when Archy went to the window and looked towards the isthmus he saw that a new battery had been unmasked in the advanced lines of the Spaniards. Suddenly a deafening crash resounded behind him. A round shot had burst through the wall, and, amid the débris, lay the cot on which Langton was lying. He was unhurt, but Archy said:

"Come, it is too hot here for us. I must get help and carry you up to the hut in the rocks." And in an hour Langton lay under the rude but safe shelter provided for him under the rocks at Europa Point. [Pg 154]

For the first week or two Archy was taken up with caring for Langton, and trying to make their cranny in the rocks comfortable. In this effort he met with the greatest kindness from Mrs. Curtis; and the deftness with which, out of their few belongings, she made them really a tolerably comfortable place to live, caused Archy to exclaim with enthusiasm:

"I have always heard, ma'am, that one woman could do as much as twelve men and a boy; and now I know it!"

Judkins's help was by no means to be despised, however, and with the resources of an old campaigner he showed them marvels. Archy was eager to begin the effort for his exchange immediately, but the garrison knew that Don Martin, the Spanish Commander-in-Chief, after the departure of the British fleet, had gone away for a few weeks to recover his health, and both Captain Curtis and General Eliot, to whom Captain Curtis introduced Archy, advised him to wait until Don Martin's return, as the second in command would probably do nothing in his absence. Archy acquiesced in this, and settled himself to spend the intervening time as patiently as he could. He was courteously, and even kindly, treated by everybody, and with his gay and jovial nature he soon became hail-fellow-well-met with the whole garrison and population, with one exception. This was the officers of the Hanoverian regiment, for King George had let some of his German troops for hire to fight the Spanish, as he had hired Hessians to fight the Americans. Archy found that the English officers and soldiers had but little more liking for the Hanoverians than he had, although it could not be denied that the Germans did their duty, and suffered and fought along with the rest. Archy took a malicious delight in telling how, in America, the Hessians were chiefly good for eating up the provender, and when there was fighting for dinner these prudent Teutons usually retired, and left the British to settle with the Americans. Archy, boy-like, although he had the stature of a man, avoided the Hanoverian officers ostentatiously, mimicked their droll accent whenever he had a chance, and took a vast amount of trouble to let them know how lightly he esteemed them—of which the stolid Germans were generally unconscious, and to which they were always indifferent. [Pg 155]

The bombardment kept up steadily, but the loss of life was singularly small. The people grew accustomed to it in the day, but those who had fled southward in the beginning, to temporary shelter, were still alarmed by it during the night, and so remained in their miserable huts. As the case always is, after the first horror people began to see the amusing side of even very dreadful events, and it became a relief to laugh at the grotesque things that happened. [Pg 156]

One evening, in the spring, about twilight, Archy Baskerville and Captain Curtis were walking soberly through one of the narrow streets of the upper town, passing the barracks of Colonel Schlippergill's Hanoverian regiment. The windows of a small room, used as a mess-hall, were open, and around the table in the middle of the floor they could see a dozen burly German officers wreathed in smoke from their long pipes, and with great mugs of beer before them—for a supply of beer had been laid in especially for them.

"Look at them," said Archy, in a tone of deep disgust, "smoking and guzzling—guzzling and smoking—nothing but that."

"Nonsense," replied Captain Curtis, briskly. "Those poor Hanoverians can do nothing to please you. Their smoking is harmless, and their guzzling is of beer, which is much better for them than the rum and grog we give our men." [Pg 157]

Just then they noticed, in the soft dusk of evening, a two-legged black shadow moving around the parapet of the long, low building in which was the mess-hall.

"It is a peacock," said Archy, after watching this mysterious creature for a while, "and a big one, too. Where do you suppose such a creature could come from?"

"It is some one's pet peacock, no doubt," was Captain Curtis's reply, in a low voice—"some one

who has managed to conceal it all this time." For animal pets had disappeared long before this, and had, generally speaking, been made into broth.

The peacock tiptoed gingerly along the ledge, and then, going towards the centre of the roof, peered curiously down a small skylight that had been left open in the mess-room for the benefit of the air.

"The peacock knows where to go for company," whispered Archy. "I always thought those German officers, with their everlasting strut, first cousin to the peacock family."

The peacock, as if satisfied with his view, came back to the parapet, and then a voice was heard in an eager whisper from the street, saying, in Italian: [Pg 158]

"Pippo! my Pippo! Come back to me. Come back to me, Pippo. Ungrateful bird! For you I have nearly starved myself, and have remained in my cellar when I might have been safe elsewhere. Dear Pippo, come back!"

A dark spot against the wall, under the window, resolved itself into the figure of an old Genoese woman, well known as Mother Nina, whose pet the peacock had been for many years, and who had miraculously kept the bird out of sight for months.

Pippo seemed totally disinclined to accept this cordial invitation to return to his foster-mother, and showed his indifference by again tipping cautiously towards the open skylight. Archy, however, felt sorry for the poor old woman crouching under the window, and, seeing a trellis-work covered with vines by the side of the building, he quickly swung himself up on the roof, and moved softly towards the peacock, which seemed absorbed in contemplation of Colonel Schlippersgill and his companions under the skylight. Some words now floated up from the deep, guttural German throats. Archy did not understand German, but presently Colonel Schlippersgill himself spoke in English: [Pg 159]

"Eef it were not for dose damned golonies in Ameriga, der blace would haf been relieved long ago. I would be glad der see der defel himself eef he would shtop der bang, bang—"

That allusion to "damned golonies" was too much for Archy's temper. He seized the huge old peacock by the legs, and, giving it a vicious swing, which brought a frantic and ear-piercing squawk from the creature and an agonized shriek from the old woman, dashed the bird down the skylight into the laps of the German officers; and, at the same moment, the last shell of the day's bombardment struck a corner of the building with a loud explosion, hurling the old woman through the open window, where her yells, the peacock's screams, and the violence of the explosion made Bedlam. The uproar raised the whole street, and a crowd collected as if by magic. The German officers, wildly excited, rushed about bawling in German and English, while the old woman and the peacock maintained a duet of screams that could be heard half a mile.

Meanwhile Archy, as innocent as a lamb, was at Captain Curtis's side, who, leaning up against the wall, added his robust haw-haws to the general commotion. [Pg 160]

In the midst of the racket and confusion, Colonel Schlippersgill rushed to the door, and, raising his hand for silence, bellowed out:

"Mine friends, 'twas der peacock."

At this a clear, boyish voice on the edge of the crowd rang out:

"The peacock was looking for company." The people roared with laughter, except the German officers, while Colonel Schlippersgill shouted, angrily:

"Arrest dot man!"

To this the voice replied:

"You'd better arrest the peacock."

Another roar saluted this, but the old Genoese woman, supposing the peacock was about to be taken from her, began to screech:

"Arrest my Pippo! Pippo mio—" and then poured out, at the top of her lungs, in English and Italian, the story of Pippo, varied with calling down maledictions on the head of Colonel Schlippersgill, whom, in some way, she held accountable for Pippo's misfortunes. She was interrupted by a file of soldiers marching down the narrow street in double time, with orders to investigate the disturbance. It did not take them half a minute to arrest the old woman and catch the peacock. Colonel Schlippersgill and his officers, swelling with rage, accompanied them voluntarily to the Provost Marshal's office. Captain Curtis and Archy followed, and the procession took its way towards headquarters. General Eliot happened to be there when the party appeared, and the investigation began. Colonel Schlippersgill and the old woman began their respective stories in English, but it soon resolved itself into a verbal duel in which the Colonel took to his native German and the old woman to her native Italian, with the result that even General Eliot's stern face resolved itself into a smile, the auditors were convulsed, and the soldier who held the peacock by the legs inadvertently let it go. When Pippo flew out of the window the old woman flew out of the door after it, and the investigation turned into a roaring farce, except so far as Colonel Schlippersgill was concerned, who went off swearing that he "would be damned but dat rapscallion dot galled der Cherman officers a beacock shouldt be arrested." The culprit, [Pg 161]

meanwhile, took his way gleefully up to Europa Point with Captain Curtis, and told the story in whispers to Mrs. Curtis and Langton. Judkins, who was cooking supper over a meagre fire, managed to catch it, and for once his hard features relaxed into a grin. After the scanty supper was over, when Archy, with a look of seraphic innocence was walking out of the hut, Judkins caught his eye, and, touching his cap, said, in a grim whisper:

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"Sarved them Dutchmen right, sir."

CHAPTER XI

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The spring of 1780 advanced, and the dauntless garrison on the Rock saw no prospect of relief, but every man, woman, and child of English birth only grew the more determined not to surrender. No complaints were heard from any of them, and those of the highest rank and most delicate nurture were the bravest where all were brave. Especially was this true of the women, and the spectacle of their patience and calm courage was inspiring to the men. The Spanish bombardment was not then the terrible thing it became afterwards, but it was sufficiently annoying, and many officers preferred, as Captain Curtis did, the safety of camping out for their families to the dangers of the barracks, which were often bombarded in the night-time. The town, too, had become sickly, and the higher and purer air of the rocks was better than the close quarters of the narrow streets and rickety houses, half wrecked by the bombardment, which were hot-beds of disease. Their supplies were still plentiful, such as they were; but in those days only a few coarse sorts of provisions could be kept for any length of time, and the besieged people had to live on salt beef, hard biscuit, beans, and the few small and inferior fish they could catch. The hard fare told sadly on most of those who had to endure it, but Archy Baskerville positively throve on it, and grew taller and broader and ruddier every day.

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Some weeks passed before the return of Don Martin de Soltomayer, the Spanish Commander-in-Chief, and before Archy could take any steps towards passing through the Spanish lines. In that time Langton grew much better, and was able to walk about, although still pale and weak. Archy took the most devoted care of him, and found also plenty of time to do many small services for Mrs. Curtis, who learned to love him; and as for Dolly, she soon came to think him almost as agreeable a person as Judkins, and her heart was quite won when, once she was a little ill, Archy sneaked out at night and surreptitiously milked the one old cow still left the garrison, and which was especially reserved for the sick. Mrs. Curtis reproved him for it, but her reproaches sat lightly on Archy—by which it will be seen that he was far from a perfect young man.

He was also an expert fisherman, and spent a good deal of his time on the sea-shore, from whence he would bring nearly every day a few miserable fish, which were esteemed the greatest delicacy by Mrs. Curtis, to whom Archy always gave them. Musa, the Moor, was generally hanging about the shore, engaged in the same employment. He was silent and uncommunicative by nature, but Archy's irrepressible cordiality and affability were such that he would have been on good terms eventually with an ogre, so that after a little while a sort of friendship came to subsist between them. At long intervals Musa would disappear for several days at a time, and Archy knew well enough that this time was spent in expeditions to the African coast. Sometimes Musa would succeed in getting across the Straits, and sometimes, after watching his chance for days, he would be unable to elude the Spanish cruisers, and would return to Gibraltar.

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In the latter part of March the Spanish Commander-in-Chief came back, and Archy, without any trouble, got permission to go with a flag of truce to the Spanish headquarters. Langton, who was still far from well, was extremely anxious to go with him to the Spanish camp, and, as Archy had permission to take one companion, he yielded to Langton's importunities and agreed to let him go.

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"Although I know I shall have to lug you back up these rocks; you will never be able to get back alone, as weak as you are," he added; at which Judkins, who was standing by, touched his cap respectfully, and said:

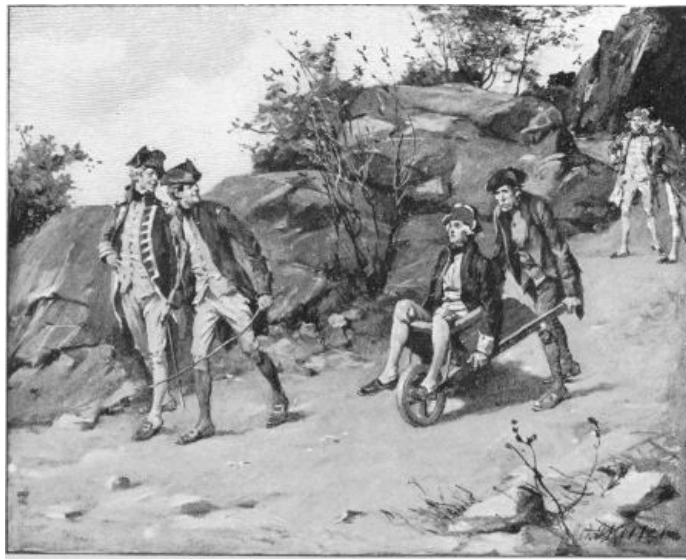
"If Mr. Langton ain't able to climb up, sir, or to git down, for that matter, there's a fine, strong wheelbarrow here, and I can trundle him both ways quite convenient."

Langton, bursting out laughing, cried:

"That is the very thing. But we must leave the wheelbarrow at the Land Port. The Spaniards would shoot us on sight in such a rig."

At mid-day, by tacit consent, the bombardment and the reply always abated—and in that interval an odd procession made its way towards the Land Port. Archy, laughing uproariously, with Captain Curtis smiling broadly, preceded the wheelbarrow. In it sat Langton, quite composed and dignified, and evidently enjoying his ride, while Judkins, looking as serious as an undertaker, trundled him carefully down the steep paths. Neither Archy's jeers, nor chaff from those of his brother officers he met, nor the smiles of ladies and children, disturbed Langton, who calmly descended at the Land Port, tightened his belt, straightened his cap, and announced that he was ready to see the Spanish Commander and his whole staff.

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LANGTON WAS TAKEN DOWN THE HILL IN A WHEELBARROW

A soldier, with a white handkerchief tied to a ramrod, went in advance of them towards the isthmus. As soon as he was perceived, an officer in the uniform of the Walloon regiment came towards them, and they met about half-way between the Spanish and English lines. The officer, a remarkably handsome young man, introduced himself as Lieutenant Von Helmstadt, of the Walloon regiment, and Archy handed him a letter from General Eliot to Don Martin, which he received with great respect, raising his cap as he did so, and saying:

"I will conduct you, with pleasure, if you will submit to the usual custom of being blindfolded?"

"Certainly," responded Archy, taking out his handkerchief, which was bound tightly over his eyes by Von Helmstadt, and Langton and the soldier were treated likewise.

Thus blindfolded, they stumbled on for a half-mile through the Spanish lines. Presently they realized that they were entering a tent, and Von Helmstadt removing the handkerchiefs from their eyes, they found themselves in the tent of Don Martin. The Spanish Commander-in-Chief was a handsome, middle-aged man, with a truly Spanish dignity and suavity. The party was introduced by Von Helmstadt, and Archy produced General Eliot's letter, which Don Martin read attentively, and then folded up.

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"You would find it extremely difficult to get through Spain, even with the best passports," he said, in French. "Our people do not readily distinguish between the English and the Americans, and they are now unreasonably exasperated against the English."

"I know it, sir," answered Archy, respectfully; "but if you will give me the passports I will take my chances."

"It is a matter for consideration," continued Don Martin. "I could not guarantee your safety a mile beyond my lines. I shall have to lay the affair before my Government, and I will inform you of the result."

Archy, who was quick of wit, saw in a moment that Don Martin had no overweening desire to pass him through, and the immediate turning of the conversation towards an indifferent subject convinced him that he would not soon see the outside world. After a few minutes they rose, Don Martin saying, with great dignity:

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"Present my best compliments to General Eliot, and say to him I am most happy to hear of his continued good health, and that I will immediately communicate with him by letter concerning this matter."

They were again blindfolded before leaving the tent, and so made their way back to the British lines, accompanied by Von Helmstadt. The manners of this young Walloon officer had been most courteous, and on parting he said, good-humoredly, "I hope that none of our balls has a message for you."

"The same to you," responded Langton.

As soon as they were out of ear-shot, Langton said, significantly, to Archy:

"You'll not get out."

"You think so?"

"I know it. But you'll see all the fun"—this somewhat lugubriously.

Archy walked on, sad and disappointed, and did not even smile when Langton climbed into the wheelbarrow and Judkins rushed it up the steep roadway at a smart gait.

As might have been foreseen, Don Martin did nothing towards getting Archy to France.

A courteous and ornate reply was received promptly to General Eliot's letter, and after that came a long silence. Then followed a series of letters, requesting all sorts of proof that Archy was what he represented himself to be. These, Don Martin always politely explained, were in the usual order, and came not from him, but from the Minister at Madrid.

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Archy was asked to show his uniform and sword. He had neither. There were more letters, more asseverations of a desire to pass him through; but the upshot of all the negotiations was that Archy never found he had made the slightest real progress towards getting out. He wrote many letters to his uncle, and even to Lord Bellingham, trusting to the chance of Musa's getting them across to the African coast; but even while writing them he felt the uselessness of it. And, after a while, what seemed to him a strange thing came to pass. In spite of his being a prisoner, he began to be heart and soul with the British garrison. As he explained it, in a burst of confidence, to Langton:

"I ought not to want you to win. I ought to wish that the Spaniards should march in to-morrow morning; but I don't—and I can't. Don't mistake me. I would lay down my life this moment to drive you out of North America. That is my country, and there you are my enemies; but, dash me, Langton, if I can spend months here, eating your bread, such as it is, well treated by everybody, seeing what a gallant fight you are making against the Spaniards, without feeling as one of you. I suppose it is clean against the articles of war to feel so, but I can't help it."

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"I would feel the same way, I dare say, under the same circumstances," replied Langton. "You see, you are not a prisoner on American ground—or English ground either, for that matter; that makes all the difference in the world. And, besides, you are not treated as a prisoner. You would be a queer fish not to feel as you do."

"At all events, I shall do my duty; and if that old *hidalgo*, Don Martin de Stick-in-the-mud, thinks I mean to give up trying to get away from here, he does not know Archibald Baskerville, Esquire—that much is plain. I have written him letters in English, French, and Spanish—such French and Spanish! I dare say the old fellow finds the reading of them as hard work as I do the writing them, and I can keep it up as long as he can."

The quiet endurance which was necessary to bear this life of tedium and hardship patiently had been left out in Archy's make-up, and he became restless, and yearned for an adventure of some sort. Naturally his mind turned towards the sea, and he began to wish that he might go with Musa on one of his expeditions across the Straits. He knew very well that if captured he would be taken for an Englishman, and the chances were ten to one against him then; but he had no notion of being captured. Musa, under the circumstances, would meet with great indulgence, as the Spaniards were extremely anxious to turn the neutrality of the Moors into active friendship.

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The very day this scheme entered his mind he went down to the shore early in the morning, and found Musa getting his lines ready to fish from the rocks. They were quite alone, and Archy began, artfully:

"Do you know, Musa, I believe I should die if I were to be shut up like this anywhere I could not see salt-water. I am a sea-officer, you know; and in my own dear country, before I went in the navy, I lived on a great, salt bay—like a sea, really—and I never remember the time I did not know how to manage a boat."

Musa's reply to this was a little discouraging.

"No doubt your excellency can manage a boat. But, generally, the officers of a big ship do not know how to manage a little boat. They seem to think they can do as much with a small boat as with a big ship, and they can't."

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"Musa," said Archy, presently, "I have read something of the history of the Moors in Spain. What great fellows for fighting were those Moors! I dare say some of your ancestors were chieftains there."

"Yes," answered Musa, proudly, "and they did not yield to the Spaniards—they died fighting. Only the women and children were left alive."

Archy having found a subject dear to Musa's heart, lost no time in cultivating it. When he had exhausted all he knew about the Moors in Spain, he left Musa, and, going up into the town, begged and borrowed the few books in the garrison that treated of the Moors in Spain, and eagerly read them. Every time he met Musa he had a new supply of heroic actions of the Moors to tell about. He got a volume of Shakespeare, and, having mastered the story of Othello, told it very gravely, as an exact and well-authenticated history of the dependence of the state of Venice upon a Moorish commander. Musa was a man of character and abilities, but he had a tremendous supply of racial vanity, and Archy's artful praises of his country bore fruit immediately. Within a week Musa had agreed to take him on a trip to Tetuan, across the Straits, which he was planning for the first dark night. General Eliot's consent had to be gained; but after a private interview with him Archy came forth beaming. It had been arranged that two sets of despatches, duly authenticated and sealed, should be prepared—but one set was bogus. If captured, Musa and Archy were to frankly confess they were carrying despatches, and give up the bogus ones, and offer to get more if allowed to return to Gibraltar. This stratagem seemed so likely to succeed that both Archy and Musa were eager to be off, and two nights afterwards a cloudy sky and a moonless night saw them both in a small cutter belonging to the *Enterprise*, bound for the African side.

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Archy had persuaded Musa to take the English boat instead of the unwieldy tub with a huge lateen-sail with which the Moor was familiar, and with the one sail and the jib Archy felt capable of sailing to America if necessary. True, the cutter was of a build and rig unusual in the Mediterranean, and might excite suspicion on that account; but Archy, like a true sailor, preferred to take his chances in something that the wind could drive along than to the foreign boats, which he regarded with unmixed contempt. Under Captain Curtis's advice he put on the jacket and trousers of a Maltese sailor with a red fez, and about eleven o'clock at night they set sail for the African coast.

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The current which sets through the Straits was in their favor, as they were bound for Tetuan, about forty miles in a straight line from Gibraltar. Their great danger lay in running across the Spanish vessels, which cruised incessantly up and down the Straits, but the blockade was not then as strict as it afterwards became. They had a lantern with them, but carefully refrained from showing a light.

As they sailed along under a lowering sky—rare at that season—they frequently saw the lights of the Spanish cruisers, but they handled the boat so skilfully that they were not once hailed, much less overhauled. A sense of joy filled Archy's heart when he found himself again on the sea; and seeing his perfect familiarity with the boat Musa allowed him to manage it, only giving an occasional hint about the currents, with which Archy was unfamiliar. The wind did not fail them during the whole night, and next day, on a brilliant forenoon, they were off the old walled town of Tetuan, with its flanking towers showing clear against the glorious blue of an African sky.

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They sailed into the harbor and landed on a rickety old mole, crowded with Moors, Berbers, Arabs, and Jews. The British still maintained a consulate there, chiefly for the chance of communicating with Gibraltar, and, as soon as they landed, Archy went to the Consul's house. It was a low building, with many pillars, after the Moorish fashion, and under the quaint colonnade sat the Consul in a linen jacket and slippers, taking his noonday coffee.

When the handsome young Maltese sailor, as Archy looked to be, with a bag of letters over his shoulder, walked up to him in true Anglo-Saxon fashion, and said, "Good-morning, sir," the Consul nearly fell off his chair with surprise. But Archy soon made known who he was, and was very warmly greeted. The Consul eagerly asked his news and despatches, and when he found out that the Rock was well provisioned and the garrison was more indomitable than ever, he said:

"I will call the chiefs and principal men of the town together to-morrow, that I may tell them your story—for their respect for England and English rights will be very much increased thereby; and, meanwhile, you must be my guest."

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Archy was only too happy to accept, and spent the next twenty-four hours chiefly in gobbling oranges—the first fruit he had seen for months—and galloping up and down the environs of the town on a vicious donkey, with which he had several disagreements, that invariably ended in the donkey pitching him heels-over-head. But Archy did not mind a little thing like that, and was always ready to tackle the donkey again.

Next day a great assemblage of Tetuan notabilities met at the Consul's house, and while sitting around a tinkling fountain in the court-yard, with coffee, sherbet, and pipes, the Consul, seated in the middle, with Archy on one side and Musa on the other, began the story of the failure of the Spanish, so far, to capture Gibraltar. He spoke in Italian, which is the *lingua franca* of that region, and frequently turned to Archy and Musa for confirmation. Archy did not know a word of the *lingua franca*, but he nodded his head gravely whenever the Consul turned to him with a note of inquiry in his voice.

The chiefs and notabilities sat silent and attentive, puffing at their pipes; and it was plain that they were deeply impressed by what they heard. The confabulation broke up after several hours, and Archy returned to his amusement of stuffing oranges and riding donkeys.

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The Consul took a day or two to make up his despatches, and to get together the few and scant letters and despatches that he had received for the garrison by merchant-ships and such stray means of communication. They were concealed in oranges, hollowed out for the purpose, and put in a bag which was carefully stowed away in the cutter. As fresh fruit was not only the greatest luxury but the greatest necessity of the Gibraltar garrison, in which scurvy had appeared, the cutter was filled with as much as she could carry without impeding her sailing qualities—and then came the waiting for a dark night.

But the nights refused to grow dark, and, emboldened by their success in eluding the Spanish cruisers before, both Archy and Musa, on the third evening, determined to take the chances, and, the wind being fair, they sailed in the afternoon for Gibraltar.

Bright as was the night, and white as was their sail, it seemed as though they would slip through the blockading fleet as easily as they had six nights before. They passed several Spanish cruisers, and were hailed more than once; but their boat was so small, and holding only two men, no further effort was made to stop them. About two o'clock in the morning, when it really began to grow dark, and they were not more than ten miles from Gibraltar in a straight line, they found themselves unexpectedly close to a Spanish gun-brig. They were hailed, and, as before, paid no attention, and continued on their tack. The brig, however, put about and came after them, emphasizing her desire to speak with them by firing a blank cartridge at them. It was then high time to take some notice of it, but instead of heaving to they tacked for the brig, and in a few minutes were alongside. The Spanish officer of the deck, leaning over the rail, called out:

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"Who are you?"

"Let me come aboard and I will tell you," replied Musa.

In another minute he was on board, leaving Archy to hold the boat.

Archy could not catch the conversation between Musa and the Spanish lieutenant, but he saw Musa show the bogus despatches, then both went below and remained ten minutes, evidently in the captain's cabin. They came on deck again, and Musa had a little bag in his hand, and a letter. He swung himself into the cutter, the lieutenant and one or two of the watch called out "Good-bye!" and immediately they were proceeding in opposite directions.

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Musa stowed his bag away carefully, and then, in response to Archy's eager questions, said:

"He gave me fifty doubloons for my despatches, and a letter to the commanding officer of any Spanish vessel that may stop us, telling them to let us pass into Gibraltar, as we have brought them valuable news and may bring more."

"Hurrah!" cried Archy, under his breath.

But they were not stopped any more, and under cover of darkness they again slipped into Gibraltar Bay. About a mile from the nearest point of debarkation they were chased by a Spaniard, but a battery near by opened fire vigorously, and under cover of the cannonade they landed. It was then after sunrise, and the firing had roused the garrison.

As soon as they landed they went to headquarters, accompanied by a number of officers, including Captain Curtis and Langton and a crowd of other persons.

When they were in General Eliot's presence Musa motioned to Archy to speak, and Archy motioned to Musa—so there was silence.

"Will you proceed, Mr. Baskerville?" asked General Eliot.

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Archy, thus adjured, gave an account of the trip, and produced the letters and despatches.

Then Musa, with great dignity, laid the little bag of doubloons down on the table.

"Excellency, I was afraid to refuse them, but I do not consider the money mine," he said.

"Then whose is it?" asked General Eliot.

"I, as an officer, can take none of it," replied Archy, quickly.

"Musa, it is yours," said General Eliot, "and it does not half repay what you have done for us. As for you, Mr. Baskerville, I can only say that now, more than ever, we regard you as a friend instead of an enemy—a guest instead of a prisoner."

CHAPTER XII

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The siege proceeded determinedly, and every day the blockade grew stricter, and the garrison was hemmed in more closely both by land and sea. No naval expedition had been organized against the little British squadron that lay under the guns of the fortress, but it was scarcely thought probable that Admiral Barcelo, with his blockading fleet, which stretched the length of the Straits, would not attack it. Admiral Duff, who commanded the little British squadron of five ships, only one of which carried sixty guns, fully expected it, and made ready for it. Captain Curtis's ship, the *Enterprise*, of twenty-eight guns, being short of officers, Langton was formally assigned to her as soon as he was fully recovered. This left Archy alone in their hut on Europa Point. He had ostensibly nothing to do; but there are few occasions on which a kind heart, an active brain, and good legs and arms cannot find some useful work, and he found it in many ways. The officers and men were so vigilant, night and day, at the guns, erecting new batteries, repairing old ones, shifting guns from a good position to a better, that they could give but little attention to the women and children. There was always plenty for them to do, and Archy, who at home in America had been accustomed to being waited on every moment by black servants, now very cheerfully did for others what he had been used to having done for him. Whenever there was a distribution of supplies he was always on hand to help the weak, the sick, and the old with their precious burdens.

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Every night before turning in Captain Curtis would show a light from his cabin window, which meant to his anxious wife on the Rock that all was well, and in reply a lantern would be flashed to him from the little hut on Europa.

One night in the early part of June, 1780, Archy was walking back to the hut, after showing the light, when he saw Musa standing in the pathway. The night was dark and rainy, and a Levanter—that wind which brings cold and misery and illness—was blowing fiercely. Musa touched him on the arm, and spoke in perfectly good English:

"Good-evening, Excellency."

"Good-evening, Musa. What are you doing up here this time of night?"

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"I came to see his Excellency, Captain Curtis. I thought I could read the lights on the ship, and that he was ashore, but he is on his ship. I am going to him now."

"Is there to be a night attack?"

"How should I know, Excellency?" answered Musa, who could keep his own counsel.

Archy went back to the hut, left the lantern, and said, cheerfully, to Mrs. Curtis:

"I think I shall go down to the mole and ask Captain Curtis if I may stay aboard ship with Langton," which was a very usual thing for him to do.

Archy walked fast down the hill, for it was nearly nine o'clock, after which no one was permitted to pass the sentries except by giving the countersign. He reached the new mole just as the slight commotion of relieving the guard was heard. The *Enterprise* was anchored no great distance from the mole, in advance of the other four small vessels of the squadron near by, and the last boat was just putting off. Langton was in it, and Musa also, and in response to Langton's cordial invitation Archy jumped aboard.

Arrived at the ship, they found Captain Curtis taking a walk on the quarter-deck before turning in. Langton asked permission for Archy to remain on board all night, which Captain Curtis at once granted, and then turned to speak to Musa, who evidently had something to communicate. [Pg 185]

Archy followed Langton below, to a little cabin which had been given him, not on account of his rank, but because of the lack of the full number of officers on the ship. As soon as they were alone, Archy said, significantly:

"I think that Arab fellow suspects an attack is to be made to-night."

"Very likely. If Captain Curtis had been Admiral Barcelo he would have burned or scuttled us long ago."

"I shall sleep on the floor here, if you don't mind."

"Do you expect me to give you my bunk?"

"If I wanted it I'd throw you out, but as you are a little boy, and the grandson of a lord, you may keep it."

"I wonder what our respected grandfather would say if he had to sleep in a hole like this?"

"He would say a whole dictionaryful, and smash everything he could lay his hands on besides."

"Pleasant old person, he must be."

"We will make a visit to Bellingham Castle together when the war is over—when we have walloped you, and when I am a post-captain in the American navy, and you are still a midshipman in the steerage." [Pg 186]

At which Langton, now quite as strong as Archy, kicked at him, and the two immediately engaged in a friendly and noiseless scuffle, for Captain Curtis was a strict disciplinarian, and kept an orderly ship.

Just as Langton had succeeded in getting Archy down, and had planted his knee firmly on that young gentleman's broad chest, the cabin door accidentally swung open, and there was Captain Curtis passing by. Both young fellows jumped as if they were shot. Captain Curtis said nothing, but his look of inquiry was answered by Archy's saying:

"Mr. Langton and I were having a friendly tussle over—what was it, Lanky? Our grandfather, or the war?"

"The war," replied Langton, smiling.

"You may have a tussle of another sort to-night," said Captain Curtis, coolly. "There is a prospect of an attack on us before morning. If you wish to go ashore," he continued, turning to Archy, "I can send you in my gig."

Now the idea of being on shore when anything was going on aboard ship was harrowing to Archy, and he made haste to protest. [Pg 187]

"I have no objections to your staying," said Captain Curtis. "I think an attempt will be made to burn the ship, and every able-bodied man who can handle a bucket will be welcome. You will not, of course, be called upon to do any fighting, but you must provide yourself with a cutlass and a brace of pistols to defend yourself in case the Spaniards should board us—for in the *mêlée* they will not stop to inquire your nationality. Good-night," and Captain Curtis passed on.

Langton went out and called the master-at-arms, who produced a cutlass and a pair of navy pistols, and Archy, placing them under his pillow, rolled himself in a blanket on the floor and meant to go fast asleep. But he could not. The wind rose and the ship began to roll. Neither could Langton sleep; so they spent the hours in talking in whispers, chiefly about their family concerns, and each anticipating, after the fashion of the young and hopeful, that their whole lives were to be ordered exactly as they wished. Archy even predicted that Langton would distinguish himself so much that he would be offered a peerage, and then his grandfather, in default of other heirs, [Pg 188]

would have him made Lord Bellingham, of Bellingham Castle. Langton, who was of a cooler nature than Archy, laughed at this, but admitted that he would not mind being Lord Bellingham's heir, and would do the handsome thing by Archy, by his mother, his sisters—everybody.

Midnight came and went, and just as two bells were striking they heard a hail on the opposite side of the ship. The reply came back immediately:

"This is the *Hind*, provision-ship, from England."

"But that is no English voice that says so," were Langton's words to Archy as they both rose, and, taking their arms, stepped out into the gangway.

They heard the officer of the deck shout "Keep off!" and the next minute every crack and cranny of the ship was illuminated with an unearthly red light. Langton rushed up on deck, followed by Archy.

Within half a cable's length of them was a fire-ship, with six others following in a compact semicircle. The decks were glowing redly with the combustibles that were already lighted to throw aboard the *Enterprise*, and the few men who were to fire the ship were dashing the burning fuses at her; but they fell short, and dropped harmlessly in the black water. Captain Curtis had already ordered the boats to be lowered away, and this was done with the utmost steadiness and quickness. When Langton stepped into his boat, Archy involuntarily, and without asking himself why he did so, followed him. No one ordered him back—in fact, no one thought of him. All were engrossed, as he was, in the terrible work before them of grappling and destroying the fire-ships, which the wind was driving on to the *Enterprise* and her consorts. With a yell, the Spaniards on each of the fire-ships dropped into the boats they were towing astern, and, taking to their oars, made off rapidly in the darkness of the night.

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Every ship in the British squadron was awake and alive then, and their boats had taken the water. The *Enterprise*, though, being the farthest out, seemed to be the target for which all the fire-ships were aiming; and, borne by wind and tide, they were drifting frightfully fast upon her. Her boats, however, managed, in the most seaman-like manner, to intercept them, and grappled with them, while the combustibles on their decks were blazing, the flames were running up their rigging, and the tremendous explosions of powder crashed out and made the solid rock to shake. The boats, in danger of being swamped every moment, of being blown skyward, and of being engulfed in fire, yet did their duty manfully. Langton's boat, with another one, made fast to the foremost fire-ship, and the men, bending to their oars with a will, towed it blazing and exploding to the rocks, where it was run ashore, and the boat made off just as one last crash blew the burning hulk to pieces.

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The garrison took the alarm, and a furious cannonade from a hundred guns burst upon the night. The scene was awful beyond description. The very Rock itself seemed to blaze with light from its batteries, while the red glare from the burning vessels cast a vivid, unearthly brightness upon sea and shore and ships. In the midst of it, two large Spanish frigates were seen to emerge from the darkness, as it were, into the circle of fire, and steer straight for the little *Enterprise*. The batteries on shore instantly directed all their fire towards the two ships, and that, with the smart broadside from the ship, and the shells that were dropping everywhere, forced them to withdraw.

For two hours the fight with the fire-ships continued, but at the end of that time they were all driven ashore, and lay in wrecked and smouldering masses on the rocks.

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Archy scarcely remembered what part he had in the affair, except that he sat in the stern-sheets with Langton and helped to handle the grappling-irons while the men pulled; but when it was all over, and, smoke-begrimed and weary, they clambered over the side of the ship, Captain Curtis met them, and, grasping Langton's hand, said:

"I never saw a boat better handled in my life—and you, Mr. Baskerville, did your part well."

That was praise enough for Langton and Archy.

It was nearly four o'clock before they were ready to turn in, and dawn was beginning to appear. The town had been thoroughly alarmed, and crowds ran down to the mole as soon as the danger was over.

Archy recognized Judkins's stalwart figure in the dim light as he trotted down the hill, trundling the identical wheelbarrow which had been Langton's coach on a former occasion. As soon as he reached the shore he began to fill his wheelbarrow with floating pieces of the wreck for fire-wood, which was very scarce.

Judkins was a thrifty soul, and before anybody had time to draw a long breath, after the dangers they had escaped, he was looking out for the comfort of Mrs. Curtis and Dolly in the matter of fuel.

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At four o'clock Langton had to take his watch, and, on going below a few minutes beforehand, he found Archy snugly tucked in his berth and sleeping like a baby, after his night of excitement.

The failure of this attack apparently discouraged the Spaniards, and as the summer progressed they seemed to rely more upon starving the garrison out than upon a direct attack with their present means. They therefore confined themselves to a strict blockade by night and day, and devoted all their energies to making new and tremendous fortifications on the isthmus, upon

which they mounted great numbers of heavy guns, provided with vast magazines of ammunition. This last was very injudicious, as it turned out. General Eliot, observing all they did, purposely let them carry the work, during the summer and autumn, to a certain point, disturbing them little; but he had a deep and far-reaching scheme in regard to this. He had determined upon a sortie, and on the evening of the 26th of November, after gun-fire and the closing of the gates for the night, the orders were given. Everything had been arranged beforehand, but only two or three officers besides General Eliot knew of the plan, as the utmost secrecy was essential.

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As most of the regular garrison was necessary to remain in charge of the fortress, the attacking body of two thousand men was made up largely of the sailors and marines from the squadron in the harbor. Captain Curtis was to be in command of the left column, and Langton was one of the young officers to be under him.

The men for the sortie were to assemble without beat of the drum about three o'clock in the morning, when the moon would be gone down; but they were notified at nine o'clock the night before. There was no suspicion of anything unusual in the air until, at half-past nine o'clock that night, Captain Curtis and Langton were seen coming up the path towards the hut, and the little group assembled there knew in a moment that something unlooked for had happened.

Mrs. Curtis and Archy were sitting within the rude shelter, while outside, in the full radiance of a brilliant moon that lighted the heavens with glory, sat Dolly, wrapped up in a huge old boat-cloak of her father's, with Judkins by her. The two had been singing, and, as Judkins's bashfulness forbade him to sing in the presence of Mrs. Curtis, the two had retired, according to custom, to a nook in the rock, whence they could be heard but not seen.

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"Now, Judkins," Dolly was saying, "we only have time to sing the evening hymn before I must go to bed. I always think of papa on his ship when I sing it, and wish he were here to listen to it."

"True for you, Miss Dolly," answered Judkins, gravely. "It's 'opin' I am that my honored cap'n may be with his little girl more than he is now—when them bloody Spaniards leaves off tryin' to beat us off our own ground, and goes 'ome and minds their business as they ought to."

And then their voices rose in sweetness—Judkins's rich barytone and Dolly's bird-like soprano; and they had two reverent hearers in Captain Curtis and Langton, who stopped a little distance off and listened, with bared heads, to this sweet and simple hymn.

"Why, there's papa now—and Mr. Langton too!" screamed Dolly, and, according to custom, she flew towards her father and swung around him.

Mrs. Curtis forbore to ask any questions until Dolly was gone, after a specially affectionate good-night from her father; and when she was out of the way, Captain Curtis said but one word:

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"Sortie."

But that one word meant volumes. Archy had never ceased to admire and respect the fortitude of the women in all the dreadful events that he had seen of the siege, and he admired it more than ever when he observed the calm courage with which Mrs. Curtis received this announcement. There was danger in the attempt—extreme danger; but instead of weakly bewailing it, and distressing Captain Curtis by her fears, Mrs. Curtis showed a gentle self-control and a desire that Captain Curtis should have an opportunity to serve his country still further which was nobly inspiring.

Their time was short, and in a few minutes Captain Curtis and Langton were on their way back. Archy and Judkins were with them. As they walked along Archy was considering anxiously how he could manage to go along with the attacking column and yet observe his character as a prisoner of war.

Besides his natural and indomitable love of adventure, life on the Rock was a drearily monotonous business, and any break in it would have been eagerly sought by a young man of less daring disposition than Archy Baskerville. But—a non-combatant—he was turning over in his mind what device he could hit upon on which to base his request, when Judkins showed him the way.

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"If you please, sir," said Judkins to Captain Curtis, "maybe the likes o' me ought not to ax it, but there will be some poor wounded men lyin' in the trenches and ditches after this here sortie, and I'd be monstrous glad, sir, if you could let me go out, sir, in the rear, sir, along with the men from the 'orspital, to help fetch them poor souls back, when they can't get back of themselves, sir."

"Very well," replied Captain Curtis, "I think you can be useful, and I will mention it to the Commander-in-Chief."

"And I, sir," said Archy, in a wheedling voice. "You'll hardly do it for Judkins and refuse me? I assure you, sir, I will not go one step beyond where I am ordered; and you see, sir, what a strong fellow I am. Judkins and I could manage a stretcher famously between us—couldn't we, Judkins?"

"Lord! yes, sir," was Judkins's answer, with a broad grin of approbation.

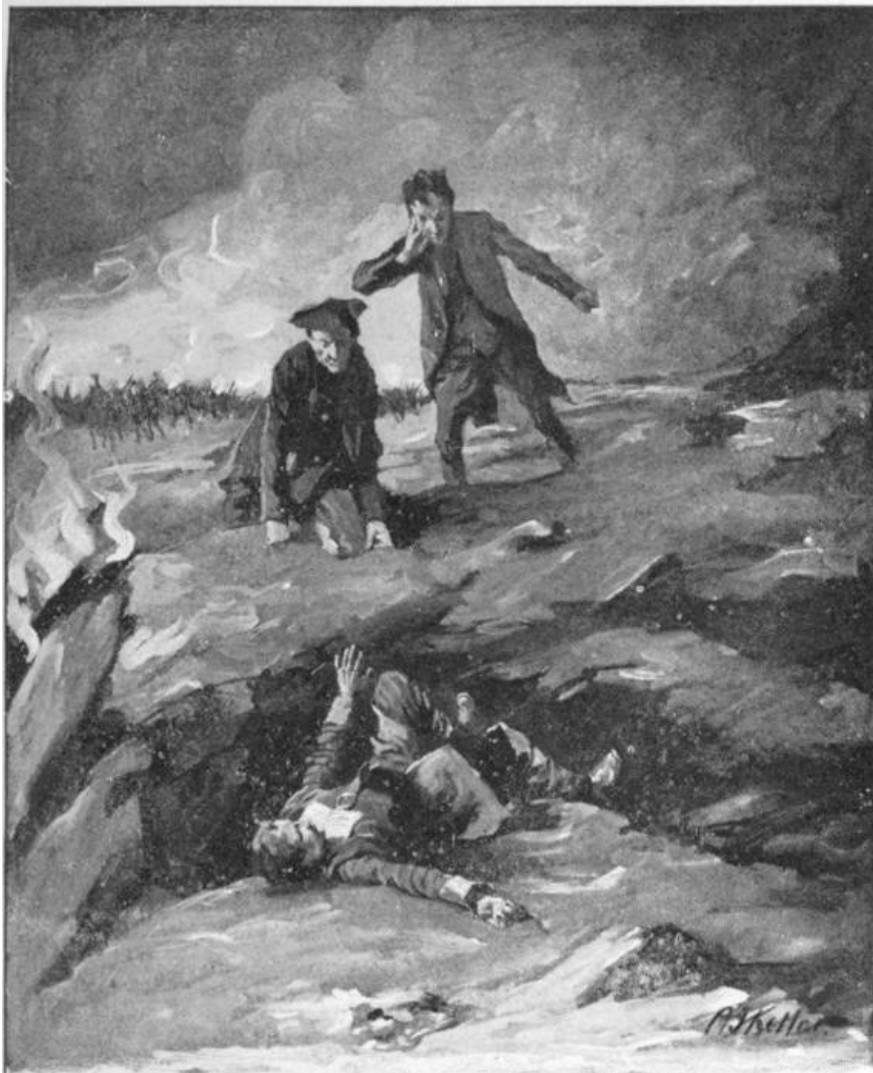
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And so, at three o'clock of a dark morning, when the column moved out in death-like silence, behind them marched the hospital corps, and with that corps were Archy Baskerville and old Judkins.

The night was pitch-dark, and the three detachments marched out in perfect silence. The Spaniards had no suspicion of an attack until the first division was directly at the outer line of fortifications. Then the sentries quickly gave the word, the drums beat the alarm, and the camp of fourteen thousand men was roused in an instant. The first onslaught, however, of the British was irresistible. They overpowered the guard, and the work of firing and destroying the guns and fortifications immediately began. Before the Spanish Commander-in-Chief, in the darkness and confusion, could get his troops under arms the blowing up of the magazines had begun, and whole batteries of guns had been spiked. The bastions and gabions were fired, and so rapid and thorough were the British in their work that it was all over before the Spaniards realized what was happening, and the British were making for the Land Port gate.

The Spanish camp had been thrown into the greatest confusion, and their first line of fortifications was now past saving. The noise and the bursting out of flames and the explosions of powder were dreadful, but all were between the British and their foes. The losses of the detachment had been trifling, and Archy Baskerville had found nothing to do except to stand off and watch the quick progress of events. But while the three divisions were retreating rapidly and in good order to the gate, he saw in a ditch in front of him an officer lying on his side and groaning with agony.

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HE SAW AN OFFICER LYING IN A DITCH

"Help here!" cried Archy; and in another moment Judkins was at his side, and the two had the officer on a stretcher and were carrying him with a rush towards the British lines, the officer meanwhile feebly protesting.

"No, no," he cried; "let there be one Spaniard to die with honor at his post."

And in a moment more, by the light of burning timbers and bursting bombs, Archy saw that he was the young Walloon officer, Von Helmstadt, whom he had seen months before at the time of his first effort to get out of the fortress. Day was breaking as they carried him fainting into the hospital. The surgeons managed to revive him, and then, examining him, told him he must lose his leg.

"No, no," he cried; "better to die at once! Why did not that brave young man leave me to my fate? All would have been over by this time."

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Archy could stand no more, but rushed out and up to Europa Point, where he found Mrs. Curtis watching and waiting.

"I have not been in my bed this night," she said. Archy, with a bursting heart, told her of Von Helmstadt. He had a deep feeling of sympathy for the young Walloon officer, so far from home, and in such heart-breaking straits. There was, however, little else but rejoicing on the Rock that day, for the result of the sortie was in the highest degree favorable to the besieged. The Spaniards saw in two hours the complete destruction of what had cost them months of labor and millions of money to construct. They seemed paralyzed by their loss, and for a while the besieged had a respite.

But there was no respite in the blockade. The supplies left by Rodney's fleet were beginning to grow very scant, and although all eyes in the garrison every morning for months scanned the sea for the sails of a British fleet, none appeared. As the year 1780 drew to a close the prospects of the garrison grew darker. The sufferings of the sick were acute, and none more so than those of poor Von Helmstadt, who daily grew worse. He resisted the taking-off of his leg, which the doctors told him was the only means of saving his life, until at last General Eliot himself went to his bedside and begged him to submit.

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"I have a reason, sir," replied Von Helmstadt. "I am engaged to marry a beautiful and charming girl. If I lose my leg and live, how can I ask her to tie herself to a mutilated creature, as I shall be, for life? Yet I know her constancy so well that I am sure she will be the more determined on fulfilling her promise to me."

"But your duty to your country," argued General Eliot, "and your duty to your family? Have you not a mother, a father—some one whose heart would be broken if you sacrifice your life to this?"

Von Helmstadt remained silent for a moment.

"Yes," he said, after a pause, while his eyes filled with tears, "I have a mother and a father, too. You are right, General. It is my duty to live, even if I live mutilated."

The whole garrison took the deepest interest in this brave young man. The best of their poor supplies was reserved for him, and nothing was too much to be done for him in the hope, at least, of lessening his sufferings. Archy and Judkins became heroes as his rescuers. Every day Archy visited him, and was received affectionately by him, even in his utmost misery. His patience was so touching, his courage so unbroken, that often Archy would leave the bedside completely unmanned by the sight of Von Helmstadt's sufferings, and the sorrowful conviction that all was in vain. Nor was the heroic young officer forgotten by his own friends, and daily flags of truce came to inquire after him and to bring messages and letters from his comrades.

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He bore the agony of amputation with extraordinary bravery, but after a day or two of hope he grew very ill, and soon it was seen that the end was near.

Never had Archy Baskerville in his life felt so painful an interest as in this gallant young man, whom he had helped to save from one death only to see him die in a more lingering and distressing manner. They were the only two souls within the gates of the beleaguered fortress who had not common cause with the besieged. At last, after four weeks of suffering, the end came on Christmas Eve. The time itself was solemn instead of joyful, and it was made more sad by the death of the brave young prisoner for whom every one in the fortress felt such tender sympathy. The Spaniards were notified immediately that the body would be carried to them the next day with military honors.

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Never could Archy Baskerville forget the Christmas of 1780. It was a beautiful, mild day, but to those brave souls imprisoned and fighting for their lives on the Rock of Gibraltar there was a melancholy glory in the day which seemed to make their situation the more poignant. Want and scarcity prevailed in all things except the implements of war and destruction. There was no Christmas cheer, but the congregations that assembled in the garrison chapel and the Catholic church in the town were quiet and resigned, like people who have ever before them the prospect of death and bereavement. As soon as the morning services were over the sad procession was formed to carry Von Helmstadt's body to the Spaniards. It was determined to take it by water, and all the boats in the little squadron were drawn up at the new mole for the escort, while on the Spanish side a similar procession was waiting to move.

The flag on the hospital was at half-mast, and a large detachment of troops, with all the highest officers of the garrison, and a body of seamen and marines under Captain Curtis's command, was formed to receive the body when it was brought out. Archy Baskerville, as the one who had brought the young Walloon officer in, was given a place among the mourners who followed the gun-carriage on which the coffin lay, wrapped in the Spanish flag.

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To the solemn strains of the dead-march and the booming of minute-guns the procession moved, followed by General Eliot as chief mourner, with many officers of high rank, and Archy Baskerville, the youngest person among them, walking in the last line. They reached the new mole presently, where the body was transferred to the first cutter of the *Enterprise*, and Captain Curtis then took command. At the same moment that the boats put off from the British side the procession started from the Spanish side. Midway in the bay they met, when the Spaniards received the body, and the British cutters turned back. Out of respect to the Spaniards, who would not have understood the custom, the British refrained from playing the lively airs with which they endeavor to lighten the hearts of the men returning from a comrade's funeral, and

slowly and solemnly they pulled back to their own ground.

Never had the prospects of Archy Baskerville's reaching France seemed more improbable than on that melancholy Christmas night of 1780. Yet within twenty-four hours he found himself far beyond both the British and Spanish lines, and free—free to take his desperate chances of escape through a country where he might at any moment be mistaken for an Englishman, and where an Englishman could expect no mercy. [Pg 205]

The evening of Christmas Day was one of mist and gloom. Archy had spent the early part of the afternoon in the hut at Europa, where they had made a little festival, such as their poor means allowed, for Dolly, and she and Judkins had sung them a Christmas hymn; and then, as people will in sad times, they had sat around the scanty fire and told of happy Christmas-times in the past. Archy felt strangely unhappy. Besides the sorrows of their own condition, he had heart-breaking anxieties about his country and the mortal struggle in which she was engaged, and even his hopeful and buoyant spirit gave way under the misery and monotony of the long months of the siege.

About eight o'clock they separated—Captain Curtis and Langton to return to their ship, and Archy, out of pure restlessness, going down to the shore with them. Mrs. Curtis's last words spoke the hope and cheerfulness which seemed to dwell in every one of the heroic women on the Rock. [Pg 206]

"Good-night, Archy," she said. "All will be bright in the morning," and Dolly swung round his neck, asking:

"Why don't you laugh, Archy, and be merry, and make us all laugh, as you always do?"

"Because I can't now, Dolly," answered Archy, kissing her and putting her down. "But next time you see me I will be just as gay as a bird."

Then, with Captain Curtis and Langton, he started for the shore. At the mole the *Enterprise* boat was waiting, and the last that Archy heard in the darkness of a misty night was a cheery "Good-night—good-night!" from Captain Curtis and Langton. Long time was it to be before he was to hear those well-loved voices again. Archy walked along the shore towards the isthmus in the dusky evening. He kept close to the shore, listening to the boom of the waves, and so absorbed in his own melancholy thoughts that he scarcely noticed where he was going. The shore was well patrolled, and it was common enough for him to walk there in the evening.

At one point within the English lines a number of small boats were tied to a huge stake, and into one of these Archy stepped and seated himself. The sentry who was passing looked curiously at him, and then, saluting, went on. He was a man in the garrison who knew Archy personally, and he did not think it strange that the young American midshipman should pause in his walk and rest a while in the boat. [Pg 207]

The mist was gathering fast, and the wind was sweeping in from the Mediterranean, and it was growing very dark. Archy was roused by hearing the nine-o'clock gun fired. He lifted his head and the thought came—

"I shall have to communicate with Captain Curtis, so as to pass the sentries and get back to Europa."

He turned to spring ashore, but he found the line had parted, and the boat had drifted out a considerable distance. He felt in the bottom for oars. There were none. The darkness had descended like a pall, and the wind suddenly became a gust. He could see nothing, but he knew that wind and tide were driving him towards the Spanish lines. He was by nature well-equipped to meet danger, and in a moment his brooding depression—the rarest of moods for him—gave place to coolness, calmness, and perfect self-possession. He was a good swimmer, and quickly determined that his best chance lay in swimming ashore as soon as the boat drifted near enough. He took off his jacket and shoes, fastened them into a bundle under his arm, and, fixing his eyes on the lights on shore, quietly waited until they grew nearer. [Pg 208]

All at once a flood of black rain descended that blotted out everything. The wind seemed to blow from all quarters at the same instant, and the boat's head swung round. The lights both on sea and shore disappeared, and Archy was drifting he knew not where.

He reflected that he was in no great danger of being upset, and if he drifted far enough he would be in the midst of the Spanish fleet. But in the darkness he had no idea how fast the boat was moving—he only knew the tide was swift and strong. Nor could he measure very well the time he had been in the boat. He listened intently for the striking of the bells in the little English squadron, but after straining his ears for an interminable time it seemed to him, as he sat in the little boat that rushed through the seething water in the blackness of darkness, the conviction came to him that he was far out of reach of that friendly and encouraging sound.

He could see neither to the right nor to the left of him, and at that moment he had an almost overpowering impulse to jump out of the boat and swim, so trying were the sitting still and being swept he knew not where; but he said to himself: [Pg 209]

"If I were swimming about in the darkness, how glad I would be if my hand struck this boat—how eagerly I would climb in! No; I'll stick to the boat until I can see more than ten feet ahead of me."

Ages passed, it seemed to him, for every hour is an age in such circumstances. He thought the day would never come. At last, when the dawn seemed as far off as ever—it was really only two o'clock in the morning—the rain ceased, and the atmosphere cleared enough for him to see that he was near the shore; and oh, joy! there was a light! He felt sure that he was far beyond the Spanish lines.

As his sharp eyes pierced the dim and unearthly light, which was increased by the declining moon that shone fitfully out of a still stormy sky, he saw that he was on a broken and irregular coast, and a black mass, from which he could faintly discern the light, he took to be buildings. He saw that he was being carried closer to the shore every moment, and in a little while he was near enough to jump overboard, not forgetting his jacket and shoes, and a few bold strokes landed him once more on hard earth.

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His first impulse was of sincere thankfulness. One of the great lessons he had learned of his immortal commander, Paul Jones, was that man should recognize his Maker, and he had never seen that great man either go into or come out of any danger without commending himself to the Most High; and having done this, Archy proceeded to follow Paul Jones's example further by taking the most active and energetic measures on his own account. He saw that he was approaching a homestead, large and imposing, with numerous outbuildings, and when he was close to it he saw that the light came from a small addition to the main pile, which was built around a court-yard, after the Spanish fashion.

Archy's quick mind had grasped the fact that if he spoke English he would at once be taken for either a spy or a deserter, and as he did not relish figuring in either of these characters, he determined to rely upon his small stock of French, and still smaller stock of Spanish, which last he had picked up while at Gibraltar.

Wet and shivering, and carrying his drenched jacket and shoes, he cautiously approached the small, unshuttered window from which the light proceeded, and peered in. The room was very humble, apparently that of an upper servant. A lamp had been left burning, and on the hearth fire still smouldered. A wooden platter with some food on it was on the hearth. The room was quite empty, and Archy shrewdly suspected that it was, perhaps, the quarters of some privileged servant, who had gone out for a time, expecting to return, and had not come back. As food and fire were what he most wanted then, he concluded that it was the part of wisdom to help himself; so he softly raised the window and climbed in, only to find, on trying it, that the door was open, and he might have entered that way.

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He thought it best not to fasten either the door or window, but to proceed and make himself comfortable. A pile of fagots lay in a corner, and in half a minute he had a roaring fire. He had no great fancy for sitting in wet clothes, and seeing a cupboard in a corner, he opened it, expecting to find probably a footman's outfit. But, instead, there was a handsome and complete costume of a Spanish peasant—a green velvet jacket, brown cloth knee-breeches with silver buttons, leggings, shoes, and a red cap.

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Archy, promptly stripping off his drenched clothing and hanging it at the fire to dry, after removing his money, watch, and pocket-knife, proceeded to array himself in the warm, dry garments before him; and then, surveying himself in a piece of cracked mirror on the wall, he could not suppress a grin, thinking:

"I wonder what Pedro, or Sancho, or whatever his name is, will say when he finds I have appropriated his Sunday clothes!"

In the same cupboard was a small skin of the sour wine used by the peasantry. Archy made a wry face over the uninviting draught, but drank some, and then cleaned the platter neatly of a vast quantity of garlic-and-onion dressed stuff, which he relished exceedingly—after which he felt quite himself again. He concluded to sally forth and make a reconnoissance of his position, and, closing the door softly behind him, was again under the murky night sky. In another small room he saw lights and heard faint sounds of carousing. The servants were evidently making a night of it. In the huge, dim court-yard a large leather-covered coach stood where the mules had been unhitched from it.

While Archy was looking at this vast old machine he saw the door open from which the sounds of subdued merrymaking had come, and several servants sallied forth. Archy involuntarily opened the coach door softly and got in, and, the better to hear, he laid himself almost flat on the long and broad front seat of the coach, which was piled with cloaks and blankets, and through a crack in the leather curtain could see and hear everything.

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"I wish Don Miguel was not in such a hurry to start for Madrid in the morning. Going off before sunrise and travelling until dark doesn't suit my constitution," grumbled one of them.

"Never mind, Pedro. That comes of living with grand people like Don Miguel de Lima. They are always more trouble than any others. Thank the saints that *my* people are plain country gentlemen and ladies. *They* don't travel any. They haven't been thirty miles from home in thirty years."

Pedro, leaning up against the coach wheel, continued to grumble:

"And Don Miguel, because he was bred in the army, likes everything done at double-quick. I don't believe he even takes a siesta. And he can't be worried and fretted into giving up his own way, as

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some masters and mistresses can. He is the coolest old martinet I ever saw—I don't believe the devil himself could disconcert him."

The servants seemed to have no notion of going to bed, but continued to gossip in whispers. Archy listened with all his ears. Madrid! That meant liberty! If only he could get to Madrid with Don Miguel—but how could it be managed? At all events, he meant to strike out for the French frontier when daylight came—at the worst, he could only be caught and imprisoned again. Possibly he might lose his life—but Archy's was a mind which harbored hope and drove fear out of the window. He remembered his wet clothes by the fire, and dreaded to see Pedro or Sancho go towards the back of the house. It was cold in the coach. So Archy covered himself up warmly as he lay and awaited events. He never felt more wide awake in his life, but the warmth, the rest, the food, and the sour wine were too much for him, and he suddenly fell into a deep and dreamless sleep.

CHAPTER XIV

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It seemed but a few minutes afterwards, although it was really several hours, before Archy knew anything more, and then it was a jolt of the coach that waked him. His senses returned instantly, and he knew where he was. He kept perfectly still, and peeping through the crack in the curtain, behind which he lay, still covered up, he saw that they were travelling along the highway towards the dim mountain ranges. Day had dawned, and the sun was rising over a beautiful landscape, although it was still December. Six stout mules drew the unwieldy vehicle along at a slashing gait.

Archy turned his head cautiously, so as to see without being seen, and perceived a stout, soldierly looking old man leaning back among the cushions and sleeping soundly, as his vociferous snores and snorts indicated unmistakably.

"This is Don Miguel de Lima," thought Archy. "He will wake up presently, and I can introduce myself better if I am sitting up and conducting myself like an officer and a gentleman than in hiding here like a brigand."

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Archy then quietly slipped to his feet, and, setting himself back in the coach, calmly faced the old gentleman.

But Don Miguel did not wake up soon—he snored and snorted and slept for a couple of hours more, and the sun was high in the heavens before he opened his eyes, and saw, as he supposed, a handsome young peasant, who had apparently dropped out of the sky, in the coach with him.

Don Miguel fully sustained Pedro's account of his *sang-froid*, and after carefully examining Archy, and seeing at the first glance that it was not a peasant, but a handsome and soft-handed young gentleman, dressed, for purposes of his own, in peasant's costume, he said, in a tone of calm inquiry:

"Well, sir?"

Archy, giving the old gentleman a military salute, replied promptly in the best Spanish he could muster:

"I believe I have the honor of addressing his Excellency Don Miguel de Lima. I am Midshipman Archibald Baskerville, late of the continental ship *Bon Homme Richard*, and now a prisoner on parole"—and then he added, "Americano."

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Archy got this far glibly enough, but when he wished to describe how he got into his present rig his Spanish was totally inadequate, and he took refuge in French; but his acquirements in that line running short, he dropped into English, and gave Don Miguel a very animated account of his adventures from the time he found himself in the boat until that moment. Don Miguel listened with the utmost courtesy and attention, and when Archy stopped for want of breath, calmly remarked, in Spanish:

"Your narrative is very interesting, no doubt; but I have not understood one word of it. I only know Spanish and French."

Archy, nothing discouraged, began again. He pulled out his watch and money, and that, with what he could tell about the boat and the loss of his clothes, and certain keen observations which Don Miguel made himself, convinced him that the young man who had suddenly rolled out from among the cloaks and blankets in the coach was what he represented himself to be. Archy could not but admire the cool courage of the old man, who took so debonairly the society of an unknown, who might be a robber or a murderer.

Not a word more was spoken, while they rolled and bumped along the high-road, until twelve o'clock, when, reaching a little village among the hills, they stopped. Pedro sprang from the box, opened the door, and nearly fainted when Archy almost jumped into his arms.

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Archy then, bowing low to Don Miguel, thanked him ceremoniously, and saluted him as an officer. Don Miguel gravely returned the salute. At the inn Archy got something to eat, and, providing himself with a loaf of bread and a lot of cheese, struck out gayly on the highway

towards Madrid. The day was bright, and the air, the space, the freedom, the exercise were exhilarating to Archy's active nature and sanguine temperament. The only thing that troubled him was that his friends at Gibraltar would be in distress about him. Probably at that very moment they were in deep grief, supposing him to be drowned. He remembered, however, the courtesy of the Spanish authorities in regard to letters, and determined at the next posting-house to write to Don Martin de Soltomayer, inclosing a letter to General Eliot and another to Captain Curtis. With this anxiety off his mind he trudged along cheerfully enough, shrewdly calculating that Don Miguel would overtake him, and possibly give him a lift. Many persons met and passed him, chiefly peasants in carts, and in about two hours he heard a tremendous clattering and jangling, and the coach with its six fine mules hove in sight. Archy, walking along the pathway, was intensely disappointed when it rattled on, with nothing more from Don Miguel except a bow in response to Archy's. But after it had passed it stopped, and Pedro came running back to say that his excellency desired to speak to the señor—for Pedro, too, had discerned the gentleman under the peasant's dress.

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Archy, secretly delighted, went up to the coach, and Don Miguel asked him where he was bound.

"To Madrid, and thence to France."

"Get in," said Don Miguel, briefly, and Archy got in.

He thanked Don Miguel in his best French-Spanish, and then inquired about the next posting-house, where he could write a letter, mentioning that he had once met Don Martin de Soltomayer, and would endeavor to notify his friends of his safety, through Don Martin.

"I know him well," replied Don Miguel. "Has his deafness increased?"

"He was not deaf at all when I saw him," answered Archy.

"Ah. Perhaps it was his eye that was failing him—has he but one?"

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"He had two when I saw him."

By which Don Miguel discovered that Archy really knew Don Martin.

They made no further stop until they halted for the night at an inn and posting-house. Archy wrote his letters, and finding that a courier for Gibraltar was expected in the next two days, felt relieved in his mind. He dared not spend any of his small amount of money in a room, and slept in the hay-loft. By sunrise he was on his way again, and, as on the day before, he was overtaken by the coach and given a lift. Stopping at a little town that day, Archy bought a couple of shirts, and, finding a bookstall, he invested a few copper coins in a Spanish dictionary and grammar. Reduced entirely to Spanish and French, it was surprising to him how magically he learned both, especially Spanish; and in a few days he found he could take care of himself very well in the Spanish language. Don Miguel and he conversed much then, and Archy could describe fluently, if ungrammatically, and interlarded with French, the fight of the *Bon Homme Richard*, and many other incidents which established his identity as an officer and a gentleman with an experienced man of the world like Don Miguel. He carefully avoided any reference to Gibraltar, and when Don Miguel asked him how he got into the open boat, Archy floundered so in his effort to tell about it in Spanish that Don Miguel could not make head or tail of it—which was just what Archy desired.

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It cannot be said that either was bored with the other's company. Don Miguel retained a taste for adventure, and was secretly amazed at Archy's coolness, gayety, and boyish bravado, while Archy had sense enough to show both gratitude and respect to a man who had really helped him as had Don Miguel.

On the morning of the day when they expected to reach Madrid, Don Miguel asked Archy what his plans were.

"To go to the French Ambassador, declare myself, and ask to be sent to France."

"The French Embassy is closed on account of small-pox, so I have heard in the last few days. But I can easily introduce you to the Minister of Marine, who will investigate your case."

"May I ask how long this would take, Excellency?"

Don Miguel shrugged his shoulders.

"A month—two months, perhaps. The Minister of Marine will not be hurried."

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Archy sat silent, and reflected. Presently he said:

"With these clothes, and the little money I have, I believe I could get to the French frontier in half the time."

"Do you expect to be taken for a Spanish peasant?" asked Don Miguel, with a suspicion of a smile.

"No," answered Archy, smiling very broadly.

Their last halt was at a large and flourishing village near Madrid. Some sort of a *festa* was going on; everybody was out in holiday clothes, and a company of strolling mountebanks was giving a performance. There were slack and tight rope walking, and dancing dogs, and a conjurer who ate fire.

Don Miguel, while the mules were baiting, sat in his coach in the little public square, but Archy had to be in the midst of things. He wandered about, and mixed with the village people, who, in their turn, mixed with the strollers, all being upon the most informal terms. After the tight-rope performance a trapeze was set up, and a harlequin, all in tights and spangles, came out and gave an alleged athletic performance which delighted the audience, but sent Archy into fits of laughter. The midshipmen on board the *Bon Homme Richard* and those on the *Royal George*, who were accustomed to run all over the rigging a hundred and fifty feet from the deck, could discount this unambitious gentleman, thought Archy, and as he commonly gave expression to what was in his mind he said this out loud.

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"Do you think so?" replied the person to whom he made this indiscreet remark. "Perhaps you will show us something much better than that which we like."

"No, I thank you," replied Archy. "It is not in my line to do such things in public."

A group had gathered round him, and a chorus of jeers and sneers went up. The effect of this on Archy Baskerville may easily be imagined. He tore off his green velvet jacket, kicked off his shoes, and, springing on the trapeze, began a performance which was certainly far superior to the professional's, although not up to Archy's best form when on board ship. He swung by his feet, his knees, his chin; he made a spring and reached the wire, which was only a few feet above the trapeze. He worked rapidly along the wire by his feet and hands until he came to the end, which was fastened to the stone balcony of a tall building with a chimney. By that time the people were applauding frantically. He shinned up the front of the building by the windows and balconies, and, reaching the chimney, climbed to the top and squared himself off astride of it with his hands in his pockets. It was not nearly so high as the maintop-gallant yard of the *Royal George*, where he had often been.

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The people at this went wild. Women shrieked and implored him to come down, and when he turned to come down they shrieked louder than ever. It would have been a dangerous pastime for any one except a sailor; but in a few minutes Archy had dropped to the ground, and, putting on his jacket and shoes, went up to Don Miguel, who still sat in the coach as unruffled as ever.

"You are a very venturesome young man," was his only comment.

"Oh no, sir," answered Archy; "that is the sort of thing we are taught aboard ship. A fellow that couldn't run all over the rigging would be in a bad way. I wager my friend, the acrobat yonder, couldn't do it."

The crowd quite surrounded the coach then, much to Don Miguel's disgust, who ordered them away. All left except one man, who was the manager of this band of strolling acrobats. He could not be persuaded that Archy was not a professional acrobat, in spite of his evidently being on terms with the grandee in the coach. He beckoned Archy a little way from the door of the great lumbering vehicle, and whispered in his ear:

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"What will you take to join us? We are on our way north, perhaps as far as the Basque Provinces. I see you have been in the business, and we shall do well in the North. What will you take, I say?"

Archy looked at the man as if he were crazy, but in half a minute he began to see the matter in a new light. To the North—to the French frontier; that would be quicker and better than waiting indefinitely in Madrid. And if it leaked out that he had come from Gibraltar he was sure to be regarded with suspicion by the Madrid authorities.

"How long do you expect to be on the road?" he asked, under the influence of these new ideas.

"About two weeks. We shall only give performances in the large villages and towns. We want to reach Vitoria and St.-Jean-de-Luz by the middle of January, as they have *festas* about that time; and then we can come southward again before the Carnival. What will you take, I say?"

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"How many of you are there?"

"Myself and my wife—she tells fortunes; Juan, who does the tight-rope; and Luis and his wife—they are all. What will you take for your services?"

"One-eighth of the receipts," said Archy, not knowing in the least whether he was making a good bargain or not, except that here was a chance to reach the frontier.

"Done!" cried the manager, joyfully.

Archy went up to Don Miguel and told him what he had done. An inscrutable smile came into the old man's face.

"Do as you like," he said; "I shall not betray you. On the contrary, I will give you Spanish money for your English money, and this—for I see you have no weapon." He fumbled about in the coach and produced a pistol, singularly small for those days. "This looks like a toy, but it is not; it was made and given me as a curiosity."

Archy thanked him feelingly, and found enough words in his vocabulary to say that Don Miguel's confidence was even more gratifying to him than the kindness and generosity he had received. And sunset saw Don Miguel rolling along alone in his coach into Madrid, while Archy, duly enrolled as a member of José Monza's company of wonderful acrobats, was trudging along, with a pack on his back, towards the tent in the fields which meant home to all of them.

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CHAPTER XV

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Behold our young friend, having travelled from the southern coast almost to Madrid with a Spanish general of the highest family, now prepared to make the rest of his journey to France as a member of a company of mountebanks!

His first introduction into this new profession was anything but pleasant. As soon as they arrived at the tent, where the two women, Maria and Julia, were cooking supper, José opened a chest and took out a tawdry and dirty costume, which he proposed that Archy should wear. Now the green velvet jacket, the brown breeches with silver buttons, and the yellow gaiters of a peasant had gone hard with Archy, but at least they were clean, and this acrobatic costume was not. He looked at it, sniffed at it, and finally, in a volley of Spanish and French, declared he would not wear it. That came near losing him his engagement. José swore that wear it he must; Archy vowed that wear it he wouldn't. Maria, José's wife, solved the difficulty by saying:

"See, it makes no difference—it is too small for him, anyhow."

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Then they all calmed down, and ate supper very amicably out of a large pannikin of something or other which tasted violently of onions, leeks, and garlic.

Next morning early they took up the line of march. Among José's possessions was a stout horse, by name Bébé, which José regarded as by far the most important member of the company. When hitched to the rude cart which transported their belongings, Archy thought there was still room for the two women; but, to his surprise, Maria and Julia toiled along contentedly, each with a pack on her back, while the three men carried nothing. Archy had nothing to carry except his shirts and his two books. Naturally, he was very much disgusted with the want of chivalry of the gentlemen of the party, and offered to help both of the ladies with their burdens. But they scarcely understood what he meant by his offer, and laughed at him for it. They showed their good-will to him, though, by proposing to wash his shirts for him, which he thankfully accepted, and afterwards astonished them very much by the frequency with which he called upon them for this service.

By the time the day's march was over, Archy found that he had fallen in with a very honest set of people, although rude and unlettered. Next day they reached a small town, and gave their first performance in the public square. The wire was stretched for the tight-rope walking, and José shrewdly fastened it to the balcony of a tall building with a chimney, not unlike the one near Madrid where Archy had first appeared in public. Maria, disguised as a gypsy, sat in the tent, which was decorated with bunting, and told marvellous fortunes to the gaping rustics who were credulous enough to cross her hand with silver. Luis's performance on the trapeze was considered fine, and was much applauded; and when he got through, José, as general director of affairs, advanced, and, ringing a huge bell to secure silence, began an oration which surprised Archy as much as anybody.

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"Ladies and gentlemen," he cried, "you will now see a marvellous performance by Señor Archibaldisto de Baskervilliano, a distinguished Indian gentleman from North America. Señor Archibaldisto was once a sailor, and as all the vessels in his country have masts as high as the spire of Seville Cathedral, it is nothing for him to dance the bolero on the top of yonder chimney. He is the heir to immense estates, and his father is a grandee of the first class in North America. But having been stolen in his youth, he adopted the acrobatic profession, and has performed with great applause before all the crowned heads of North America."

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Archy bowed modestly in response to the tremendous applause which this evoked, and began his trapeze performance.

As he was now endeavoring to do his best, and as he had practised in the last day or two, he acquitted himself to the delight of the people, and when he repeated his performance of shinning up the chimney, although he could not dance the bolero on top of it, he went through with some gymnastic performances which charmed the crowd. When their afternoon's work was over, and Julia handed around her apron for contributions, José divided the money with perfect honesty among them, and Archy's one-eighth was somewhat more than he expected.

As José had promised, they pushed on rapidly, only giving performances in the larger villages and towns. Luis, without the slightest professional jealousy, taught Archy the bolero, and he was able to introduce the national dance of Spain in some of his exhibitions. He also taught José many things, and in a little while their joint performance so charmed José that he began to try and persuade Archy to return to Madrid with them, and was quite disgusted when Archy only laughed at him.

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Archy was sometimes surprised at his own happiness on that journey. The travel was fatiguing, the fare rough, the work hard; but it was under the open sky, he was with honest people, and he was travelling towards freedom. He had lost all fear of being arrested for an Englishman, but, as it turned out, that danger still remained, and eventually came near to cost him dear.

On the tenth day from Madrid they reached Vitoria, and gave a performance in the quaint old town.

José made his harangue concerning Señor Archibaldisto, dwelling upon the fact that he was a

sailor by profession. The crowd was made up, as usual, of villagers and peasants; but Archy observed a group of three or four persons, one in the dress of a notary, which seemed of a better class. Archy did better than usual even, the crowd applauded vociferously, and Julia, going about holding her apron out, soon had it heavy with copper coins.

The notary, a keen-eyed fellow, was saying quietly to his companions:

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"This Señor Archibaldisto is an impostor—that is, he is a gentleman. Look at his hands; they are sunburned, but no more out of shape with work than a fine lady's. And he is an Englishman. I have been in England and I know them. He is no North American; the North Americans are Indians—black, like the Moors. Listen to his Spanish. He speaks rapidly, but incorrectly, and I know the English accent. Depend upon it, he is an English spy—probably from Gibraltar."

This was enough. A cry went up from the notary's companions, of which the crowd quickly caught the meaning, and then, like a pack of wolves, they howled:

"A spy! A spy from Gibraltar! An English spy! Garrote him! Let him be garroted!"

Archy was standing on the ground near the open door of the tent where Maria was telling fortunes. As he heard this ominous cry he turned to go into the tent, but José met him at the door. The Spaniard's face was black with hate.

"You are an English spy!" he hissed.

"I swear to you I am not—I swear before God that I am not a spy!" cried Archy.

José barred the way for a moment, but suddenly Maria, who had seemed nothing more than a beast of burden, rose and pushed him out of the way.

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"Come," she said to Archy, for the crowd was now closing around them menacingly.

Maria spoke to José in a clear, high voice, audible over the enraged murmurs and shouts and cries of the crowd:

"Do you call yourself a Christian, and stand by and let this honest boy fall into the hands of these blood-thirsty people? José Monza, I am ashamed that you are my husband!"

José, stunned by this declaration of independence from the submissive Maria, could do nothing but turn his head from side to side, with his mouth gaping wide open.

Maria, albeit her wits were newly found, had them all about her, and whispered to Archy hurriedly, as she dragged him in the tent:

"While I am talking with the crowd in front, slit the tent behind, and dash through the crowd. There is a church-yard to the left—you will know the spire of the church because it is the only white one in sight—and to-morrow morning before daylight we will come to the church-yard." Then she advanced to the tent door, and, shoving José out of the way as if he were a bale of goods, began an animated harangue to the people, who gathered around the door to hear her, but interrupted her every moment with demands for the English spy.

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In another moment Archy had cut with his pocket-knife a long slit in the tent, had sprung out, and was flying down a narrow and tortuous street. Immediately the mob was in full cry after him, but all at once he seemed to sink into the ground before them. He had caught sight in his flight of an open trap-door leading into one of those underground shops so common in Spanish towns; he dropped noiselessly into it, pulled the trap down with him, and heard hundreds of feet trampling as the multitude rushed on in pursuit of him.

As soon as his eyes became accustomed to the darkness he saw there was no one in the shop. There was another room behind it, which opened into a garden. Feeling sure that the proprietor would be back in a very short time, Archy realized that he must be getting away very shortly. He slipped through the back room, ran up some crazy steps into the garden, and to his delight he saw through the gathering gloom the white spire of which Maria had told him.

The garden door was locked, but the key hung on a nail inside. With this he let himself softly out, and found himself in a narrow passage with garden-walls on one side and the back windows of houses on the other. It was quite dark in there, and he sped along unseen until he reached the end, and before him were the ivy-covered walls of the church-yard. It was but a moment's work to climb over. This being done, he hid himself behind a huge old mausoleum under a grove of ilex-trees; and then he felt safe. He could hear the cries and the patter of feet dying away in the distance, and soon all was still; darkness came on quickly and perfect silence reigned, broken presently by the mellow ringing of the Angelus bells. Then all was quiet again.

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Archy was cold and hungry, but he did not allow this to disturb him. The black shadows cast by the ilex-trees made him quite invisible under their low, overhanging branches, and he spent the whole night walking up and down to keep warm. As the first gray light of the coming dawn appeared his listening ears caught the sound of some one creeping outside the wall. He quickly clambered over, and there was Maria with a huge empty basket, which she put on his back, and together they trudged rapidly off in the direction of the high-road.

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"Remember," said Maria, "if we are stopped you are to be my brother; you are too old to be my son, and too young to be my husband."

"I think it an honor to be related in any way to so good a woman as you, Maria," gallantly replied Archy.

On the outskirts of the town they found the rest of the party with the cart and Béb , and by hard travelling from dawn until midnight they reached the Bidassoa, the boundary between France and Spain. They encamped on the French side of the river, and after a rest of a whole day and night they set out for St.-Jean-de-Luz.

They were now on French soil, and Archy's heart bounded with joy and hope and gratitude. At St.-Jean-de-Luz he had to part with his humble friends. He had enough money to take him to Paris, travelling economically, and his late experiences proved to him that his own good legs would enable him to get there even if his money gave out. Before parting they gave two grand performances, in which Archy quite outshone himself, and they took in a considerable sum of money. With his share Archy bought some little memento for each of his kind friends. Jos  and Maria not only had the pain of parting with Archy, but also with B b , that they had determined to sell for about twice his value. Their only consolation was that they had sold him to one of the woman postilions, common enough in those days, who plied between St.-Jean-de-Luz and Bayonne, and Archy was to ride B b  the day's journey between the two places. The farewells were touching. All the men kissed Archy, after the Spanish fashion, and he kissed Maria and Julia, and thanked them from the bottom of his heart—particularly Maria, to whom he felt he owed his life. Maria wept bitterly, and Archy said to her, with the greatest sincerity: "Maria, as long as I live, whenever I see or hear of a good woman I shall think of you." At last he was started on his journey. On B b 's broad back was one of those queer double saddles which were then used in the Basque Provinces. Archy sat on one side, while on the other was perched a stout Basque woman, Teresa by name. Being a sailor, Archy was perfectly willing to ride anything in any manner, from a goat to an elephant, and always at full speed. Teresa claimed jurisdiction over the horse, but this Archy would by no means admit, and just as they were passing through the market-place he gave B b  a smart cut with a knotted handkerchief, and the next thing he knew he was floundering amid the ruins of a wicker chicken-coop, the frightened fowls clacking and flapping wildly, while a dozen market-women were abusing him at once in French and Spanish; and Teresa, loud above all, was haranguing him on his cruelty to poor B b , the horse, that did not seem to Archy as much an object of sympathy as himself. He was disentangled from the coop and the fowls by two handsome Basque girls, who, however, lost all favor in his eyes by laughing at him openly. Very sulky and disgusted, he mounted again, and Teresa guided the stout B b  out of the town and along the road to Bayonne.

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Archy counted that day as among the most unpleasant of his life. Teresa alternated with laughing at him and scolding him. In a rage he dismounted and walked, when Teresa, whipping B b  into a fast trot, caused Archy to run after her frantically for fear he should never see either Teresa or B b  again. When they reached Bayonne that night they parted with mutual sentiments of disesteem.

The rest of his journey to Paris was uneventful, and on a February evening he found himself standing at the door of the large, pleasant house, set in an ample garden at Passy, which M. Ray de Chaumont had generously given to the American representatives. Archy's heart beat rapturously. He scarcely expected to meet Paul Jones, the most he hoped for being to hear that the Commodore was somewhere on the French coast. But just as he raised the knocker and gave a thundering rat-tat-tat the door opened, and he almost walked into Paul Jones's arms.

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"My captain!" cried Archy.

"My brave little midshipman!" exclaimed Paul Jones; and they embraced, and Archy was not ashamed of the happy tears that filled his eyes. And then Paul Jones held him off at arm's-length, and cried:

"How you are grown! And how handsome you are! And what adventures have you had? And, faith! how glad I am to see you again!"

They heard a clear voice behind them saying:

"This, then, is the lost Pleiad—the young gentleman who was picked up by the British at the Texel."

It was Dr. Franklin who spoke. Archy turned to him and involuntarily removed his hat—so noble, so venerable was this august man.

"Come, Commodore, you do not want to go now. You and your young friend must remain to sup with me," continued Dr. Franklin; and Archy, almost abashed by the honor shown him, proudly and delightedly accepted.

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Never could Archy Baskerville forget this first evening in the company of those two extraordinary men. Dr. Franklin's dry and penetrating wit, his acute reasoning, would have impressed the dullest intelligence; while Paul Jones, whose schemes were great and far-reaching, had plans in view well calculated to dazzle an ambitious young mind like Archy Baskerville's. Nor was he entirely silent. He felt, of course, under a strict obligation to say nothing about the condition of Gibraltar, but he told of the unyielding courage of the garrison, of the fortitude of the women, and of the many noble and admirable incidents that had occurred; he actually found himself telling the story of throwing the peacock down the skylight upon the Hanoverian officers, and the old Genoese woman being blown through the window. He was so much encouraged by Dr.

Franklin's laughter and Paul Jones's that he told of his journey through Spain, his career as an acrobat; he even related the story of Teresa, the double saddle, and his fall into the chicken-coop, and some of his other adventures. But when Paul Jones questioned him about Lord Bellingham, Archy could not refrain, in the boyish vanity of his heart, from recounting some of the various duellos at wit in which he and his grandfather had been engaged—and he only related those in which he had come out ahead, like the affair about his American uniform. Paul Jones shouted with laughter, while Dr. Franklin quietly chuckled. At last, about ten o'clock, Paul Jones made ready to return to Paris, saying to Archy:

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"You must share my lodgings, Mr. Baskerville. I am afraid to trust so adventurous a young gentleman out of my sight." And Archy delightedly accepted.

And now came a time more easy and brilliant in some respects, and more harassing and anxious in others, than Archy had ever known. He lived with Paul Jones in his Paris lodgings, and, like him, his time was passed between anxious journeys to L'Orient, to find new difficulties among the *Alliance* and the *Ariel* and their crews, and vexatious and annoying transactions with the French Minister of Marine.

Paul Jones was a favorite at Versailles and in the highest society in Paris, and he was glad to take with him in those dazzling palaces a handsome and dashing young officer like Archy, who now wore a splendid continental naval uniform, and who enjoyed the glitter and splendor of all he saw. But, like Paul Jones, he would have hailed with joy any prospect of getting away from this glittering but useless life into the real service of his country.

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Of course the subject of Archy's exchange was at once taken up. All the officers of his rank captured on the *Bon Homme Richard* had been already exchanged, so that he had before him the dreary and tedious business of trying to arrange an exchange with some young army officer of the same rank in America. The summer came and waned, as did the autumn, and no headway was made in his affair, nor in the greater affair of Paul Jones procuring an armed ship, which was continually promised but never forthcoming. The gloomy prospects of the American cause at that time made it daily more unlikely that he would get a ship. Paul Jones's spirits sank, and so did Archy's. They remained more closely at their lodgings, and the scenes of splendid gayety which they had frequented a few months before saw them no more. Only Dr. Franklin, serene and majestic, lost neither heart nor hope.

One night in November, 1781, Paul Jones and Archy sat together in their lodgings, which were close by the house of the Minister of War. Never had they felt so despairing of their country. They knew that both Sir Henry Clinton and Lord Cornwallis had been reinforced in America, and that Rodney's fleet was on its way there to strike a mortal blow to the fleet of De Grasse, from which much had been expected and nothing had come. Besides these sad thoughts, Archy's heart was heavy when he thought of his friends at Gibraltar. Were they still living and starving? Or had they at last found rest in death?

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The fire burned itself out, the candles flickered in their sockets; midnight came, yet neither made any move towards going to bed. Archy felt a singular restlessness in spite of his misery—he felt in the attitude of one waiting for something to happen. At last it came, at one o'clock in the morning. Far up the stony street they heard the clatter of a horse's hoofs going at full gallop.

"It is an official messenger. He is stopping at the hôtel of the War Minister," said Archy, in an intense whisper; and the next minute he tore down the three flights of stairs of the tall house in which they lodged, unfastened a window in the *entresol* and jumped out, instead of waiting for the *concierge* to be waked up, and found himself speeding along the street, and Paul Jones, neither so young nor so active, not far behind him.

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Windows were being opened, people were collecting hurriedly on the streets, and a little crowd already stood around the steaming horse from which the messenger had just alighted and had disappeared within the doors. In an upper window on the first floor of the splendid hôtel a light quickly appeared—the War Minister was receiving the news. The crowd below waited, some in breathless silence, others exclaiming and gesticulating in their excitement, and every moment the people increased in numbers. Presently the window was flung up, and the War Minister, with a white nightcap on his head and a dressing-gown wrapped round him, put his head out and raised his hand for silence. Instantly every voice was hushed.

"Good news—great news—from our allies in North America! On the 19th of October, at Yorktown, in Virginia, Lord Cornwallis, with all his force—guns, stores, and several vessels—surrendered to General George Washington, in command of the joint forces of America and France. *Vive l'Amérique!*"

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Before the crowd could shout, a sudden, wild cry of joy went up from a young man and an older one who stood together, clasping each other, with tears running down their faces. The French might cheer and huzza in their triumph, as they did, waking up the entire quarter of Paris, and causing an outpouring of the whole population, but the patriotic joy of Paul Jones and Archy Baskerville was too deep for words. Theirs was a passionate thanksgiving which could only be expressed by Paul Jones as, uncovering his head, he said, reverently:

"Let us bless the good God for his mercies to our dear country!"

The surrender of Lord Cornwallis was admitted to be the practical end of the war. The English people, as a mass, rose up and declared that the strife must end. Parliament, it was known, would not vote another shilling for soldiers or ships for America. The Ministers gave up in despair, and even George III., the most obstinate king of which history makes any record, saw that he must yield.

The attitude of the English people and Parliament was known in Paris by the middle of December, and at once ended the projects for the fitting-out of hostile ships for America, and likewise for the exchange of the few American officers in Europe who were on parole. With the end of the long and obstinate conflict in view, they had to exercise a little more patience and wait for the formal preliminaries of peace in order to be unconditionally released.

One of the first letters that Archy received after the great news from America was from his uncle, Colonel Baskerville. It said:

"There is no longer any question of a renewal of hostilities. I have it on authority that the Government is considering an armistice and the appointment of plenipotentiaries of peace, and the only delay in the way is that the Colonies cannot make peace without France, nor can France make peace without Spain and Holland—and Spain means to make one last desperate effort to regain Gibraltar. But I will leave it to your friends, Dr. Franklin and Commodore Jones, whether there is any chance of active employment for you, and if there is not, I beg that you will come to England under a safe-conduct to see your grandfather. You have no relatives in America, and nothing can be arranged concerning your future until peace is declared and the navy of the Colonies is reorganized, or rather established, for they have nothing which can be called a navy at present. I understand that the arming and equipping of such few vessels as the Colonies can get together is now totally abandoned. Meanwhile your grandfather is extremely desirous to see you for a very special purpose. He is an old man, and may not long survive; and if you once cross the ocean, there is but little likelihood of your return during his remnant of life. Therefore, if your friends, who are older and more experienced than you, think that you can come with honor, pray do so. Your safe-conduct will enable you to return at any time to either France or America. You will certainly not be called upon to fight any more, and the emergency of the case justifies me in urging you to come."

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Archy showed this letter to Paul Jones and to Dr. Franklin, and, after both had considered it, they advised him to go.

"My impression is, Mr. Baskerville," said Dr. Franklin, "that Lord Bellingham wishes to make some arrangement about his estates; and although you are under age, and have no guardian—and you say that your father united with your grandfather in cutting the entail—yet he may want to make you some amends, and I recommend you to accept the safe-conduct and go."

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Paul Jones, with whom Archy had lived for many months, talked with him long and confidentially, and his advice was of the same tenor as Dr. Franklin's.

"Nothing will be easier," he said, "than for me to arrange with the Minister of Marine to notify you if, by any chance, there should be a resumption of hostilities; and meanwhile you will be better off with your own relatives, especially such a man as you represent Colonel Baskerville to be, than alone in Paris, for I may leave for America any day. And you know very well, my dear Archy, that both our purses are low, and are likely to remain so until the *Bon Homme Richard's* prize-money is paid over, and Heaven knows when that will be. I have great confidence in you, but for a young man to be alone and living by his wits in a city like Paris would test the integrity of the finest young man in the world. True, Dr. Franklin remains; but he is often in straits for money, and you could scarcely expect him, with his vast cares, to take upon himself the charge of confidential friend, adviser, and banker of a young man like yourself. So, I say, go to Bellingham Castle, and if your grandfather will do the handsome thing by you, so much the better. I have not the slightest fear that you can be beguiled from your allegiance to your country by any blandishments Lord Bellingham can offer."

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"That I cannot!" cried Archy, with energy; "and I will show him I cannot."

Nevertheless, it was not with gayety of heart that Archy prepared to take his friend's advice. He almost wept when he bade farewell to Paul Jones on the morning that he took the diligence for Calais, and was rather hurt by his old commander's laughing air and gay manner at the moment of parting, until Paul Jones said:

"Perhaps I may see you in England myself. True, I believe there is a standing offer of ten thousand guineas for me, dead or alive; but did not Captain Cunningham, who also had a price upon him, take his vessel into an English port and refit? And I have had a fancy to see England ever since I was honored with so high a price upon my head."

A light broke in upon Archy's mind.

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"I see! I see!" he cried. "Very well; all I can say is that if the people molest you there is Admiral Digby, at the Admiralty, who will defend you."

"But the people will not know that I am Paul Jones," significantly replied the Commodore. "I grant you, if I went in my proper character I should see only the inside of Newgate Prison; and as I wish a more extended view, I would do better not to tell my name and adventures. I say this to you: we shall meet again in England."

This started Archy off in high spirits, and he already began to plan concealing Paul Jones at Bellingham Castle. His cheerfulness lasted until he began to think of his "enemies" at Gibraltar. Were they still alive? There was no news from the Rock except that it still held out stubbornly, and that before Spain was forced by her allies to sign a peace she meant to make one last desperate and unprecedented effort to regain that mighty fortress.

However, nothing could damp his happiness at the splendid prospects of his country, and, elated with the idea, he easily persuaded himself that everything concerning everybody he loved would come right. This happy conviction, which was partly justified by circumstances and partly accounted for by youth and health and motion along a fine high-road on a bright morning, inspired him to raise his voice in song; but as he sang very badly, and the guard laughed at him, he concluded to try some other form of amusement.

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He had the box-seat, and having a little gold still left in his belt he slyly insinuated a piece into the hand of the coachman, who, in return, passed him over the reins. But a few jolts and bumps, a growl from the postilion, and a sharp volley from the guard, together with a chorus of shrieks from several nervous old ladies inside, caused the coachman to resume his job hurriedly, much to Archy's chagrin. This was but a temporary damper, and he proved a very lively companion all the way to Calais.

They arrived in the afternoon, just at the turn of the tide, and with a favorable wind for the Channel Islands, where Archy meant to go. There was a guardship, he knew, stationed off the island of Jersey, and if he could get to her he knew there was constant communication with Spithead.

As soon as he got to Calais he at once reported to the authorities, who, on the strength of his safe-conduct, directed him where to find a boatman. He soon found one with a tolerably large boat, who agreed to take him for a moderate sum to the British guardship. The boatman was as anxious not to lose the wind as Archy, so in an incredibly short time they were off, and before midnight, by the light of a brilliant moon, they made the island of Jersey. As they sighted the guardship they hoisted for a flag of truce a sheet which Archy had bought at a Calais tavern. They were suffered to come alongside—a small sailboat with two men not being alarming.

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Archy handed up his credentials in a small bag tied to an oar, and after they had been sent to the captain for inspection, and returned as being all right, he was asked to come aboard.

In a few minutes he was on the deck of the guardship, and the little boat had tacked for France. The reception he met with from the officer of the deck, and subsequently the captain, was rather chilling. The British people, as a whole, had opposed the war, but there were many persons, especially in the army and navy, who regarded the Americans still as traitors. Archy's first question was well meant, but unfortunate. He eagerly inquired of the captain if there was any news of Gibraltar.

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"News of its fall, I presume you mean," was the captain's brusque reply. "No, sir, there is no news of that—and will not be. The enemies of England need not expect those gallant men to yield. Gibraltar will remain ours."

Archy had so long been accustomed to regard Gibraltar as the abode of his friends that he was a little staggered for a moment, but recovering himself, he said, with dignity:

"Sir, I was a prisoner at Gibraltar for nearly a year, and I was so kindly treated by the brave garrison that, although they were the enemies of my country, I could not but consider them as personal friends, and my question was inspired by the most sincere solicitude for them."

Even this did not melt the captain's icy manner, and his next words were an offer to let Archy sail next morning in a tender that was to carry despatches to Spithead. The invitation was given so like an order to kick him off the ship that Archy promptly accepted it—and as promptly declined a rather cool invitation to accept a berth. He returned to the deck, and selecting a sheltered corner under one of the boats, wrapped himself in his cloak, used his portmanteau for a pillow, and in a little while was sleeping the sleep of the just, the young, and the healthy. At daylight he was aboard the tender. It was a mild January morning, and the good breeze of the night before still held. When they came within sight of the splendid British fleet in The Downs, Archy could not repress a sensation of envy. Could but his country have the half of such a fleet!

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The journey from Spithead to Yorkshire was not very pleasant. Archy, like most hot-headed young persons, was fond of airing his opinions and proclaiming his beliefs in season and out; and, armed with his safe-conduct, he enjoyed an immunity that he had never known before. He swaggered on his way, announcing with vast pride and belligerence that he was an American; he inquired for news concerning the surrender of Cornwallis wherever he judged it would be most annoying; he entertained sulky English travellers with accounts of the fight between the *Serapis* and the *Bon Homme Richard* whenever he had the chance; and when he did all this without getting a broken head he rashly concluded that it was due to his own superior wisdom; and, in short, conducted himself in such a manner that in after-life he often bitterly regretted that he had not been well thrashed for his behavior. Being naturally good-tempered, he was much surprised when people

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took offence at remarks that amused him but were exasperating to others, and he always assumed the air of a much injured person when called to account for his impertinence.

He travelled over the same road from London to Bellingham Castle that he had taken more than two years before, and he really began to look forward with pleasure to seeing his grandfather again—so strong is the tie of blood when once acknowledged. Colonel Baskerville he thought of with the greatest affection; and when, at the same hour of the evening that he had first arrived at the village, the coach rolled in and he saw his uncle waiting for him at the door of the inn and posting-house, Archy's heart beat with joy, and, jumping down, he seized the staid Colonel in an embrace that very much surprised and startled him. And his very first remark, after asking affectionately of his uncle's health, was to proclaim, with an air of triumph:

"And, nunky, what do you say to General George Washington now?"

"I say that he is a very remarkable man," good-naturedly replied Colonel Baskerville; "but from your tone and manner of confidence and arrogance I imagine that you yourself contributed largely towards the result of Lord Cornwallis's surrender"—which almost brought a blush to Archy's sunburned cheek.

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Lord Bellingham had sent the coach to meet Archy, much to his amusement, as well as Colonel Baskerville's, and as they were bumping along the road through the park the Colonel said, smiling:

"Grandsons are all the rage now. Lord Bellingham has actually condescended to admit that he had a grandson in the continental navy, but he continues to speak of your commission as if your holding it were a mere boyish escapade."

"He does, does he? Poor grandfather! He will know better before he is much older."

"I will say to you, frankly, that Lord Bellingham mortally hates the idea of the title lapsing; and if you will agree to accept it, and to cease to be an American, no doubt your grandfather will make you his heir. But if you stick to your country, as you call it, I am equally sure that Trevor Langton will be the heir—that is, if he is alive, for the latest reports from Gibraltar show that although the loss of life from the bombardment is small, there is an epidemic of fever and scurvy, and, naturally, we are all anxious about Trevor Langton. It is piteous to see his poor mother."

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Archy remained silent, distressed by what he had just heard, and Colonel Baskerville continued:

"Langton's mother, my niece, is now staying at Bellingham—the first time her father has recognized her since her marriage. Her two daughters are with her—Mary and Isabel—fine, handsome girls they are."

"If they are anything like Trevor they must be everything they ought to be, for he is the finest fellow: so brave, so gentle, so quiet—so unlike me."

Colonel Baskerville smiled again at this, while Archy went on to explain that he and Langton knew the status of affairs perfectly well. "When we were in the hut at Gibraltar we often talked it over, but it never made the least difference between us. I am an American, and shall remain so, and Trevor will get the money; but I'll never want for it while he lives, and you know I have enough to keep me in clothes and food, candles and fuel, anyhow."

Presently they rattled up to the great pile of Bellingham Castle. But how different was Archy's reception from his first visit! Lord Bellingham had developed a whim, or possibly something better, of liberality and large-heartedness, and it had impelled him to open his house, send for his daughter and her children, and receive Archy in a manner calculated to please a much older and better-balanced person. Lord Bellingham, with all his faults and freaks, was not without feeling. Archy's spirit, intelligence, and strong personal resemblance to Lord Bellingham in his youth had softened the old man's heart. He felt a natural desire that the title should remain in his family, which could only be done by Archy's accepting it. At first he had regarded his grandson's unwillingness to give up his citizenship in his own country as a mere boyish impulse; but he had become convinced that it would take all his powers of persuasion, and all that could dazzle a young and impressionable mind, to induce the boy to become a subject of a king who was so well hated by Americans. Nothing, however, was to be lacking in the way of subtle flattery, and for that reason Archy's reception was imposing. The great hall doors were flung wide open as soon as the coach drew up; an army of servants in livery were drawn up on each side of the entrance, the men on one side, the maids on the other, and Lord Bellingham, elegantly dressed, as usual, and looking like a prince—and, what was more, like a prince in a good-humor—greeted Archy with stately cordiality.

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"My grandson! Welcome to Bellingham."

A man quite as fastidious as Lord Bellingham might have felt pride and pleasure in the beautiful young man before him. Archy's figure had filled out, his handsome features had not lost their natural, joyous expression; but instead of his boyish confidence he had gained a manly self-possession, and the likeness to his grandfather in every respect had become simply astounding. In Archy Lord Bellingham saw himself in the brightness and the glory of his youth, and it did not make his heart less tender towards this handsome grandson.

Archy greeted him affectionately, and then came forward Mrs. Langton, who was just what Archy thought Trevor Langton's mother should be, and who met him and kissed him with all the

affection of a mother. Mary and Isabel were two tall, handsome young girls, the most self-possessed creatures that Archy had ever seen, who, instead of dropping their eyes and curtsies at the same time, looked him full in the face with laughing glances, and were not nearly so ready to take him on trust as their gentle mother.

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Archy's first eager words on greeting her were: "Have you heard anything of Langton?" Mrs. Langton's eyes filled with tears.

"Not one word direct for nearly two years. I know from your letters to my father and uncle much that happened at Gibraltar while you were with him, but the last word I had from my son was when Admiral Rodney's fleet left Gibraltar in the March of '80."

Archy's heart went out to his aunt, as it had done to Mrs. Curtis, and always did when sweet and motherly women were kind to him. But his heart did not go out to his cousins, Mary and Isabel. They looked at him loftily; they seemed disposed to treat him as a bandit and an insurgent, and evidently regarded his connection with their brother as his only title to consideration; in short, they were a good deal like Archy himself, and for that reason they did not affiliate very promptly.

As Archy looked around him after the first greeting, he could scarcely believe it the same place that he had known two years before. Instead of a simple dinner served in the little dining-parlor for Colonel Baskerville and himself, the great dining-hall was thrown open, and a splendid dinner was served to the family party of six—Lord Bellingham leading his daughter out on his arm, with his antique courtesy. The younger, prettier, and saucier of his cousins, Isabel Langton, fell to Archy's share.

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"Dear me," remarked Isabel, looking critically at Archy when they were seated at the table, "I had no idea you were so old."

"Nineteen is not old, my dear," responded Archy, in a tone as if he were addressing Dolly Curtis, who was ten.

"Isabel!" said her mother, in a warning voice.

"Let them alone, ma'am," remarked Lord Bellingham. "I think my grandson can take care of himself."

Mary, seated on Archy's other side, now came to her sister's rescue, while Colonel Baskerville, with a grin, prepared to enjoy seeing the young ones having it out, hammer and tongs.

"My sister is not accustomed to such familiarity as 'my dear' from strangers, even if you are a cousin," she severely remarked.

"Mary!" was Mrs. Langton's next protest.

"Isn't she?" said Archy. "I beg a thousand pardons. The last little girl I had much to do with was a darling of ten years old—Dolly Curtis—and I used to ride her on my shoulder and steal apples for her from the stores; and I thought, perhaps, you and your sister—but never mind."

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Isabel and Mary took refuge in silent indignation, exchanging wrathful glances; Mrs. Langton looked distressed, Colonel Baskerville highly amused, and Lord Bellingham's handsome old face was quite impassive. Archy, as if to show that Isabel and Mary were quite too childish to have any claim upon the attention of a young man of nineteen, then turned to his grandfather and said, airily:

"By-the-way, sir, the conduct of Captain Curtis at Gibraltar is second only to that of General Eliot, and we Americans congratulate ourselves that these two officers were not in Virginia with Lord Cornwallis. It might have delayed the surrender considerably."

An electric shock ran round the table at that. The old butler quietly removed a decanter that was handy at Lord Bellingham's elbow, and Mrs. Langton looked ready to faint. But, to everybody's amazement, after a moment's pause, Lord Bellingham suddenly smiled; his laugh was quite silent in contrast to the happy ripple that had been his throughout youth, and which he had lost during a long course of selfishness and bad temper.

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Then Colonel Baskerville shouted, and Mrs. Langton smiled, and Archy, with a fine assumption of addressing two very small children, remarked to Mary and Isabel:

"Haven't you heard the news, my dears? Lord Cornwallis, on the 19th day of last October, surrendered his whole force to General George Washington. Didn't know it, eh? It's a shame that you are kept so cooped up in the nursery that you never know what is going on in the world"; and then even the two girls laughed while they scowled.

The dinner was very jolly after that. The girls continued to snap at Archy, and he gave it them back in his best style; but it was good-natured snapping, and it so amused Lord Bellingham and Colonel Baskerville that Mrs. Langton not only permitted the girls to defend themselves, but she even smiled faintly at the scrimmage. Nevertheless, when Archy and Colonel Baskerville were parting for the night, Archy said, in a grave manner:

"I can hardly believe, uncle, that those pert misses are Langton's sisters. They need to be sent to a good stiff boarding-school to bring them down a peg or two."

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"They are as much like you as girls can be like a boy," was the Colonel's cool rejoinder, "and that

CHAPTER XVII

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Lord Bellingham soon began the systematic effort to induce Archy to give up his country for which he had, in truth, been sent for from France. But everything united to make against his scheme. While the time never had been that Archy would have abandoned his country and her cause, he was still less likely to do so in the hour of her triumph, when the English people had forced the King and his Ministry to abandon a fratricidal war. And the association for many months with two such men as Paul Jones and Dr. Franklin was not calculated to make any young and impressionable mind less American in its belief and sympathies. Nor was the splendid bait offered by Lord Bellingham half as attractive to Archy as it would have been to a young man of less adventurous life and habits. Full of an enthusiastic democracy, he rated the title as nothing at all; and as for the estates, it may be said to the honor of humanity that money has but little weight with a manly and generous nature in the freshness of youth. Archy really would have liked to own Bellingham Castle if he could have transported it to America, but he would cheerfully have given all the mediæval castles in England for one good ship of the line, and would have thrown in Westminster Abbey as a makeweight. And because little things as well as great things influence people, Lord Bellingham could not have devised a better way to defeat his own object than in bringing Archy in contact with his two cousins, Isabel and Mary. These two high-spirited young ladies were as determinedly English as Archy was aggressively American, and the result was warfare, in which quarter was neither asked nor given. Not one of the three was bad-tempered, so that, in spite of their continual bickerings, there was an odd sort of sympathy among them, the sympathy which comes from a community of tastes and amusements, which made them seek each other's society, apparently for the purpose of expressing their disesteem for each other's opinions—Mary and Isabel on the one side, and Archy on the other; Mrs. Langton vainly striving for peace, Colonel Baskerville an impartial umpire, and Lord Bellingham secretly diverted at the cut-and-come-again style in which his grandchildren disputed. But he grew grave one day when he came upon them engaged in an exciting discussion on the issues of the war in America, which Isabel ended by saying, loftily:

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"At all events, we sha'n't be mortified by hearing you express such opinions in public, for you know grandpapa can't take you about the country visiting with him, because a great many people would not recognize you. They call you a rebel."

"Do they?" wrathfully replied Archy. "I'll give them to understand, then, that I'd rather be an American and a rebel—yes, by Jove! a rebel against tyrannical kings—than to be heir to Lord Bellingham's title and estates. And that I will show them, too!"

"I hope you will stick to it," said Isabel, tartly, "for it is a pity to have the estate go out of the family, and Trevor will get it if you don't. Dear Trevor!" Isabel, who was tender-hearted in spite of her high spirit, could not keep the tears out of her eyes at the mention of Trevor's name, and Archy, too, was softened, for he answered:

"Hang it, Isabel, why do you say such maddening things? If you were not Langton's sister and your mother's daughter I would serve you as William the Conqueror did the Princess Matilda—roll you in the mud until you cried *peccavi*," at which Isabel smiled in a superior manner. She was so tall and strong that William the Conqueror would have had trouble rolling her in the mud.

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Lord Bellingham moved away in a thoughtful mood. He began, for the first time, to realize that he might possibly not succeed in buying up his grandson—a reflection which he had hitherto refused, even in his own mind, to consider a possibility.

However, fate was preparing a delicious revenge for Archy upon his two cousins, and it took a form which not only gave him ecstatic pleasure at the time, but sufficed him for chaffing the two girls during the residue of their lives; and this is how it came about.

The spring had passed, the fall of the Ministry had made it certain that the American war was practically over, and the summer came and waned. But it was not like summer weather, and on a certain August night the air was so sharp upon the northern hills and moors that a fire was not unpleasant in the great hall at Bellingham Castle. Lord Bellingham sat before it, with Mary and Isabel taking turns in reading the London newspapers to him. The news they contained of the abandonment of hostilities was not very agreeable to either of the girls, each of whom punctuated her reading with her own opinions, very much after Archy's manner. Lord Bellingham listened, smiling instead of scowling. The society of his daughter and of his grandchildren had certainly changed the old man's temper and manners, if not his disposition. Presently Lord Bellingham asked:

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"Where is my grandson?"

"Indeed, I don't know, grandpapa," replied Mary. "He is the most restless creature I ever saw. He cannot sit down and be quiet and placid like an English gentleman; he must always be off on some sort of an expedition."

Lord Bellingham smiled again. He knew that the instant Archy entered the doors the three young

people would gravitate together, although to say a civil word one to the other was strictly against their code.

"There he is now," said Isabel, as steps were heard, and the porter came out from his corner to open the doors.

Instead of Archy, though, there entered a slight, well-made man, of about thirty-five, with a plain but striking face, in which glowed a pair of singularly beautiful black eyes. He was dressed in a handsome riding-suit, and had an air and manner of distinction. [Pg 271]

"Is Mr. Archibald Baskerville here?" he asked; and then, seeing the old man and the two girls sitting at the other end of the vast hall in the glowing light of the fire, and the waxlights on a reading-stand, he advanced, removing his three-cornered hat and making a profound and graceful bow, first to the two girls and then to their grandfather.

Lord Bellingham, who had seen much of men and things, recognized in an instant that he saw before him a person of distinction, and, rising from his chair with much dignity, he returned the salutation with a courtly inclination.

The stranger then spoke in a softly modulated voice, in which there was occasionally a slight hesitation.

"I believe I am addressing Lord Bellingham, and—" he paused and looked towards the two girls, whose height and beauty made them appear much older than their sixteen and seventeen years.

"My granddaughters," said Lord Bellingham, with a wave of his hand.

The stranger made another bow, so elegant that the two girls summoned all their grace to return it properly, and then, accepting the chair which Lord Bellingham indicated, he continued: [Pg 272]

"I venture the liberty of calling to see my young friend, Mr. Baskerville. I trust he is still here."

"Mr. Baskerville is not at present under this roof, but we are expecting him in momentarily," replied Lord Bellingham. "Mr. Baskerville is my grandson, and I beg to introduce myself as Lord Bellingham."

"I wish, my lord," replied the stranger, with dignity, "that I could respond to the courtesy you show me by introducing myself. But the exigencies of the times are such that I am compelled to forego, for political as well as personal reasons, giving my name. Mr. Baskerville, however, will recognize me as an officer and a gentleman."

Now, Lord Bellingham was not addicted to making friends with strangers, but he was so captivated with his unknown visitor's air and manners and speech, and his curiosity was so aroused, that his answer was in a very courteous tone:

"These are, indeed, troublous times, and I am more than willing to take my grandson's friend on trust. I may hazard, however, in spite of your excellent English, that you are a Frenchman, or a Spaniard perhaps, who finds himself in England, and whom prudence requires that he should conceal his name." [Pg 273]

"I am neither French nor Spanish," coolly responded the stranger. "I was born in Scotland. But I have lately come from Paris."

"How are affairs there, may I inquire?"

"In a very singular state," replied the stranger. "With an autocratic government, and little sympathy between the court and the people, the court ardently espouses the cause of democracy in the case of the American colonies."

"And the King and Queen will rue it," energetically cried Lord Bellingham, bringing his slender, ivory-headed cane down to emphasize his remarks. "They are teaching their people rebellion against kings, and they may pay the penalty by being driven out of their own bailiwick."

The stranger, as if not caring to pursue the subject further, turned and said, in a manner at once flattering and respectful:

"May I be permitted to observe that these two charming young gentlewomen remind me strongly of her Majesty Queen Marie Antoinette; and in proof of this, allow me to show you this."

He drew from his bosom a very beautiful miniature of the Queen, set in brilliants, with her monogram, and handed it to Isabel. There was, undoubtedly, a likeness between that fair, haughty face and the faces of the two handsome young English girls, with their abundant blond hair, their brilliant blue eyes, and their short upper lips, like the Austrian. [Pg 274]

Mary and Isabel smiled delightedly. It was something to be told they looked like the Queen of France, and that by a gentleman who had been honored by the gift of her portrait.

The miniature at once established the stranger in Lord Bellingham's mind as a person of consequence, and he was already deep in the good graces of Isabel and Mary.

His conversation further prepossessed them in his favor. Quiet, modest, and without dragging in the names of the great, it was easy to see that he had moved in the best society of Paris, and by his frank comment upon persons and things he showed he was not in slavish subservience to it.

He spoke of the King and Queen with gratitude and affection, but on the subject of the administration of the military and naval affairs of France he showed something approaching bitterness and chagrin.

Lord Bellingham was deeply interested in the conversation of so accomplished a man; but Isabel and Mary, whose lives had been spent in seclusion, were perfectly infatuated with him. They thought him a duke, at least, and even whispered to each other, under cover of their grandfather's sonorous conversation, that the stranger might prove to be the Comte d'Artois, that younger brother of the royal house of France who was celebrated for milking the cow so beautifully at the Little Trianon, and who was the best dancer on the tight-rope in Paris.

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Nearly an hour had passed in conversation when, with a bang, the great hall door came open, and Archy and Colonel Baskerville entered, just home from a long ride.

The stranger rose instantly, and, facing the door, held up a hand of warning. As soon as Archy's eyes became accustomed to the glow of the fire and candles, he uttered a cry of joy.

"My—" captain he was about to say, when he caught sight of Paul Jones's uplifted hand, and the word was checked in time. But, rushing forward, the two met and clasped each other rapturously, and in that warm embrace some whispered words were exchanged which caused them both to smile delightedly as they returned to the fire with their arms around each other like two school-boys, instead of being a captain and one of his junior officers.

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Lord Bellingham and the two girls were amazed at the warmth of the meeting, and more puzzled than ever to make out the identity of their mysterious visitor. Not so Colonel Baskerville. He surmised in an instant that it was Paul Jones.

"Grandfather," cried Archy, "I cannot tell you the name of this gentleman whom I have the honor to call my friend, but I assure you that Bellingham never sheltered a more honorable and deserving man."

"I believe you," replied Lord Bellingham, with dignity, "and as I have already accepted him upon his own representations, I can do no more on yours. Perhaps your friend will remain the night with us?"

"Unfortunately, no," replied Paul Jones, "with sincere thanks for your lordship's goodness. I have been two weeks in England, and to-morrow morning, early, I must embark. I have ordered post-horses from the village for twelve o'clock to-night, which will get me to the coast before this time to-morrow."

"Uncle," then said Archy, turning to Colonel Baskerville, "will you not, on my assurance, shake hands with my friend?"

"Certainly," responded Colonel Baskerville, offering his hand, and saying, in a low voice, which Lord Bellingham did not catch: "With a surmise which amounts to a certainty as to who he is."

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Supper was now ordered in Lord Bellingham's room, and when it was announced, all four of the gentlemen arose. Mrs. Langton had sent a message asking to be excused, so Isabel and Mary were to go to their mother. As they rose, Paul Jones made them another of those captivating bows which had charmed very great ladies, much less two innocent and unsophisticated young girls, and they returned it with curtseys which almost brought them to the ground. And then a strange thing happened. Archy suddenly doubled up with silent laughter. Lord Bellingham had preceded them and was now passing through the library door, so that he could neither see nor hear what was going on behind him. Paul Jones looked surprised until Archy whispered in his ear:

"My cousins profess to detest Americans!"

A smile suddenly illuminated his dark face, while Colonel Baskerville, like Archy, seemed to be excessively amused at the profound curtseys of the two young girls.

"Dear ladies," said Paul Jones, who was famous for making headway with the other sex, "may I not have the honor of kissing your charming hands, as a memory to carry away with me of the two most beautiful maidens I have ever known outside my native country?"

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And Isabel and Mary, blushing and smiling and nothing loath, extended their hands, which Paul Jones touched with his lips in the most respectful manner. As they sailed gracefully off, Archy seized Colonel Baskerville, who wore a sympathetic grin, and whispered, convulsively:



"ISABEL AND MARY EXTENDED THEIR HANDS TO PAUL JONES"

"Uncle, this is more than I can stand. I shall certainly explode when I think of Isabel and Mary—and—o-ho!" Archy went off into spasms of laughter, which lasted until he was seated at the table directly under Lord Bellingham's stern eye. And even then, with all his pride and delight in his old commander, Archy was secretly convulsed when he anticipated the revelation of Paul Jones's identity after he was out of the three kingdoms. He felt no fear for his brave commander; he knew that few men united the greatest boldness with the most consummate prudence as Paul Jones did, and was perfectly sure that after having escaped capture in the two weeks the great captain had been in England, he was little likely to be caught between Bellingham and the coast. [Pg 279]

Lord Bellingham had promptly surrendered to the charm of Paul Jones's conversation, and listened with profound attention to all he had to say, as did Colonel Baskerville. Paul Jones gave much interesting information about affairs on the Continent, but with so much tact that no one would have suspected the active part he had taken in many of the incidents he related. He sat, the wax light falling upon his clear-cut face and deep and speaking eyes, one knee carelessly thrown over the other, and his brown, sinewy hand involuntarily seeking the hilt of the dress sword that he wore, according to the custom of the time. Lord Bellingham was in his most gracious mood, but the more fascinated he was with the conversation of his new guest, the more profound was his curiosity to find out who the stranger was. The personal history of Paul Jones was little known at that time, and his announcement that he was born in Scotland did not enlighten Lord Bellingham in the least. In vain he framed adroit questions; Paul Jones's answers were more adroit still. Lord Bellingham, with an inscrutable smile upon his handsome old face, listened and watched, and was at last compelled, after four hours of close conversation, to admit to himself that he had utterly failed to penetrate the stranger's disguise. [Pg 280]

A few minutes before midnight Paul Jones rose.

"My horses are now due from the village," he said, "and I must leave this hospitable roof. Will not you, Mr. Baskerville, go with me one stage on the road?"

Archy accepted delightedly. The whole party then, Lord Bellingham included, came out in the cold and gloomy hall, where the fire had quite died out, to bid the guest farewell. Colonel Baskerville said good-bye with great courtesy, and added:

"I beg to say that I offer you my hand with full knowledge, I believe, of your name, and character, and rank."

Paul Jones's expressive eyes glowed with pleasure. Many English officers refused to recognize him on account of his having adopted the American cause, although born in one of the British Isles, and the respect of such a man as Colonel Baskerville was peculiarly gratifying.

"I thank you most sincerely for your generous recognition; it is the mark of a just and liberal mind. And to you, sir," said Paul Jones, turning to Lord Bellingham, "I do not know whether you would extend to me the same hospitality you have this night if you knew my name. Every motive of the most ordinary prudence requires me to keep it secret the brief time I am in England. Yet, as a slight testimony to my belief in your generosity, I will say to you that I am Paul Jones, captain in the continental navy." [Pg 281]

And the next moment he had passed through the great doors, descended the stone steps, and his post-chaise was rolling rapidly off with himself and Archy inside.

CHAPTER XVIII

"Now, tell me, my captain," cried Archy, "what I have been longing to ask—what brought you to England?" [Pg 282]

"A desire to serve my country. Knowing that I must soon return to America, and hoping that one of the first things which will engage the attention of Congress will be the organization of a navy, I determined to find out all I could about the English dock-yards. For this purpose I landed at Plymouth two weeks ago. I managed, by means I cannot now reveal to you, to inspect the dock-yards at Plymouth and Portsmouth both, and I have in my head a complete knowledge of the methods by which the British navy is built, armed, manned, and victualled; and this information I shall lay before the Marine Committee of Congress as soon as I return. I have also a complete list of every ship in the British navy, with the rating, metal, boats, officers, and men, when and where built, and present station and employment. How I got it goes with me to the grave, a secret.^[1] Meanwhile, it became advisable for me to get away from England as soon as possible. I found all the ports in the south of England were watched, but I played with my enemies by taking post for Yorkshire. The captain of a Portuguese vessel, which lay at Gravesend, was to call at Bridlington for a part of his cargo, and I persuaded him, by the promise of a considerable sum of money, to wait for me north of the Humber for three days. He is probably there now, and he is to land me in France. And now for our mutual adventures."

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"Your's first, of course."

And then Paul Jones began and gave Archy a clear account of how things were going, as nearly as he could tell, in America. It was then Archy's turn, and he told with great relish of Lord Bellingham's efforts to induce him to become a British subject, of Colonel Baskerville's unvarying kindness and wisdom, of Trevor Langton's brilliant prospects, in case he were alive.

"I hope he may still be living; but I heard through a well-informed person in London that sickness was making fearful inroads upon the garrison. I remembered your cousin's name, and asked if there were news of him. It seems that the Duc de Crillon is most generous in allowing news of individuals, and I was told that he had lately had a severe attack of fever, and it was not known whether he was alive or dead."

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This was distressing news for Archy to hear. He was silent a few moments, and then said:

"I will mention this first to my uncle, and leave it to him whether he will tell my aunt and cousins and my grandfather. It will break his mother's heart if Langton is—" Here Archy stopped, unable to continue; but after a while he recovered himself, and began to take his usual cheerful view of Langton's chances.

"He may be as well as you and I are at this moment, so I will not allow myself to fear for him. And now, will you advise me for myself?"

"I can only repeat to you the advice I gave you in Paris. If I saw the slightest danger of your being beguiled into giving up your country, I would wish you to leave England at once. As it is, I see that Lord Bellingham is most kindly disposed towards you; and you are much better off until affairs have finally settled themselves with him, and especially Colonel Baskerville, of whom I have formed a high opinion. Remember, you are still, technically, an officer on parole, and so you will remain until peace is signed. I recommend, both for your interest as well as your real welfare, to remain with your relatives until you are quite free. I am glad to see that you have some domestic influences. It is well for a young man who has no mother or sisters to have the association with some one else's mother and sisters—and if the mother of those sweet and modest girls be like them, you are fortunate."

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Archy had not thought he could laugh so soon after hearing of Langton's supposed illness, but at the recollection of Mary's and Isabel's gratification and delight at being noticed by Paul Jones, Archy burst into laughter, long and loud.

"If you could but hear us quarrel! My cousins are, as you say, sweet and modest; but they hate everything connected with our cause, and when I tell them that it is you—"

Paul Jones joined in Archy's merriment, so that the postilion thought the two gentlemen inside had lost their minds, they laughed so much.

They reached the first and last stage—a village on the coast—at daylight. From thence Archy was to return to Bellingham in the post-chaise. Dawn was breaking over the German Ocean, and the east glowed with a soft radiance that was turning the sky to an exquisite rose-color, and was presently to break into the splendor of the sunrise. Few vessels dotted the sea, but near the shore lay a Portuguese brigantine, which Paul Jones at once recognized. Afar off, the pile of Scarborough Castle frowned over the sea. Paul Jones's eyes sparkled, as did Archy's, when they looked seaward.

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"It was yonder," cried Paul Jones, "that we fought the *Serapis*. Under those waves rests what was left of the gallant old *Bon Homme Richard*. Yonder is the sea on which I struck one good and ringing blow for my country!"

"And made the name of Paul Jones immortal," replied Archy, feeling his heart swell at the sight of the man who had earned so much glory on that spot.

The parting was painful for both, although they expected to meet shortly in their own liberated and victorious country; but it was brief. The brigantine sent a boat ashore, and almost before Archy realized that he had said good-bye to his friend and captain, Paul Jones was aboard, and the brigantine was stretching out to sea with a fair wind.

Archy turned towards the little public-house where the horses were baited, and ordered some breakfast for himself. He felt dazed. It seemed to him as if weeks separated him from the same hour the day before. After getting his breakfast he went to the chaise, while the horses were resting, entered it, and fell sound asleep. He did not stir until noon. By that time the horses were being put to, and they took the road for home. Archy, who was a good sleeper, dozed nearly all the way, but he was disturbed by troubled dreams and thoughts of Langton. However, when in the dusk of evening he drove up to Bellingham he was quite wide awake, and not all his anxieties for his friend could wholly damp his glee at his prospective triumph over Mary and Isabel. He had no fears as to the manner in which Lord Bellingham would receive him after knowing the name of his mysterious guest. His grandfather would never on earth admit that he had been hoodwinked in any way, and no matter how chagrined he was he would put a bold face on it. But Isabel and Mary!

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Archy rushed in the hall and found them sitting around the fire as they had been the previous evening, with the addition of Colonel Baskerville and Mrs. Langton.

"Grandfather," bawled Archy, quite unable to moderate his exultation, "do you know who it was you entertained last night? Ha! ha!"

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"Perfectly," replied Lord Bellingham, with a cold smile.

Archy felt rather flat, and looked reproachfully at Colonel Baskerville, who, he felt convinced, had robbed him of the pleasure of springing the sensation on his grandfather. But Mary and Isabel were left. Colonel Baskerville had not been cruel enough to deprive him of that delicious triumph over them.

"Do *you* know, Mary and Isabel?" he cried.

"No," replied Isabel, "but he was so graceful and agreeable. We told mamma we were sure he is a man of rank."

"So he is," shouted Archy, in reply.

"And there was something so romantic about him," chimed in Mary.

"When he showed us the portrait of Queen Marie Antoinette, we thought it might be possible—though I dare say it was foolish enough—that he might be the King's brother, the Comte d'Artois."

At this Archy capered with delight. Colonel Baskerville whispered something to Mrs. Langton, who started with surprise, but who laughed in her gentle way at the little comedy being played by Archy, whom she had learned to love, and Mary and Isabel.

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"At all events, he was very civil," announced Isabel, "and I am sure I hope he liked the way we curtseyed. Oh, how easy it is to tell persons of rank and birth."

"Indeed, that is true," Mary echoed; "and I dare say, cousin Archy, your friend is very much opposed to these extraordinary American sympathies and notions of yours."

"Do you want to know who he is?" shrieked Archy, joyfully. "Do you want to know, I say? He is Captain Paul Jones, of the continental navy—so much for his rank; and as for his birth, he is the son of a gardener. O-oo-oo!" Archy's yells of rapturous laughter fairly made the roof ring, and it was so infectious that even Lord Bellingham burst into a cackle—the nearest approach he ever made to audible laughter.

But it was no laughing matter to Mary and Isabel. They sat as if paralyzed, looking blankly at each other, and quite stunned by the magnitude of the mistake they had made. Mary gasped out:

"Paul—"

And Isabel added, faintly:

"Jones."

And then, unable to stand the laughter, in which even their mother joined, while Colonel Baskerville haw-hawed openly, they flung out of the hall and rushed up to their rooms, where, locked in each other's arms, they wept bitterly from pure chagrin.

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All this was bliss to Archy, but serious thoughts were lurking in his mind. He took the first opportunity to speak to Colonel Baskerville alone without attracting observation—and that opportunity did not come until bedtime, in the Colonel's own room. Then he repeated what Paul Jones had told him of Langton's illness.

"Poor lad! poor lad!" said Colonel Baskerville, pacing the floor. "I never saw him, but in my heart I love him. I think, with you, it is best not to tell his mother of this new anxiety, but it would be well to let Lord Bellingham know. As Captain Paul Jones says, the Duc de Crillon is most chivalrous in permitting communications with the garrison at Gibraltar respecting individuals, and there might be means, through Lord Bellingham's influence at the Admiralty, to find out something about Langton."

Next morning all the members of the household were surprised when they found that Lord Bellingham's solicitor had arrived from York at an early hour. Archy surmised that the solicitor

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had been sent for in regard to making Lord Bellingham's will, and was not surprised, during the course of the afternoon, to be invited to his grandfather's room. Lord Bellingham thought he had made up his mind to make Langton his sole heir, but Archy had so won upon his pride and ambition, which took the place of a heart with him, that he could not forbear one last appeal to him.

When Archy, so frank, so manly, so handsome, stood before him, Lord Bellingham yearned to make him the heir; and for that purpose assumed a dignity and sweetness of manner which he possessed, but rarely exhibited. Although Archy's determination was too firm to be shaken, he realized that Lord Bellingham could be, when he chose, a very persuasive man. Lord Bellingham used every argument, and one in especial was peculiarly touching to Archy, while not convincing.

"I will acknowledge," he said, "after having been of another mind for thirty years, that I was unduly hard on your father. He was a better son to me than I was a father to him. Suffer me, therefore, to ease my conscience of its reproach to my dead son by helping me to give you your rights."

Archy remained silent. He knew not how to put his refusal in words, but presently he rose.

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"Grandfather," he said, "I thank you for your justice to my father. He had his faults to other people, but he had none to me; and if I follow his injunctions I shall never disgrace him or you or myself. I feel sure, though, that he would advise me to stand by my country, and I must do it. But you have another grandson—at least, I hope you have—who is much more likely to fulfil your expectation than I am—Trevor Langton."

All this was very pretty, thought Lord Bellingham, but it did not serve to give him his own way, which he dearly loved, and especially in this great and important matter. From the most winning mildness he suddenly changed to the blackness of wrath. He sat quite silent, beating the devil's tattoo on the floor, and suddenly burst out with—

"Hang it! I'll give you a thousand pounds and let you go back to your damned country!"

"Thank you—thank you!" cried Archy, who inherited his grandfather's disinclination to acknowledge that he was disappointed. "A thousand pounds! I'll be glad to get a hundred, sir! And a thousand! It will buy me my outfit for the navy, when we get one, and leave enough to live like a prince on besides!"

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At which Lord Bellingham most unexpectedly found himself laughing, in his silent way, to see that what he had intended to be a miserable pittance should be received so debonairly by this unconventional youngster.

"And now, sir, may I go and tell my aunt that you have cut me off with a shilling, so to speak—for I take it that Langton is to be your heir now, poor chap, if he is living?"

"You may; and I say, you dog—I'll give you two thousand pounds."

Archy dashed into Mrs. Langton's sitting-room, where, with Colonel Baskerville, Isabel, and Mary, she was anxiously awaiting the result of the conference.

"Hurrah, aunt!" he cried, "my grandfather has behaved like a king. He has given me two thousand pounds, and the rest will be Trevor's. And now, Miss Mary and Miss Isabel," he added, maliciously, "I beg you to notice that I could have been as English as you if I had chosen, and could have been a lord to boot—but not I! If I can but get a lieutenant's commission in the American navy, I'd rather have it than to be Lord Bellingham of Bellingham Castle. Do you believe me now?"

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And even Mary and Isabel received the announcement with respect. Mrs. Langton kissed him tenderly, saying:

"You are a noble boy, and I wish you were my son, too," while Colonel Baskerville shook his hand warmly.

"You have done the very thing I could not wish you to do," he said, "but I must admit that you have acted the gentleman and the man of honor."

Lord Bellingham showed that he was in earnest in sending for his solicitor to make his will, but the news they had just learned of Langton's illness made it important that it should be known whether he were still alive at the moment of disposing of so much property. Lord Bellingham showed the most intense eagerness. After having put off making his will until his old age, he then became morbidly desirous to make it; and at last, after many conferences with his solicitor and Colonel Baskerville, the Colonel hit upon a plan in his own mind on which he congratulated himself. He spoke privately to the solicitor about it before mentioning it to Archy or Lord Bellingham.

"My nephew, Mr. Baskerville, has a safe-conduct from the French government which would easily enable him to go to Gibraltar by way of France. He could go there, find out whether Trevor Langton is alive or dead—alive, I trust and pray—and return in one-half the time it would take for an inquiry through the regular channels. I have no doubt he would go. He is at the restless age which, happily, does not last always; and besides, if he does this for Langton, it must meet with a reward from my brother besides the paltry two thousand pounds he has promised, or rather threatened, in his will. But not a word of this to my nephew. He is not without perversity, and

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besides, having done a noble and disinterested thing, however mistaken we may think it, he is too acute to sully it by trying to make interest with his grandfather afterwards."

Lord Bellingham grasped eagerly at this, and, of his own volition, said:

"I should not fail to remember this in making my testamentary arrangements."

It was enough to mention the journey to Archy. The eyes of Europe were turned on Gibraltar. The moment was fast approaching when the last mortal struggle was coming between the dauntless garrison and the gigantic naval and military power of France and Spain, and no young man of spirit but would have been fascinated at the idea of seeing the climax of these great events. Archy could not start soon enough to please himself, and, within the week, had taken the road to London. He travelled in state, in Lord Bellingham's private post-chaise, which was to take him to London. He carried with him letters to Admiral Kempenfelt, who commanded the *Royal George*—one of the splendid fleet of thirty-four vessels that were being made ready at Spithead, night and day, for an effort to save Gibraltar—and numerous other letters, calculated to forward his journey to France under a flag of truce, and he had also a considerable sum of money in gold.

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He stopped but a day in London, to have his safe-conduct viséd at the Admiralty. Then he sent the post-chaise back with a long letter to his grandfather, and a short but affectionate one to Trevor Langton's mother. In this last, he actually forced himself to send his love to Mary and Isabel, but he could not forbear adding at the bottom:

"P.S.—DEAR AUNT,—I hope my cousins are not pining away for Captain Paul Jones. He admires the ladies very much, but I do not think he has the intention to ask any particular fair one to share his glorious destiny with him. Break this gently to my cousins.

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"A. B."

That very afternoon Archy took post for Portsmouth, and arrived there in a few hours. He went to the celebrated Angel Inn, and tumbled into bed, and was astir early the next morning to find a way of reaching the mighty and invincible Rock.

FOOTNOTE:

[1] Paul Jones did possess this list, and he never revealed the source of his information, which was supposed to be some one high in authority at the Admiralty.

CHAPTER XIX

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The next morning, the 29th of August, 1782, broke clear, bright, and beautiful. A magnificent fleet lay out in the roads, and, towering among them, Archy recognized the *Royal George*, with her three great decks, her huge, broad-beamed hull, and her lofty masts. No one who ever sailed on this ship but liked her. She had a record of good fortune which made her a favorite with both officers and men. Her quarters were comfortable, and she was commonly thought to be a weatherly ship, although the terrible fate which was impending over her on that August morning made it a miracle that she had survived so long, for at that time she was the oldest ship of the line in the British service.

Afloat and ashore, all was the orderly bustle and despatch of getting a fleet of more than thirty ships ready for sea in short order. Every moment was precious, but Archy saw for himself that much remained to be done, and it would be many days yet before the ships could be made ready to leave.

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About ten o'clock in the morning he hired a small boat and put out to the *Royal George*. As he neared her, he saw her great hull slowly and almost imperceptibly careen on the starboard side, by which he was approaching her, and, presently, a gang of men in slings were let down over her port side. Archy knew very well what that meant. Something was to be done to her hull below the water-line, and as the day was perfectly still, without a breath to ruffle the dead calm of the water, the ship had been heeled over to save time, instead of the more tedious process of being put in dry-dock to have the work done. Soon the sound of ripping planks off and the noise of hammers and chisels echoed over the water. A swarm of little boats were gathered around the monster, and her decks were alive with people. Forward was a crowd of women and children, families of the men, who were allowed on board for an hour or two, as all work was suspended while the ship was being heeled over.

The ladder was over the starboard side, and as Archy, on reaching the ship, ran lightly up it he felt a strange joy at again touching the deck of a ship; and, with the joyful expectation of youth, he fancied that in a little while the American navy would possess a whole fleet of noble ships like those he saw around him.

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As he stepped over the side the officer of the deck was standing close by, and, on Archy's explaining that he knew Admiral Kempenfelt and had a letter for him, the lieutenant called the Admiral's orderly, and in a few moments Archy was shown into the great cabin.

"Ah, my young friend, happy to see you!" cried Admiral Kempenfelt, rising from his table, where he was writing, and shaking Archy's hand cordially. "So it seems, from Lord Bellingham's letter, which I have glanced over, that you have had some adventures since I saw you last."

"Yes, sir," replied Archy, smiling, and returning the Admiral's kindly grasp. "But not the sort I want. The *Seahorse's* people seem to have ended my fighting career when they picked me up at the Texel nearly three years ago, and now that our countries are on the verge of peace, it looks as if I would never have another chance to do a little whacking on my own account."

"Ah, that's the way with you youngsters; nothing but whack—whacking all the time. Wait until you get my age and you will love peace, as I do. I am heartily glad, though, that this quarrel with our late colonies is over. Not one-tenth of our people have been in favor of the war for two years past, and both sides have done enough now to come to an honorable peace. I have heard something of you since you have been in England this time. So you won't turn Englishman for Bellingham and all it carries with it?"

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"No, sir. Would you turn Frenchman for Versailles and St. Cloud, and the Louvre thrown in?"

"No, hanged if I would!"

Archy bowed and slapped himself on the breast, saying:

"I perceive I am in good company, sir."

"Well, now, Mr. Baskerville, let us see about getting you to Gibraltar before we get there. A vessel—the *Fox*—is now waiting for a wind to carry some French officers across, to be exchanged off Ushant. You could go very well in her, and, once in France, you can take care of yourself. I apprehend no difficulty in your communicating with your cousin. The Duc de Crillon is well known to be most courteous in conveying letters to the garrison, and even sent some delicacies to General Eliot, who was forced to decline them, and there is actually much polite communication between the two commanders-in-chief. I will myself give you letters to the Admiral, and to Captain Wilbur, of the *Fox*, which, I am sure, will secure you a berth in her."

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Admiral Kempenfelt took up a pen and began writing rapidly; but the cabin floor, which had been at an angle, was tilted still more, and his chair slid down, while Archy caught the table as it was slipping after the chair.

"Deuced inconvenient, this heeling of the ship; but it saves time, and time is everything to our brave fellows at Gibraltar," and the Admiral calmly resumed his writing. But Archy was not so calm. He looked out of the cabin windows on the starboard side, and the nearness of the rippling water gave him a kind of shock. He tried to calculate the angle of the floor, which perceptibly became more acute, and a sudden apprehension flashed over him that the ship was over too far to one side—but he dared not speak.

Meanwhile the Admiral went on calmly writing, threw sand on the two letters he had written, and after reading them over handed them to Archy.

"There," he said, "I hope these will serve your turn. It gives me pleasure to do you a kindness, even if you are an enemy," and he placed his hand affectionately on Archy's shoulder. "May we meet again under happier circumstances: in peace, all our quarrels forgot, and nothing but goodwill between us all—amen."

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Something in the Admiral's kind voice, the grasp of his manly hand, touched Archy's heart. The feeling of instant and dreadful apprehension had grown upon him in the few minutes that the Admiral continued writing. Every moment he hoped that the ship would be righted; instead of that, the floor became a more sharply inclined plane. Against her stout wooden walls he could hear the ringing of the carpenters' blows, and it sounded like a knell of death to him. He looked closely into Admiral Kempenfelt's eyes to see if there was any premonition of danger; but the Admiral seemed strangely unconscious of what so powerfully affected Archy, and although barely able to keep his feet on rising, gave no sign of fear that the ship might go over.

Archy longed to ask the Admiral to go on deck with him, and even faltered out:

"Will you not come above, sir?"

"No," replied the Admiral, surprised at the suggestion. "I have work to do. Remember me to my friends at Gibraltar. Good-bye, and all good go with you."

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"If we do not meet again, Admiral," said Archy, in a voice which trembled a little, and then, all at once, the words he had meant to utter left him, and an overmastering impulse made him turn and walk out of the cabin as quickly as he could.

Outside the door the orderly had braced himself against one of the quarter-deck guns. Something in the man's face arrested Archy's attention at that instant. There were strange noises about the ship, a dull reverberation like thunder, followed by a slight crash, and the men were running to and fro.

"What is the matter?" asked Archy of the man.

"Nothing, sir, except that the ship is heeled over too far; the guns have broken loose, and I believe in five minutes we shall all be under eighteen fathom of water," coolly replied the orderly.

The appearance of the deck was far from reassuring. As Archy took off his cap in passing the officer in charge of the deck he observed the carpenter say a few words in a low tone to the officer, whose reply was perfectly audible.

"If you know more about this ship, sir, than I do, you had better take the deck."

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Archy ran to the ladder. The platform was far under water, and on looking for his boat he saw the boatman about twenty yards off, pulling away for his life.

"Come here!" shouted Archy.

The man simply shook his head, pulled a little farther out, and then lay on his oars. Archy put his hand in his pocket and held up his purse. At that the boatman quickly picked up his oars, and, rowing as if his life depended on it, in a few minutes was alongside.

Archy's conduct had not escaped observation. Several officers were walking about the deck, and, although they said nothing, their faces were grave enough as they leaned over the rail and watched the boat, into which Archy sprang while it was yet several feet away from the half-submerged ladder.

"It wasn't the money for myself, sir, that brought me back," gasped the boatman, as with tremendous strokes the boat shot away from the leaning hull of the ship; "but it was worth while to try for my wife and family. That there ship is in the most dangerous way I ever see a ship. One puff of wind now will send her over."

"Lay on your oars," said Archy, watching with painful interest the mighty hull on which the hammering and pounding sounded preternaturally loud.

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The perilous position of the ship was plain to the whole fleet, and every eye was turned towards her. On several of the ships near her the order was quietly given to stand by to lower the boats. In the stillness of the August morning every sound could be heard, and on board the *Royal George* was much noise. The women and children forward were laughing and chattering with the sailors, and every moment a burst of loud laughter showed that the men were enjoying their little holiday time. The noise of the workmen striking the hull was incessant, but above all there would come the frequent ominous sound of a gun that would break loose from its fastenings and roll down the inclined plane to starboard. The officer of the deck continued to walk up and down in what seemed to every eye that watched him an almost insane ignorance of the danger of the ship. The boatman turned to Archy and said:

"I see the carpenter go up to him once afore, but he didn't take no heed. I dare say the carpenter won't ax him no more."

However, at this moment the officer turned and disappeared below.

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Thousands of eyes were fixed upon the *Royal George* in agonizing apprehension. Archy, in uncontrollable agitation, cried aloud:

"Why don't they haul the guns back? The ports are all open, and if she heels a foot more she is gone. Oh, God!"

For the *Royal George* was slowly, inch by inch, heeling over more; and at the same instant, afar off, the bright water grew dark with an advancing wind—the wind of death—which stole towards the great ship softly and silently.

Suddenly the people on board the doomed ship seemed to realize their peril. The officer of the deck reappeared and ran quickly aft. The crowd forward stopped its shouting and singing and laughing; the sharp blare of the boatswain's pipe was heard, calling all hands on deck—but it was too late. The towering hull gave one lurch as the wind struck it, the awful shriek of a thousand voices smote the air, and in another moment, with a roar that was heard for miles, the *Royal George* went down, head foremost, in a black vortex of her own making.

For a few minutes Archy was dazed and paralyzed with the horror of the sight. He saw the black and seething whirlpool made by the monster, with her hundred and twenty guns, her giant masts and spars, her huge anchors and cables, for one horrible moment upon the blue and sunlit water. He heard the roar of the rushing air through her ports, the thunder of guns and anchors breaking through the decks, and a frightful crashing, as if every mast and spar and deck in the ship had been splintered at once; and, worst of all, one wild shriek from twelve hundred souls, swallowed up with her; and never, to his dying hour, could Archy Baskerville forget that cry—a cry that haunted forever, night and day, all who heard it. It was only when it had ceased, when instead of the stately ship he saw a seething mass of waters where she lay a minute before, and where now a few human beings were tossed like leaves upon the water—it was only then that he came a little to his senses, and shouted to the boatman:

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"Give me an oar, and pull—pull!"

In a little while they were among the floating bodies. The few minutes had somewhat sobered Archy. He still felt as if he were in some terrible dream, but almost without his own volition he began to act rationally. He threw down his oar, and, leaving the management of the boat to the boatman, stripped off his jacket, trousers, and shoes, and, plunging into the water, swam vigorously towards the first man he saw. As he got near enough he recognized the orderly who had been on duty at the Admiral's door. The man could not swim; but, although almost sinking in

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his heavy clothes, quietly obeyed Archy, who called to him:

"Don't catch me around the neck—put your hand on my shoulder."

He would have been hard to save, as his clothes were heavy with water, but the boat came alongside at that moment and he was hauled in. Archy cried to him:

"The Admiral?"

"Gone," briefly answered the marine. "He never left the cabin."

Every ship in the fleet sent boats, and in half an hour all of the survivors were picked up, and then came a terrible reaction. The flags were half-masted, the booming of minute-guns over the water was heard, and the people on the ships and crowds that ran to the shore gave way to paroxysms of grief and horror. Even those who had lost no friend or relative, and they were few, were overcome with the dreadful shock of the disaster.

Archy Baskerville's nerve lasted him until, with the boatman's help, he had handed the orderly and three other men they had saved over to the large cutter which was collecting the survivors from the small boats, and then he gave way to a perfectly hysterical burst of grief. Within an hour from the time that he had shown the utmost coolness and courage in saving life, he could only throw himself down in the boat and weep and sob like a nervous woman over the horrors he had seen. The boatman, his stolid face ashy pale, sat trembling, and presently said, in a thick voice, to Archy:

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"'Tis lucky, sir, that both of us wasn't took this way when there was something to do. I swear to you, sir, my arms is so weak I can hardly pull the boat ashore, and I know my wife is near wild with fright, and—and—I don't seem to feel that, nor nothin', sir."

"Pull me to the *Fox*, and then you can go ashore and fetch my portmanteau," said Archy. All he wanted then was to get away from that dreadful spot.

The *Fox*, a small gun-brig, was then getting up her anchor, as the wind was increasing, for which she had waited, and her orders admitted of no delay.

As Archy came over the side of the brig, the men, with white, set faces, were walking around the capstan in silence, the creaking sound painfully audible. The officers, mute, and, as Archy could see, many of them as shaken as he, were standing about the deck, and as Archy handed Captain Wilbur—a stern, weather-beaten man—Admiral Kempenfelt's letter, on which the ink was scarcely dry, he tried to speak, but he could only say, "Admiral Kempenfelt," and burst into tears.

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Captain Wilbur lifted his cap as he took the letter, and then turned aside, to conceal his agitation. Presently he spoke in a low voice:

"Everything shall be attended to at once. I will send Admiral Kempenfelt's letter to the flag-ship immediately, and we will not be detained more than an hour. Would that we had sailed before we saw that awful sight!"

The afternoon sun was declining when the *Fox* passed out to sea. Archy looked resolutely seaward—he could not bear to turn his eyes towards the dreadful spot where the *Royal George* had gone down.

At eight bells, after relieving the watch, Captain Wilbur called all hands on deck, and, having no chaplain, he himself held a simple religious service, in which all, both officers and men, joined fervently. Captain Wilbur, although a dashing officer, was a stern man, a rigid moralist, and counted as puritanical—but all hearts were subdued by the terrible calamity they had just witnessed. Archy felt that he had special cause for gratitude, and he gave thanks with a greater devoutness of spirit than he had felt since the hour that Commodore Jones—a man of deep though unobtrusive piety—had exhorted him to thank God for the glorious success of their country.

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They had sailed on the 29th of August, and by extraordinary good-fortune found themselves off Ushant within thirty-six hours. There, waiting for them, was the French frigate *Alceste*, with the English officers to be exchanged for the French. To Archy's delight and surprise he found that as soon as the French officers were landed at Ushant the *Alceste* was to take aboard the Comte d'Artois, the King's brother, and the Duc de Bourbon, who were determined to see the last act in the tragedy and to sail for Gibraltar.

The gallant French officers expressed the utmost sympathy for the terrible disaster suffered by the British navy, and especially at the loss of Admiral Kempenfelt, who was admired and respected even by his enemies. The Admiral's letter—the last he had ever penned—was recommendation enough to Archy, even without his prestige as having served under Paul Jones. He was at once offered a berth on the *Alceste*, which he gladly accepted, and on the 12th day of September he came in sight, for the third time, of the Rock of the Lion.

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So celebrated had this siege become that persons from all parts of Europe came, as the Comte d'Artois and the Duc de Bourbon, to see the last mortal struggle between Spain and England for this mighty fortress. On that September day when they cast anchor in the harbor of Algeciras, the shore, as far as the eye could reach, was an armed camp. The gigantic fortifications, armed with hundreds of the heaviest siege guns, were manned by forty thousand men. Fifty French and Spanish battle-ships, nine of which wore admiral's flags, were drawn up in menacing array, and

beside them were a hundred gunboats, mortar vessels and bomb-ketches, ten enormous floating batteries, and three hundred smaller boats, to land men when a practicable breach in the defences should be made.

From these enormous forces of attack, Archy turned his eyes on the great fortress. The golden light of morning bathed the summit of the Rock in fire, and the ensign of St. George floated proudly above it. There were not six thousand men, and less than a hundred guns, to oppose the tremendous bombardment of the Spaniards and French; but these were the seasoned sailors, soldiers, and marines who had held out stubbornly against death and defeat in every form for more than three years.

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Precisely at seven o'clock in the morning a signal-gun boomed over the water, and then began the unparalleled assault, which made all that had gone before it mere child's-play.

CHAPTER XX

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On that September morning, as the sun rose in unclouded glory, every man of the heroic garrison of Gibraltar was at his post; every soldier and sailor in the tremendous array of ships and batteries meant to annihilate the fortress was ready for the assault; and uncounted thousands of persons, both on sea and land, watched and waited to see this terrible and unmatched bombardment.

At seven o'clock three hundred heavy guns on the land side opened fire upon the Rock. Fifty ships of the line and the ten great floating batteries, protected by bomb-proof shields, moved up to within a thousand yards and poured their broadsides upon the fortress.

The garrison had less than a hundred guns to reply with, but these were served with a steadiness and vigor that made them doubly effective. From these guns were thrown red-hot shot, which were frightfully destructive to the ships, but rolled harmlessly off the shields of the formidable floating batteries into the water, from which clouds of steam arose to mingle with the dense smoke that made the fair day dark. The thunder of the guns was indescribable. The solid Rock itself seemed to roar and tremble as it replied to the hurricane of shot and shell that rained upon it. The huge ships fired broadside after broadside, while from the isthmus the batteries were worked by ten thousand men. Soon, all below the summit of the Rock became as black as midnight with the smoke, and it was lighted by the red flames from the guns and the explosion of magazines on land and sea. But high above all, serene in the light of morning, floated the proud standard of England. As Archy Baskerville, from the *Alceste's* deck, watched the terrible and imposing sight of war in all its majesty, he felt a thrill of pride that those six thousand indomitable men were of the same blood as himself.

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All day this hell of fire and fury lasted, and as night came on its horrors were increased by the ships and floating batteries catching fire. By that time the fortress had proved its impregnable nature, and the superiority of its cannonade became manifest. One after another of the ships caught fire from the red-hot shot, and by midnight, in spite of the utmost efforts, the *Pastora*, Admiral Moreno's flagship, was seen to be blazing from stem to stern. Other of the smaller vessels were in flames, and as the day had been made dark by the smoke, so now the blaze lighted up the whole bay with a frightful glare that was reflected in the lurid heavens, while the Rock itself seemed a mountain on fire.

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The hot shot had told with terrible effect on the Spanish fortifications on the land side, and they were blazing in more than fifty places at once. By midnight it had proved equally appalling upon the fleets and floating batteries. Nearly every one of the smaller Spanish vessels was on fire, and distress signals were seen in all parts of the bay. The wind was adverse, and, with the powerful currents, was driving the ships of the line away from the Rock, so they could be of no assistance in saving these smaller vessels, which drifted about helplessly until the fire reached their magazines, and then would be exploded with a concussion that seemed to shake Gibraltar to its base. About two o'clock in the morning the floating batteries, which were the chief hope of the besiegers, were seen to be in disorder. It was then, by the fierce light of battle, that Archy Baskerville, from the *Alceste's* deck, recognized Captain Curtis, as, in command of a few light gunboats, he put off from the New Mole, and, rapidly forming a line upon the flank of the floating batteries, drove them directly under the guns of the fortress. This was their destruction, and the Spaniards abandoned them so quickly that scores of wounded men were left aboard of them to perish in the flames. Then Archy saw Captain Curtis in a cutter make for the blazing and exploding boats, and with other officers and men drag forth the wounded, who would otherwise have perished in the flames. Archy's heart swelled almost to bursting.

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"Oh, that I were there! that I were there!" he almost cried aloud, so overpowering to the heart and the imagination is the sight of heroism.

At one moment the cutter was alongside a gunboat just as the magazine blazed up. The whole vessel seemed to rise in the coppery sky and to break into a million pieces before it descended. No one ever expected to see the cutter and its heroic company again, but when the first horrible shock and crash were over she was seen still afloat.

The dreadful night wore away and the dawn came on. Archy, who thought that he had seen the

most terrible sight in the world at the sinking of the *Royal George*, now realized that there was something more dreadful still. The bay was covered with wreckage, to which drowning men clung. Dead bodies floated everywhere—the smell of powder and of blood was in the murky air. On the land side it was, if anything, worse. Fortifications were destroyed, guns were dismantled, the trenches were encumbered with the dead and dying. It was then, when the full scene of destruction was visible, that the hopelessness of the attack was seen. The preparations that had been months in making had been tried and had failed, and the flag of England still flew steadily over Gibraltar. As if by common consent the tremendous cannonade ceased, and just as the last gun was fired the first pale gleam of the sun shone upon the British ensign, and from the Rock came borne a cry of triumph as the salute was played.

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Archy Baskerville, who had watched through the whole day and night, felt a thrill of something strangely like joy at the success of the indomitable garrison. He would have liked to echo that cry of triumph, and it required all of his self-control not to do so; but he remembered that he was on a ship of his allies, and, whatever his heart might feel, he spoke no word that indicated the conflict of emotions within him. The French officers were equally on their guard, but Archy, looking into the faces near him on the *Alceste's* deck, when that shout was wafted towards them from the invincible fortress, saw that they had no more hope. The fortress that could withstand the assault of the previous twenty-four hours was impregnable.

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By common consent there was peace on the day after this frightful bombardment, and on that day Archy was permitted to go ashore, in the effort to communicate with Langton.

The Duc de Crillon at once gave permission for him not only to communicate with Langton, but to go inside the Landport gate. The most generous relations were maintained during the whole time that General Eliot and the Duc de Crillon were opposed to each other, and every favor consistent with prudence was granted on each side.

At nightfall, therefore, Archy was taken to the Landport gate blindfolded, and led inside the fortress, when presently he found himself in a casemate, and there—oh, joy! were Langton and Captain Curtis, both overjoyed to see him. But Langton was white and gasping for breath, and as weak as a child.

"He has not yet recovered from his fever, though he worked like a hero yesterday; but I think he will not be able to do any more during the siege," said Captain Curtis.

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Langton could only smile feebly, and ask eagerly after his mother and sisters.

"But you must get well now, to be our grandfather's heir, because, I assure you, he means to make you so," cried Archy, trying to be cheerful, but feeling a sinking at the heart as he looked at Langton.

And then Archy declared he would not leave the fortress without a glimpse of Mrs. Curtis and Dolly and Judkins. They were all sent for, and there was a brief interview—too hurried for joy, but yet comforting when Archy clasped their hands and felt Dolly's childish arms around his neck. But, presently, like a dream, it was over, and he was once more outside the walls.

Archy had formed a plan before he had seen Langton for five minutes, and the very next day he carried it into effect. He got an audience with the Duc de Crillon, and told him briefly the story of his relations with Langton, and his forced imprisonment during a part of the siege, and then, in a burst of frankness, he said:

"Pardon, sir, but Mr. Langton can be of no more service at Gibraltar. I am almost afraid if released now that he will not live to return to England; but if he could be released on parole—he seems almost dying now—his mother—"

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Archy stopped, and the Duc de Crillon, after a pause, turning to his military secretary, said:

"Make out a parole for Midshipman Langton, of the Royal navy, and address it to General Sir George Eliot, saying if, in his judgment, Mr. Langton is a non-combatant now, and likely to remain so, that this parole is at his service."

Archy tried to express his thanks, but his heart was too full for his tongue to be glib. His very hesitation and embarrassment, however, were not without their eloquence, and the Duc de Crillon did not for one moment suspect him of a want of gratitude.

It still took some days to arrange the preliminaries, and Archy was permitted to enter the fortress several times. He could scarcely believe his eyes when he saw how little damage had been inflicted by the greatest bombardment in history, and he could hardly believe his ears when the slight loss sustained by the besieged was mentioned to him. One thing appeared settled, that Gibraltar could never be taken by assault, and that the Spanish and French commanders would make no further efforts.

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Archy, being plentifully supplied with money, through the assistance of the Spanish authorities was enabled to get a small neutral vessel, which agreed to take to England himself and Langton and a few other non-combatants who were permitted to leave the fortress.

On the last day of September they embarked. At the Landport gate Archy met Langton, looking frightfully ill, and supported by Captain Curtis and Judkins, while Mrs. Curtis and Dolly walked behind. The kindest farewells were exchanged.

"We will meet soon in England," said Archy; "the siege is over, the war with my country is over, and as soon as Parliament meets a general peace will be proclaimed. But, American as I am, I can never think of what I saw at Gibraltar without being proud to be of the same race as the men who defended it, and the women too."

At this, Dolly said, gravely:

"I love you, Archy, even if you are a rebel," which made them all laugh and relieved the sadness of the parting.

Once on board the vessel and under a fair wind for home, Langton seemed to take a new lease of life. Their quarters were cramped and their discomforts many, but he was homeward bound, and that was enough. They had a quick voyage to Gravesend, and taking post-horses for London, arrived at Lord Bellingham's town house in Berkeley Square, and, the first thing, Archy almost ran into Colonel Baskerville's arms.

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"I have brought Langton himself back, instead of news concerning him," cried Archy, as soon as they were inside the doors; and the next moment he heard a faint cry beside him. Mrs. Langton, her arms wide open, had entered the room, and there Langton was in his mother's arms; and Colonel Baskerville and Archy turned their backs and pretended to be very busy talking, while the mother and son were in the first rapture of meeting. And then Mary and Isabel rushed in, and laughed and cried as they hugged Langton, and even condescended to be glad to see Archy; and presently they were all marched off to Lord Bellingham's room, who was to see, for the first time, the grandson for whom he destined a great fortune and a brilliant future.

Langton was still pale and weak, but it only made his face more interesting, and his bearing was still military.

Archy watched keenly the meeting between the old man and the young one. Lord Bellingham's piercing glance travelled all over Langton's person, and then wandered for a moment to Archy, who was, at all times, the handsomer and the more spirited of the two. But Langton's calm dignity and manly self-possession were not without their power, and even Lord Bellingham had no reason to be dissatisfied with him. And now Archy, having, as he justly thought, a right to express himself, indulged his natural and incurable propensity for speaking his mind, and, looking Lord Bellingham squarely in the eye, said:

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"I hope, grandfather, you have now a grandson who will suit you in all respects, and I only wish you could give Langton the title, as I don't want it. By-the-way, sir, I hear that King George is preparing to back down as gracefully as possible at the meeting of Parliament."

To which Lord Bellingham's reply was to say, good-humoredly:

"Grandson, you have earned the right to be impertinent."

Langton was immediately established in the position of heir-apparent, and Lord Bellingham could scarcely allow him to recover from the fatigues of his journey before sending for the family solicitor to make his will. But Archy's position was far from unpleasant. He was a hero to Langton and to Mrs. Langton, and in course of time actually subdued Mary and Isabel, while Colonel Baskerville, who had always felt a deep affection for him, became every day more attached to him. As for Lord Bellingham, he seemed to find Archy a source of perpetual interest and diversion, and although he gave no hint of intending to do more than give him the promised two thousand pounds, it was plain that he was far from indifferent to his American grandson. Archy had always taken liberties, hitherto unheard of, with his grandfather, and so far from producing explosions of temper, they only provoked the silent laughter which was Lord Bellingham's way of showing amusement.

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But Archy himself had undoubtedly improved. He was learning, by degrees, to be frank without being disagreeable, to have his joke without trampling upon the sensibilities of others, and to be considerate of the faults and foibles of old age. In fact, his self-love became enlisted on his grandfather's side, for, as Colonel Baskerville sometimes reminded him, dryly:

"If you had been born a peer with a great rent-roll, I think you would have been more domineering and dictatorial than Lord Bellingham."

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There was still no love lost between Archy and his two girl cousins, but their nimble tongues were silenced by Archy's generosity towards Langton, who was the family darling. It must be admitted that Archy took rather mean advantage of this, and when he received a long letter from Paul Jones, the lives of Mary and Isabel were made miserable by his chaff and jeers. Langton had to hear the whole story of their infatuation for Paul Jones, which lost nothing in Archy's telling, and made Langton laugh for a week; and when the letter by some untoward accident was lost, Archy declined to be convinced that Mary and Isabel had not cribbed it for a keepsake.

So several weeks passed in the gloomy old mansion, which Archy disrespectfully called an old rattle-trap. But they were not gloomy weeks to any one in it. For the first time in his life Lord Bellingham was surrounded by those who should be nearest and dearest to him, and he found life a very different and far pleasanter thing than when he had been at war with his whole family. His daughter's kind attentions added to his comfort, and his four handsome grandchildren were a source of infinite pride to him—and pride meant pleasure to Lord Bellingham. Parliament was to meet on the 5th of December, and Lord Bellingham determined to attend in his peer's robes and coronet, according to the custom of the times.

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The day was dull and gloomy outside, but Archy Baskerville thought it the happiest and brightest day that had ever yet shone upon him, for the King, in his speech from the throne, was to acknowledge the independence of the American colonies.

About ten o'clock on that morning the family coach was at the door, and Colonel Baskerville, Archy, and Langton awaited Lord Bellingham to drive to the House of Lords. When he appeared in his scarlet robes, and carrying his coronet in his hand, something very like a smile appeared upon the countenances of his brother and his two grandsons. Archy mentally congratulated himself that he would never have to appear in such a rig, and even whispered as much to Langton. Lord Bellingham was in a very bad humor as the result of his trailing robes and troublesome coronet, but nothing could damp Archy's enthusiasm.

"We shall be mobbed," fretfully exclaimed Lord Bellingham. "This young gentleman here will probably begin huzzaing out of the coach window for the colonies, and God knows what will befall us then!"

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"I'll take care of all of you, grandfather," magnanimously declared Archy, which only increased the Earl's irritation, and Archy proceeded to fan the flame by remarking that he supposed the King, too, was in a very bad humor that morning.

And so he was. When, amid a death-like stillness in the House of Lords, the King rose to read his speech to Parliament assembled, he gave every indication of agitation and embarrassment. He proceeded falteringly until he announced the cessation of the American war, and then, attempting to utter the sentence, "I offer to declare them free and independent States," he broke down completely, and, after a painful and agitated silence, with a distressing effort read the fateful words.

Archy was squeezed in a corner of the gallery close by Colonel Baskerville, who kept a keen watch upon him to check any characteristic outbreak of enthusiasm, and was actually enabled to prevent it until the tedious but imposing proceedings were over. Outside the Houses of Parliament a vast crowd was assembled. There were a few cheers for the King's speech, but most of the multitude accepted the tremendous event in solemn silence. As Archy came out with the surging crowd he suddenly shouted out a long and loud "Huzza!" but the next moment Colonel Baskerville had clapped his hand over Archy's mouth, had hustled him into the coach, and they were driving off, Lord Bellingham scowling in the corner seat. But Langton, shaking Archy's hand cordially, cried out:

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"Congratulations, Archy. We shall yet live to glory in our kin beyond the sea."

* * * * *

Ten years after that, one Christmas Eve, a new and handsome equipage dashed into the village of Bellingham about dusk. As the coachman pulled up the horses, the footman jumped down, threw open the door, and let down the steps. Forth stepped Langton, now a handsome man of eight-and-twenty, and after him came Colonel Baskerville, not looking a day older than on that November afternoon, ten years before, when he had travelled from York with the young American midshipman, quite unconscious of the close relationship between them.

The coach from York was almost due, and they had not long to wait before it rolled in, the horses steaming in the wintry air. Without waiting for it to come to a full stop, Archy Baskerville made a flying leap from the box-seat, and Langton and himself, grasping each other, indulged in a bear-hug worthy of their midshipman days.

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Archy then turned his attention to Colonel Baskerville, and treated him to a similar embrace, which almost broke his ribs, but which the Colonel bore uncomplainingly for the quiet joy the meeting with Archy gave him.

Langton promptly shoved Archy into the coach, the footman seized the portmanteaus from the boot of the York coach, and the four blooded horses took the road through the path towards Bellingham Castle.

"Langton," cried Archy, as soon as they were in the coach, "you are a thousand times welcome to the castle and the title, and even our grandfather's peer's robes and coronet, when they come to you, for I have now the prospect of having what my heart has yearned for during ten years. Congress has authorized the building of six fine frigates, and I have the promise of one of them. I shall be Captain Baskerville at last!"

"Then I know you will be happy," replied Langton. "I remember you always declared you would rather have a fine ship than the greatest castle in England."

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"I do not think you have changed much," said Colonel Baskerville.

"Oh, you are mistaken, uncle," answered Archy, quite confidently. "I have learned prudence, I assure you, and a great many of the other beggarly virtues," at which the Colonel smiled significantly.

"And whom, think you, have we to meet you at Bellingham besides my mother and sisters? Dolly Curtis, now a lovely girl of twenty-two, and very anxious to see her old playfellow," said Langton.

"How jolly!" was Archy's reply. But when he tried to imagine Dolly as anything but a little girl, who played with him and scrambled all over him, and rode upon his shoulders and sang songs

with Judkins, he failed utterly.

Presently they rattled up to the door and were in the great hall in a moment, and Mrs. Langton's arms were around Archy's neck, and she was leading him to Lord Bellingham's chair by the fire, where the old man sat quite tremulous with joy to see him.

And Archy burst out with the very thing that pleased Lord Bellingham most:

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"I wished to see all my friends in England, grandfather, but especially you; for after I went back to America and experienced your generosity in providing for me, I recalled all your kindness while I was here, and I wondered how you put up with such a presumptuous little beggar as I was."

Isabel and Mary, two handsome and dignified young women, came forward and greeted him with the utmost cordiality, and they all three burst out laughing involuntarily at the same moment, remembering their ancient squabbles.

And then a charming, beautiful, modest girl advanced, who looked at Archy with strange but not unfriendly eyes—Dolly's eyes—and gave him her hand—over which he bowed—and said to him in a sweet and thrilling voice one word which brought back the stirring past:

"Gibraltar!"

THE END

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE ROCK OF THE LION ***

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