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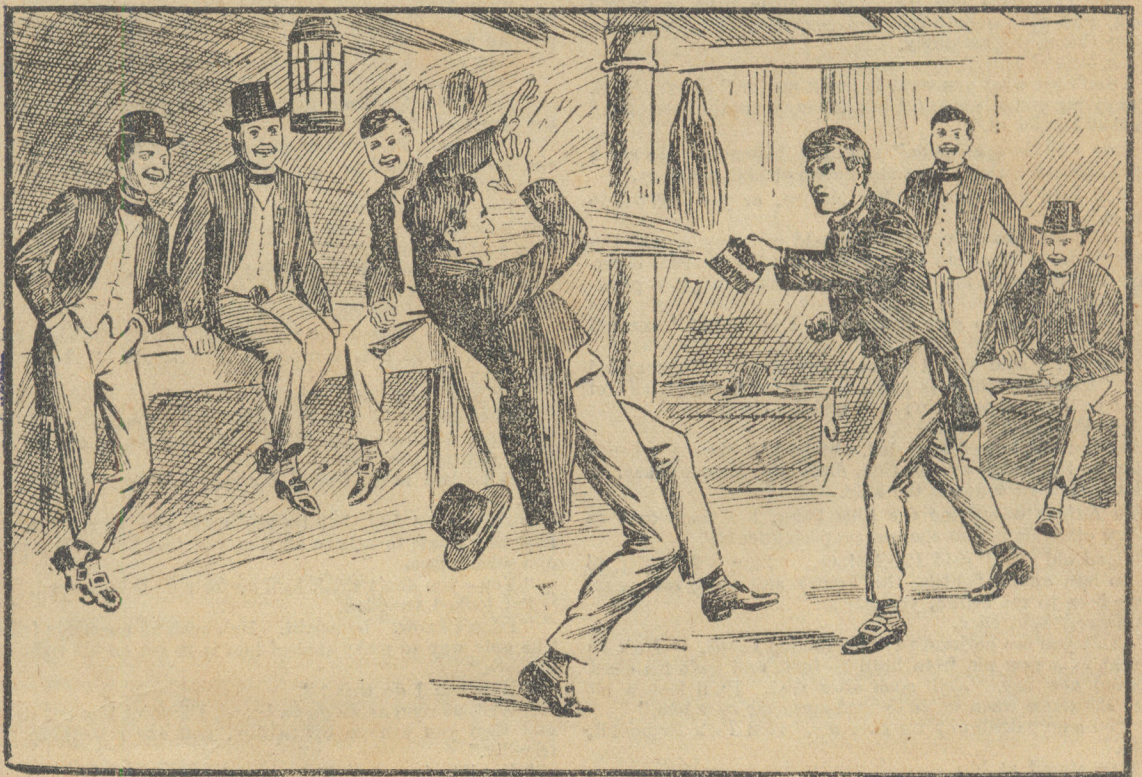


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"MIDSHIPMAN DICK": A STIRRING SEA STORY.



Dick flung the contents of the coffee can into the face of the bully

By ERIC STANHOPE.

DICK JOINS HIS SHIP!

"Hallo, younker! Ahoy!"

Dick Redmond turned round.

He had come down to the landing-place, resplendent in his new middy's uniform and dirk, and feeling that the eyes of all Portsmouth were upon him.

He had called to a boatswain, who had gladly brought his boat to the steps, spotting a new middy at once, and scenting a larger tip than an old hand would have given him.

Out in the harbour the brave frigate *Edipus* was flying the Blue Peter, a signal that she was about to put to sea, to carry despatches to Lord Nelson, then engaged in the task of hunting the French fleet in the Mediterranean.

Dick Redmond was about to step into the boat when he was hailed by a couple of youths who came running down to the landing-place.

Both of them were in midshipman's garb, but it was not nearly so new and spick and span as Dick's own. For Dick was a new middy, and had never been on the salt water yet.

"Stop for us, younker," called out the taller of the two, a dark-faced fellow of about seventeen. "We want to go to the *Edipus*."

"Sure and we do," said the other, a merry-faced Irish lad, about two years younger. "You'll take us in your boat won't you, acushla? We've no money left, and——"

"TAFFY LLEWELLYN'S SCHOOLDAYS." A Grand School Story Next Week. Order Early.

"Of course he'll take us, Pat Malone," exclaimed the taller midshipman. "He's no choice in the matter, if he doesn't want to have his head knocked off. Jump in!"

Sure and it's a pig ye are," said Pat Malone, as he jumped into the boat. "Ye might as much as say by your leave, anyway."

"Oh! nonsense. Shove off, boatman!"

The boatman grinned as he touched his forelock.

"Aye, aye, Master Crane."

Dick Redmond stepped into the boat.

He was feeling, and looking, rather indignant at the high-nanded conduct of Midshipman Crane, but he was new to naval life, and did not know exactly what to say.

"Get a move on you!" exclaimed Master Crane, staring at Dick as if he were an intruder in the boat he had himself hired. "Don't keep us waiting. Can't you see the *Edipus* is getting ready for sea?"

"Sure and perhaps he doesn't want to go to the *Edipus* at all, at all," said Pat Malone. "I didn't think of that entirely."

"Can't you see there's no other King's ship here, you stupid Irishman. He must be going to the *Edipus*. Besides, I knew a new midddy was coming."

"Sure, and so did I, now I think of it."

"I am the new midshipman," said Dick, diffidently. "I am going to the *Edipus*, and I'm very glad to take you."

"Should think you were," was Crane's ungracious retort.

"We're old hands, and you ought to be glad to be seen with us. Where have you come from?"

"Home," said Dick.

"Oh! I thought you might have come from a baby's school, with your smooth face and your curly hair," observed Master Crane, disparagingly.

Dick flushed hotly.

"I don't see what you want to insult me for," he exclaimed. "I'm giving you a lift, and I haven't done anything to offend you that I know of."

"Sure and he's a baste," said Pat Malone. "He can't help it, alanna. Don't take any notice of him, me bhoy."

"You hold your tongue, Pat Malone, or you'll get into trouble."

"Can't, acushla. I never could hold my tongue, and I'm too used to getting into trouble to mind," said Pat, cheerfully. "Pull away, my man. You're going to get a good tip."

"You're going to give it to him, I suppose?" sneered Crane.

"Haven't I said that I haven't any money?" demanded Pat. "The new midddy is going to pay for the boat, and of course he'll give a good tip; new middies always do."

Dick Redmond laughed.

He liked the breezy Irish lad, but he had already taken a dislike to the lanky, overbearing, disdainful Master Crane.

Crane glanced towards the ship.

The *Edipus* was flying the Blue Peter, but there were as yet few other signs that she was preparing for sea.

"Good old ship," said Pat Malone. "Sure I'll be glad to get to sea again, fighting the French and ating salt pork. Never been to sea before, youngster?"

"Never," said Dick.

"Can't you see he hasn't?" demanded Crane. "Isn't he as neat as a new pin from head to foot, and isn't his chest a brand new one. We'll soon alter that. He'll look a bit more shipshape when we've daubed some tar over him."

"You won't daub any tar over me," said Dick Redmond, hotly.

Crane stared at him.

"Why won't I, if I want to?"

"Because I shan't let you."

Crane stared, and burst into a scoffing laugh.

"Blow my topsails!" he ejaculated. "Here's mammy's baby boy coming to the old *Edipus* to be cock of the midshipman's berth, and keep us all in order."

"I don't want to be cock of the berth," said Dick. "But I want to be let alone, and I'm not going to stand any bullying, so I tell you."

Crane laughed.

"You'll soon alter your tune, my buck, when you're aboard the *Edipus*," he exclaimed.

"I don't think I shall."

"You see, I shall make it a point to take some of the sauce out of you."

"Sure, and you can let him alone, Crane," exclaimed Pat.

"You know that the first lieutenant is very particular about the way he's treated."

Crane stared at the Irish middy.

"What are you talking about?" he demanded.

Pat winked at him, unseen, by the new midshipman.

"Sure and you know Mr. Quill is mighty particular about him, Crane. Didn't he say, when we were going ashore, that if we saw the new middy we were to give him his kind regards?"

Crane grinned.

Then his face became perfectly grave.

"Yes, I remember now," he remarked. "I forgot that the first lieutenant had taken the new middy under his wing. I remember now."

"What is your name, youngster?" asked Pat, turning to Dick, solemnly.

"Dick Redmond."

"That was the name, wasn't it, Crane?"

"Yes, that was the name Mr. Quill mentioned," said Crane.

"He's been rather anxious about you, Redmond, thinking you might not arrive before the ship sailed."

"Awfully anxious," exclaimed Pat. "When he's anxious he gets into a fearful temper, and lays about him with a handspike."

"Does he?" said Dick, looking rather uneasy.

"Yes. I knew that he was anxious about something to-day, because I saw him brain a marine on the quarter deck."

"Not—not killed him?"

"Well, between you and me," said Pat, "the man will never get out of his hammock again alive. Of course, they'll pretend it was an accident."

"They always do," said Crane, nodding his head solemnly.

"You remember that affair at Palermo, Crane?"

"You mean the time that little midddy was found dead in the gun-room?"

"Yes, that's it. He was picked up with his head stove in, and they pretended he had fallen against a gun and done it himself."

"Yes, and that was sheer nonsense," said Crane. "It was impossible. It was an open secret that Quill had done it in a fit of temper."

"He used to get into awful tantrums at Palermo. It must have been the hot weather."

"That's what the doctor said it was."

"Yes, they hushed the matter up, but all the ship knew the facts," said Pat, turning to Dick again. "That's why I'm sorry for you."

Dick had turned rather pale.

He had been told that he would have a rough time of it on the sea in a King's ship, fighting the enemies of His Majesty King George the Third.

But he had never looked for anything quite so rough as this.

Dick was no fool, but he was quite new to sea life, and naturally prone to believe all that was told him with a grave and solemn face.

"You—you don't think he'll go for me?" he gasped.

Pat looked troubled.

"I don't know. He might. He's such an uncertain fellow. The only way to make sure of him is to get on his right side at once."

"How can I do that?"

"Well, as soon as we go on board, I'll point him out to you and then you can go to him, and say something very friendly."

"But if he is such an ill-tempered man——"

"Oh! Quill has his good points," said Pat Malone. "If you're very civil and polite to him, he will look over a lot. Won't he, Mr. Crane?"

"You're right," said Crane. "I've heard him say that he would look over almost anything if only he had plenty of politeness. He's a great stickler for politeness——"

"If I might give you a word of advice, younker," continued Pat, "I'd—but there, you are a sharp fellow, and you don't want advice from me."

"But I do," said Dick, eagerly. "I don't know much about the sea, and I should like to learn. I'd be very much obliged to you."

"Well, in that case I will certainly advise you," said Pat, with a nod of the head. "Now, I'll point out Quill to you as soon as we get aboard. You'll walk up to him. Don't touch your hat. He hates formality."

"He's shockingly down on formal people," said Crane.
 "All you've got to do, Redmond, is to hold out your hand in a friendly way, and say, 'how do you do, Quilly, old buck?' That's sure to please him."

"Thank you," said Dick. "That's easy enough."
 He wondered why the boatman gave a sudden yelp as if he had an inward pain.

Pat turned on the man with a severe expression.
 "Sure and what's the matter with you?" he exclaimed.
 "Is it ill ye are?"

"Beg pardon, sir, just a stitch in the side, sir."
 The boat came up to the side of the *Edipus*.
 Dick gave the boatman a crown piece, and followed Pat and Crane up the ladder.

The decks of the frigate presented a scene of busy animation.
 On the last day before putting to sea much had to be done, and officers and men were working and tearing away at it, most of them in an excited and irritable temper.

A short, fat gentleman in a first lieutenant's uniform seemed to be most excited of all.

In spite of his stoutness, he skipped about with the alertness of a monkey, and seemed to be here there and everywhere all at once.

He was red in the face, his complexion strongly resembling a newly-boiled beet-root, and he was shouting orders and stamping his feet every minute.

"That's the first luff," whispered Pat.
 "The first what?"
 "The first lieutenant, noodle."

"Oh!" exclaimed Dick, in dismay.
 The first lieutenant of the *Edipus* was an even more terrifying personage than he had pictured in his imagination.
 Pat slapped him on one shoulder and Crane on the other.

"Go it, Redmond. Better lose no time," said Crane.
 "Sure and if ye leave it till he sees ye, it will be too late," exclaimed Pat.

"I say, he looks very ill-tempered."
 "There's only one way to pacify him."
 "You think he'll be pleased?"

"My dear fellow, he'll be simply joyful. However, do as you like. Come on, Pat Malone, we've got plenty to do."
 The two midshipmen marched off, leaving Dick alone.

The new middy hesitated a moment or two, and then, making up his mind, he advanced towards the first lieutenant of the frigate, to carry out Pat's precious instructions.

TAKING THE STRANGER IN.

Dick stepped in front of Mr. Quill, who had just raved out a succession of orders, and had stopped shouting from the sheer necessity of taking breath.

"If you please, sir—"
 The first lieutenant of the *Edipus* stared at the midshipman.
 "Who are you?" he exclaimed.

"I'm the new midshipman, sir, Dick Redmond. How do you do, Quilly, old buck?" said Dick, holding out his hand rather timidly.

Mr. Quill fixed a freezing glare upon him.
 In spite of the haste and hurry round him, a silence fell in the immediate vicinity of the first lieutenant and the new midshipman.

Bearded, bronzed seamen and worried-looking officers ceased their occupation to stare at the new middy, in utter amazement at his astounding impudence in addressing the first lieutenant in such a familiar way.

Dick saw that there was something wrong, but he could not see exactly what it was.

As Mr. Quill did not take his hand, he let it drop slowly to his side.

"How do you do, old fellow?" he repeated, feebly.
 "The devil, sir!" roared the first lieutenant, finding his voice at last. "Who the devil are you, sir?" "What do you mean by it, sirrah?"

Dick turned very red.
 There was a sound of giggling round him, but it was instantly suppressed as the first lieutenant turned a savage glare upon the gigglers.

"The service is going to the devil," roared Mr. Quill.
 "How do you do, Quilly, old buck! Oh, I'll teach you! I'll talk to you! I'll open your eyes."

"Please, sir—"
 "Where did you come from, sir? Where did you learn to address the first officer of one of His Majesty's ships in that manner, sir? The devil, sir! Can't you speak?"

"I——"
 "I'll teach you, sir. I'll flay you! I'll marry you to the gunner's daughter, dammy. I'll—I'll——what do you mean by it, hey? Explain yourself."

"I——"
 "Impudent young rascal. I don't know why I don't knock your saucy head off your shoulders. I'll have you flogged. I'll have you keel-hauled. My word! Haven't you a single word to say for yourself, you young villain?"

"Yes, sir, I——"
 "The Service is going to the very devil. Insulted on the quarter-deck by a midshipman, just out of short frocks, by Jove! What do you mean, sir? You haven't a word to say for yourself! Of course, not! Certainly not! Get out of my sight, sir! I shall report this to the captain, and he will deal with you, sir. Go below!"

"I——"
 "Not a word more. Go below!"
 "Certainly, sir."
 "Get out of my sight."

Dick made haste to get out of the irate officer's sight.
 Something had certainly gone wrong somewhere, he had not succeeded in pacifying the ferocious Mr. Quill.

He made his way from the quarter-deck, and being totally new and strange to a ship, he soon found himself in everybody's way.

He was asked or ordered to get out of it, many times, till he was so bewildered that he hardly knew whether he was standing upon his head or his heels, and at last in despair he plunged into the first opening he found and went below.

It led him to the midshipman's berth, as it happened.
 Crane and Pat Malone were sitting on a locker, laughing together. They burst into a fresh roar as they caught sight of Dick.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Crane. "How did you get on with the first luff?"

"Sure, and was he plazed?" asked Pat.
 Dick, as he looked at their laughing faces, had a glimmering of the truth.

He flushed hotly.
 "So you were fooling me!" he exclaimed.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

Pat laid back and roared, and Crane, in the excess of his merriment, rolled off the locker, and sat on the planks and yelled.

Dick looked from one to the other, not knowing whether to laugh or to be angry.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Pat. "Was he wild with ye, alanna?"
 "He seemed very much annoyed."

"Did he threaten to have you keel-hauled?"
 "Yes."
 "Then, he'll do it by Saint Patrick. Crane, me boy, stop laughing. It was a good joke, but it has got the new kid into trouble, and no mistake."

Crane caught a peculiar look in Pat's eyes, and he became grave again at once. He rose to his feet and wiped away his tears.

"You're right, Irish," he exclaimed. "I'm sorry for that though. What had better be done? Quilly will be fearfully down on the poor chap."

"Well, if Redmond keeps out of his way till its blown over," said Pat, reflectively. "I daresay he'll get cool, and then take a more lenient view of the matter."

"Yes, that's likely enough, but how can Redmond keep out of his way?"

"Well, as he's a new middy, he'll be not wanted on deck, and his duties won't begin till to-morrow. If he went to bed he'd be quite within his rights, and it would keep him out of Quilly's sight."

"Well, that's certainly a good idea."
 "Are ye tired, me boy?" asked Pat, looking at Dick.

"Its early yet for bed but, upon me sowl, I think its the best thing you can do under the circumstances."

Dick nodded.
 "I've had a long journey to Portsmouth," he said, "and I'm tired. Everything is so new and strange, it puts my head in a buzz."

"I know just how ye feel—it was the same with me when I came to sea for the first time," said Pat, in a tone that implied that that was ages ago, though as a matter of fact he was just about Dick's age, fifteen.

"Then I think bed's the best place," said Crane. "The

first luff will have got over it by the morning, perhaps. Any way, he'll be calmer."

"Where's my bed?" asked Dick, innocently.

"I'll show you where it is," said Pat, getting off the locker.

Dick glanced round the midshipman's quarters.

"What is this place?" he asked.

"This! Oh, this is the first lieutenant's boudoir," said Pat. "We've really no right here at all, and it wouldn't do for him to catch us here."

"Rather not," said Crane; "I'm off. He might come down any time to try on a new wig. He always wears a new wig going to sea."

"Where are you going to put him?" whispered Crane, as he passed Pat, going out.

"First luff's cabin," whispered Pat.

Crane went out of the berth, and leaned against the wall and shrieked. Dick, in the innocence of his heart, followed the lead of his new friend. He was rather surprised by the quarters into which he was shown.

He glanced round the cabin with an approving eye.

"This is very nice," he said. "I was told I should have to rough it at sea, but I like this. Of course, the room is very small."

Pat grinned.

"And I don't like that bed on the wall," said Dick, glancing rather disparagingly at the first lieutenant's bunk. "But I suppose I shall get used to it."

"You won't have much chance," murmured Pat. "Holy smoke! What will happen when the first lieutenant comes down."

"I say, there are shaving things here," exclaimed Pat.

"Do they provide these things for the midshipmen, Malone?"

"Of course, darlint. Why, some of the middies are thirty or forty years old, and have beards and whiskers, like whales," said Pat.

"Have they really?"

"Oh! you'd be surprised. Would you like me to see you to bed? You'll find that bunk a little difficult to negotiate at first."

"Thank you very much. What about my chest?"

"Oh! you won't get that here yet. It will be shoved somewhere, and you'll never see it again till after we're at sea, when we're getting into order again. But there's plenty of things here, and you can borrow them if you like. The other middies keep a lot of things in the berth here, as it's the biggest one. You don't mind that?"

"Oh! not at all."

"Of course, you can use any of the things till your chest is unpacked. The fellows are awfully chummy. Here's a night-shirt. It's rather big for you, but you'll find it quite comfortable."

The obliging Pat saw Dick to bed, and closed the port-hole and left him to slumber. Dick had had a long journey by stage-coach, and the crowded events of the day had tired him out. He dropped almost instantly asleep. And he slept like a top.

So soundly did he sleep that he never noticed a strange motion around him, and was quite unconscious of the fact that the ship was getting under weigh.

He did not know that the *Edipus* was standing out of Portsmouth harbour, starting her voyage to the Mediterranean Sea, with despatches for Lord Nelson's fleet, and instructions *en passant*—to "burn, sink, and otherwise destroy" any of the enemy's ships she came in contact with.

Dick still slept; all unknowing of that, and of the fact that Mr. Quill, the first lieutenant, having finished his herculean labours in getting the ship out to sea—for a good deal more real work fell upon the first lieutenant than upon the captain—had come down to his cabin to clean off the dust of the day, and to change into his sea-going uniform preparatory to dining with the captain.

Little did Dick dream that the fat first lieutenant was coming into the cabin; and little did Mr. Quill guess whom he was to find there.

Mr. Quill had taken off his coat, and removed his wig, and fanned his head, which was bald and very hot.

Then he gave a slight start.

The sound of regular breathing in the cabin had caught his ear.

Someone was in his bunk!

For a moment the first lieutenant stood petrified at the thought that anybody should have had the audacity to get into his bunk for a snooze.

Then he rushed wrathfully towards the sleeper.

"Who are you?" he roared. "What are you doing here? Oh! that new midshipman, by Jove! What the devil, sir, do you mean by going to sleep in my bunk?"

Dick opened his eyes.

The cabin was gloomy, and he was confused with sleep, and by the rough shaking the first lieutenant of the *Edipus* was giving him.

"Eh—aw—yaw——"

Mr. Quill shook him savagely.

"Get up, sir! You impudent dog!"

"Let me alone! I'm tired."

"Yes, I'll let you alone. By Jove, sir! I'll keel-haul you for this! Sleeping in my bunk, by Jove! What is the Service coming to? Out with you! By Jove!"

He jerked Dick violently from the bunk.

Dick was still confused with sleep, and the sudden awakening. He didn't recognise the first lieutenant; indeed, for the moment, he imagined that he was in his bed at home, and that somebody was roughly awaking him.

And he landed out with his foot in self-defence.

The foot caught the first lieutenant on the chest, and he staggered back and sat down suddenly on the floor of the cabin.

"Hullo!" said Dick, rubbing his eyes.

He stared over the edge of the bunk at the first lieutenant, and the first lieutenant stared at him.

MIDSHIPMAN DICK DOES NOT PLEASE THE FIRST LIEUTENANT.

Mr. Quill was the first to recover himself.

He jumped up, glaring at poor Dick like a gargoyle.

"You—you audacious young scoundrel!" he roared. "You'll strike your superior officer, will you? I'll have you flogged, sir! I'll have you shot! I'll have you keel-hauled! I'll—I'll—by Jove! Marines there!"

"I beg your pardon," gasped Dick. "I didn't know——"

"Sentry there!"

The sentry was apparently not within hearing.

Mr. Quill, palpitating with rage, rushed from the cabin to find a marine to place the new midshipman under arrest.

Dick Redmond bounded out of the bunk.

He realised the truth now, and knew that he was in a terribly awkward scrape.

The best thing he could do was to escape from the cabin before the first lieutenant returned, and he looked round hastily for his clothes.

To his dismay they were not to be seen.

He hunted rapidly through the cabin.

There was no sign of his clothes.

He gave a gasp of horror.

"That fellow must have taken them away with him."

It was only too certain.

That explained Pat Malone's kindness in seeing him comfortably off to bed. He had surreptitiously removed Dick's clothes when he left the cabin.

"Whatever shall I do?" gasped the unfortunate middy.

His eyes fell upon the coat the first lieutenant had taken off to change.

It was the only garment in sight, and he resolved hastily to don it, for the present at least, and trust to luck to get his own clothes back again.

In a moment he had the coat round him, over the flowing night-shirt, and he left the cabin swiftly.

The coat, being built for the enormous girth of Mr. Quill, was about a dozen sizes too large for Dick Redmond, and he had to hold it about him with his hands as he ran out of the cabin, his bare feet pattering on the planks, and the long night garment trailing behind him.

He looked a most peculiar object, and it was not surprising that the first man he met greeted him with a roar of laughter. It was Mr. Horrocks, the fat little purser of the *Edipus*, and he leaned against a bulkhead and roared till the tears came into his eyes.

"Can you tell me the way to the midshipmen's berth?" gasped Dick.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Where is the middy's berth?"

"Ho, ho, ho!"

"Can you tell me where it is?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Dick gave it up. He heard the voice of the first-lieutenant approaching, and darted into the nearest cabin to escape the terrible Mr. Quill.

The cabin he entered was a large one, with a table laid for dinner for two persons. It was fortunately unoccupied.

"Arrest the young scoundrel, marine."

It was Mr. Quill's voice outside the cabin.

"Aye, aye, sir."

"Have him put in irons."

"Aye, aye, sir."

"I'll teach him to go to bed in my cabin."

"Aye, aye, sir."

"Don't stand there talking, marine. Go and seize the mutinous young villain."

"Aye, aye, sir."

"You stupid parrot, get out of my sight."

"Aye, aye, sir."

The first lieutenant stamped away. Dick knew his stamp by this time, and to his horror he heard it coming directly towards the cabin in which he now stood trembling.

Mr. Quill was evidently about to enter that cabin.

Dick gave a wild glance round.

What on earth was he to do?

There was no place of concealment: nowhere where he could hide. He glanced at the port-hole and was almost inclined to squeeze through it and drop into the sea. He was scared almost out of his wits.

"Ah, the table!" he muttered, with relief.

The white cloth covering the table reached almost to the deck all round it. Dick sprang to the table and darted under it, letting the cloth fall into its place behind him.

He was none too soon.

Mr. Quill came stamping into the cabin.

The first lieutenant was in a very bad temper.

He had had only a few minutes in which to prepare for the dinner with the captain, and the misadventure of the new middy had taken up most of it. He had just had time to change his coat and wig, and that was all.

Captain Cleveland came into the cabin a few moments later. He was a well-built man with a good-humoured, bronzed face.

"Ah! you are here, Quill," he exclaimed. "Good! You look disturbed. Sit down, my dear fellow."

Dick's heart sank.

He understood that the first lieutenant was there to dine with the captain, and that he was a prisoner under the table until they should go. How long was that likely to be?

"I have been worried by a new midshipman," exclaimed Mr. Quill, as he sat down. "The new midshipman Redmond, sir."

"I have not seen him. An unlicked cub, I suppose."

"Exactly, sir, and a most impudent and audacious one."

"Indeed."

"Aye. He called me 'Quilly, old buck,' and offered to shake hands with me, sir, on deck, in the sight of officers and crew. That was before you came on board, sir."

"By Jove! That's peculiar."

"And then, sir, when I went below, I found him asleep in my bunk."

"Asleep in your bunk!"

"Yes, sir! I have always said that the Service is going to the very devil, and I think it is so, with a vengeance, when a midshipman goes to sleep in a first lieutenant's bunk."

Captain Cleveland laughed heartily.

"I think it very likely that he is the victim of some practical joke played by the other reefers," he remarked. "I know they usually victimise a newcomer, though the boy must be very simple to be played upon in this manner."

"Well, that is possible, sir. It did not strike me in that light before. I have ordered a sentry to arrest him and put him in irons."

"That is rather drastic, Mr. Quill, is it not?"

"Perhaps so, if he is the victim of a practical joke."

"I am pretty certain that is the case."

"Then shall I send an order by the steward for him to be released."

"I rather think I should, Mr. Quill."

"All the same, sir, I think he should be punished."

"That's as you think fit, Mr. Quill, as the offence is against you, but perhaps the boy will be sufficiently punished by his fright on discovering the enormity he has been guilty of."

Meanwhile poor Dick was in agonies.

The two gentlemen had thrust their feet under the table, and between them Dick had hardly room to crouch without knocking against one or the other.

And now the motion of the ship was having its inevitable effect upon a landsman who had never been on the salt water before.

Dick did not know at first what was the matter with him.

A terrible feeling of uncertainty reigned in his interior, and he generally felt as if some parts of him were floating about in a sort of unmixed condition.

He grew hot all over, and cold, and hot again. He was feeling the grip of the demon *mal de-mer*, worse and worse every moment as the ship rolled in the chops of the Channel.

The two officers were dining in complete ignorance of the uninvited guest under the table.

Poor Dick gave a groan.

He could not help it, and it came out of him with a jerk, and both the officers heard it very distinctly.

"Dear me!" exclaimed the captain. "I think there must be an animal of some kind under the table."

"I gave orders for all dogs to be sent ashore before we weighed anchor, sir," said the first lieutenant. "One may have been left on board. Steward!"

"Aye, aye, sir."

"I think there is a dog under the table."

"Aye, aye, sir."

"Drive it out at once."

"Aye, aye, sir."

"I will kick it," said Mr. Quill, reaching out with his foot and touching something. "Is that you, Captain?"

"No, you are not touching me," said the captain.

"Then it must be the dog."

"Certainly. Kick it, and it will run."

"Aye, aye."

Mr. Quill kicked heartily, and poor Dick received his boot in his ribs.

He gave a gasping yell.

That kick had finished what the motion of the sea had commenced.

Dick rolled on the floor in anguish, and came out from under the table, gasping and moaning, and very sick indeed.

The two officers stared at him in amazement.

It was not often that Captain Cleveland had the pleasure of seeing a midshipman clad in a night shirt and an enormous coat, rolling on the floor of his cabin in the grip of the *mal-de-mer*.

"Who is it?" he gasped.

Mr. Quill fixed a terrific glare upon poor Dick.

"The new midshipman!"

"Ah! is this that unfortunate Redmond?" asked the captain, breaking into a smile. "His appearance is certainly most peculiar."

"Peculiar!" snorted Mr. Quill. "Peculiar! That is my coat he is wearing."

"Your coat!"

"And my shirt!"

"Your shirt!"

"Boy! How dare you! How dare you come here! Marine!"

Dick was grovelling on the floor.

At that moment he cared less for Mr. Quill, the terrible Mr. Quill, than for anything else in the world.

If the first lieutenant had driven his sword right through him, Dick could have thanked him with tears in his eyes as he expired.

For to a novice the sea-sickness is more terrible than death or torture.

Dick was in a state of anguish too fearful for words.

"Speak, sir," shouted Mr. Quill. "How dare you, sir?"

"Ug-r-r-g-r-r-g-r-r-r!"

That was Dick's reply.

It wasn't very intelligible, in itself, but it was sufficient to show what was the matter with the lad.

"Take him away, steward," said Captain Cleveland.

The steward gripped Dick by the shoulders and jerked him out of the cabin.

Just in time.

"The sea's big enough for you, my lad," said the steward, kindly, and having planted the new midshipman in the open air, with his head hanging over the side, he left him.

The sight of Dick's anguish had somewhat calmed the irate Mr. Quill.

The influence of a good dinner and the captain's excellent claret had a further effect upon him, and at length the good-natured captain succeeded in inducing him to take a humorous view of the case.

"The lad evidently came in here to hide from the marine," said Captain Cleveland. "He is suffering enough now for all his sins. I remember my first day on the sea. It is thirty years ago, but as clear in my memory as if it happened yesterday. I think we will pass over the unfortunate blunders of that new midshipman, Mr. Quill."

"Certainly, sir, if you please," said Mr. Quill, mellowed by the claret.

Dick was past caring whether his blunders were passed over or not.

He hung over the side of the ship as she ploughed her way out into the Channel, oblivious of everything save the inward horror that made life a burden.

His comical appearance caused grins to appear on the faces of all that saw him, and the friendly advice of the other middies who gathered round him did not ease his sufferings.

One advised him to drink salt water as a cure, and another recommended bilge water, stating very truly that if the newcomer could stand that, he could stand anything.

Another suggested fastening a piece of fat pork on a string, and drawing it gently up and down his throat: a suggestion that made poor Dick worse than ever at the bare thought of it.

"Oh, let him alone, you fellows," exclaimed Pat Malone, coming up. "I say, Redmond, I'll help you down into the berth if you like."

Dick was only too glad to escape from his friendly advisers.

He accepted Pat's arm down to the midshipman's berth, and there he laid in a hammock and hoped that the ship would go to the bottom.

A FIGHT WITH A BULLY!

"Feel better?"

Dick Redmond awoke.

The morning sunlight was glimmering in at the port-hole, and Pat Malone was standing beside his hammock.

Dick stared at him.

He had been ill till past eight bells, and then he had fallen into a troubled sleep.

Now, when he awoke, he felt immensely better, and there was a huge void within him which made even the smell of salt beef pleasant.

Pat looked at him with a good-natured grin.

"Feel better?"

Dick nodded.

"Yes, much better, thank you."

"Glad to hear it." I was sorry to see you so bad last night. I say, you don't bear any malice for those little jokes, do you? Every new kid has to go through it, you know."

Dick laughed.

In the keen morning he was feeling very fit and well, and disposed to take a more humorous view of Pat's little joke than he had been the the previous night.

"No," he said. "But it was too bad to take my clothes away."

"So it was, intirely," said Pat. Then he roared. "But if you had only known how funny you looked! Fancy hiding under the captain's table. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Is the captain very angry?"

"Bless you, he's forgotten all about it."

"And Mr. Quill?"

"He told me to tell you the matter would be overlooked if you were more careful in the future. He asked me if I knew who had played the little joke on you," went on Pat, with a twinkle in his eyes.

"And what did you say?" asked Dick, laughing.

"I said I believed it was one of the midshipmen."

"Ha, ha! Well, there's no malice on my side," said Dick, holding out his hand.

Pat gripped it heartily.

"Then we're friends," he said, cheerfully. "Sure and I like ye're looks, kid, and that I do intirely. Now a word of advice."

"Glad to have it."

"Take care of Crane."

"What's the matter with him?"

"He's the biggest fellow in the middy's berth, and cock of the walk here," explained Pat. "He rides the high horse here, I can tell you, and he'd be only too glad of the chance of giving a newcomer a hiding, for the sake of showing his authority."

Dick's eyes flashed.

"He won't give me a hiding!" he exclaimed.

"My dear fellow, he's a head taller than ye are, and at laste two years older," said Pat. "Don't be a fool."

"If he lays a finger on me he will get hurt."

"Keep out of his way, that's all."

"I shan't quarrel with him if I can help it."

"Can ye box?"

"Yes, I know how to use my fists."

"Well, Crane isn't much of a boxer, but he's as strong as a horse, and I tell you he will lay into you if you offend him. There's several new middies this cruise, and he's certain to lick one of them to show the others their place. I like you, and I don't want you to be the one."

At that moment Crane came into the berth.

He was looking ill-tempered, for the first lieutenant had been rating him for something, and he wanted to find someone to swear at in his turn.

The fact that Dick was still in his hammock was pretext enough for the big bully.

He came up and seized the hammock and shook it roughly. "Now then, you lazy lubber, what are you sprawling here for?" he exclaimed. "Get up, and lend a hand, can't you, you lazy skulker."

"Keep your paws off my hammock," said Dick.

Crane stared at him.

"What's that?"

"You heard what I said. Let my hammock alone."

Crane burst into a scoffing laugh.

"Yes, I'll let it alone!" he exclaimed.

And he dragged the hammock so violently to one side that Dick was pitched out into a heap on the planks below.

"Sure, and ye're a brute, Crane!" exclaimed Pat. "Why can't ye let the bhoy alone? He hasn't done anything to you."

"You hold your tongue, Oirish."

"Sure, and I'll talk if I want to."

"Do you want me to punch your head?"

"Oh! go and hang yourself," said Pat. "It's a baste of a bully ye are."

Dick Redmond staggered to his feet.

After his sea-sickness of the previous night he did not feel very strong, and the sudden heavy fall upon the hard planks had somewhat dazed him.

But his eyes were flashing fire.

"What did you do that for?" he cried, wrathfully.

Crane laughed sneeringly.

"I'll do it again if you get into the hammock!" he exclaimed. "We want no skulkers here, I can tell you."

"What's it to do with you, even if I am skulking? It's no business of yours."

"Isn't it? Don't you know I'm head of the midshipman's berth?"

"No, I don't!"

"Well, you know it now I've told you!" exclaimed Crane, "and there's proof for you, if you want any, my buck."

And he hit out straight from the shoulder, and, catching the new middy by surprise, sent him reeling across the berth, to fall with a crash to the floor.

Pat uttered an exclamation of indignation.

"You baste! That was a coward's blow."

"Do you want one?" demanded Crane.

"By the beard of St. Patrick!" cried Malone, hotly,

"I know I'm not so big as ye are, ye hulking coward, but I'll give ye a tussle at all events. Come on!"

Crane was about to accept the invitation when Dick sprang between them.

Dick's eyes were burning with rage.

"This is my quarrel!" he exclaimed, hoarsely. "Leave it to me, Pat Malone."

"Sure ye're not fit to face the baste, especially now," urged Malone.

"I'll give him as good as I can, any way," said Dick.

"Oh! get out," said Crane. "If you provoke me I shall give you a harder one, you fool!"

"Give it me, then!"

"Get out!"

Dick struck the bully in the face with his open hand.

It was a stinging blow, and it left a red mark on Crane's cheek.

The bully gasped with rage.

"You young hound! I'll smash you to pieces for that."

"Come on, then, you big brute! You shall lick me or I'll lick you."

Crane went for him like a wild bull.

Pat Malone sprang out of the way. In a moment the two midshipmen were clasped in a fierce embrace, reeling to and fro in the narrow berth.

"Hallo, a row here!" exclaimed a lanky middy, entering the berth. "Come on, you fellows, here's bully Crane pitching into a little chap, and getting his money's worth, too."

Several middies crowded in. Some of them sat on the lockers and began to eat and drink, watching the fight with interest.

Bully Crane was endeavouring to get Dick's head into chancery, but Dick was too keen to allow that, and presently, with a wrestling trick, he sent the bully with a crash to the floor.

Crane went down heavily, and lay dizzily for a few moments on his back.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Pat Malone. "That's a surprise for ye intirely, my buck. Have you had enough of that, Crane, me bhoy?"

Crane staggered up.

He was panting with fury, his rage fanned by the mocking words of the Irish boy, and the laughter of the middies seated round on the lockers.

He sprang at Dick Redmond like a tiger.

This time he did not close with him, but brought his fists into play, but here he found the new midshipman was his match.

Dick's guard was splendid, and Crane's blows were swept aside, and Dick's fists came rapping on his face.

Crane reeled back, and plumped against the lanky midshipman, almost flattening him on his locker.

The middy gave a howl, and pushed him roughly off.

"Where are you coming to, you fool?" he shouted.

"Do you want to make me into a pancake?"

"Get out of the way then, Brown."

"You get out of the berth, and let the middy alone," retorted Brown. "He's above your weight and you can't touch him, Crane."

Crane gritted his teeth.

"Can't I? I'll show you."

And he rushed at Dick again.

"Go for him, my lad," said Brown. "Crane is a wind-bag, and he hasn't any real pluck."

"I'll show you whether I haven't," snarled Crane, "after I've finished with the new fellow."

"After he's finished with you, you mean?" taunted Brown.

The bully did not reply to this remark.

He was too busily occupied with Dick.

The new midshipman, though he was younger than his bulky adversary, was a good boxer, and simply brimming with pluck.

Had he been in good form he would probably have beaten Crane hollow, in spite of the latter's physical advantages.

But the sea-sickness of the previous night, his present hunger, and the strange motion of the ship, combined to place Dick at a terrible disadvantage.

Yet in spite of that he put up a splendid fight.

Again and again Crane's savage rushes were stopped, again and again his heavy blows were warded off, and he was sent reeling back before a well-planted drive.

But Crane was strong and well, and Dick was not fit, and that was bound to tell in the long run.

Slowly, but surely, the bully got the best of the encounter.

Dick fought hard, all the harder as he felt defeat looming darkly over him, but it was of no use; he was too heavily handicapped.

And at last a heavy blow, which caught him full in the face sent him with a crash to the floor, and he lay there unable to rise.

Crane reeled against a locker, out of breath.

He had gained the victory, but it had cost him dear.

Both his eyes were closing, his nose was swollen tremendously, and red stains were running from cuts on his face where Dick's knuckles had come home hard.

He was panting and exhausted, and, as a matter of fact, in little better condition than Dick. But he could have gone on, while Dick Redmond was quite played out, and so victory rested with him.

"Are you done?" he panted.

Dick tried to rise, and sank back again.

"Here, don't sham," exclaimed one of the midshipmen.

"He's not shamming Morley," exclaimed Pat Malone, indignantly. "He's done up, after putting up a better fight than a dozen of you could have put up."

Morley laughed

"All right, keep your wool on, Irishman."

"Well, shut up, then."

Pat stooped over Dick.

"You can't go on, chappy?"

"No," muttered Dick Redmond. "Not now."

Pat grinned.

"Do you want to go on another time?"

"Yes, I do, if that brute tries any of his bullying again," said Dick, between his teeth. "I'm not going to stand that, I'd rather be killed."

"Well, you will have your wish, I expect."

Dick rose to his feet with Pat's assistance.

He was reeling with exhaustion, and he could hardly see out of his half-closed, blurred eyes.

Crane made a step towards him.

"You're licked, Redmond."

Dick nodded.

"You understand that?"

"Yes."

"Now are you going to learn your place, or do you want some more?"

"Thank you, I don't want any more."

"I'm the cock of the midshipman's berth. You hear that?"

"I hear it."

"Well, are you going to take your proper place?"

"I hope so."

"I mean," exclaimed Crane, angrily, "are you going to knuckle under, and be respectful to your betters—myself for instance?"

"No, I am not going to knuckle under, and I don't feel the slightest respect for you."

Some of the middies laughed, and Crane flushed with rage.

"That fellow speaks plainly, anyway," observed Brown.

"I rather like the cut of his jib."

Crane felt in his pocket and produced a knotted rope.

It was what was known on a man-of-war as a "cob," and frequently used in the infliction of punishment in those rough old days.

He came threateningly towards Dick Redmond.

"You see this cob?"

"Yes," said Dick, "I see it."

"Well, I am going to lay it round your shoulders, just to teach you your place. I'm going to cut some of the cheec' out of you, my lad, or know the reason why."

"Shame, shame!" cried several of the middies.

Crane cast a savage glance round him.

"Any of you going to try and stop me?" he sneered.

There was a moment's general hesitation.

Then Pat Malone stepped in front of Dick.

"Yes," he said, quietly, "I am."

"Get out of the way, Irish."

"You'll have to lick me before you touch Redmond."

"I can do that easily enough."

"Then start. I know you're more than my match, you hulking brute, but I daresay I can finish what Redmond had begun," remarked Pat. "Anyway, you're not going to touch him again while I can stand up to stop you. So come on!"

"Bravo, Irish!" shouted Brown.

Crane hesitated.

Under ordinary circumstances he was immensely more than a match for the plucky Irish lad, but at the present moment he felt hardly fit to take on a boy of ten.

He receded a step or two, scowling savagely.

"I'll pay you for this some time, Pat Malone," he said, between his teeth. "You know I'm not fit now for another scrap, or you wouldn't interfere."

"Yes, I should," said Pat, instantly. "But you know that Redmond can't defend himself, or you wouldn't try to cob him."

"I'm going to teach him his place."

"He's the boy to teach you yours, as soon as he's got his sea-legs on," said Pat, disdainfully.

"Go and hang yourself!"

The bully of the midshipmen's berth turned away scowling. He felt that there was something in what Pat said, and that his long supremacy in the middy's berth of the *Edipus* was in danger.

Pat turned to Dick again.

The latter gripped him warmly by the hand.

"Thank you, Malone," he said, with some emotion in his

voice. "I couldn't have raised a finger to help myself just now. Thank you!"

"That's all right," said Pat, cheerily. "Sure and I wouldn't stand by and see ye licked when ye couldn't help yourself. And sure I'm thinking that when ye're feeling better, ye can take Crane on again and perhaps lick him."

"I intend to try, at all events!" said Dick Redmond, quietly.

THE FIRST DAY AT SEA—A FOE IN SIGHT—TRENCH AGAINST ENGLISH!

"Redmond!"

Dick Redmond touched his hat.

He had made his first appearance on the quarter deck of his Majesty King George's gallant frigate *Edipus*, and he was looking decidedly unfit for such a place.

For his face was covered with cuts and bruises, both his eyes were blacked, and his nose and mouth were red and swollen.

He looked as if he had been through a desperate fistic encounter, as indeed he had.

The first lieutenant was in charge of the deck when Dick came up, Captain Cleveland being below in the cabin.

The frigate was speeding down the channel under a press of canvas.

The shores of old England were fast fading away astern on the starboard side, and the wide stretch of the Channel lay before her, and beyond that the waste solitudes of the great Atlantic.

The *Edipus* was fairly started on her voyage, and Dick, who was beginning to grow accustomed to the motion of the ship, was feeling much better in the keen sea air.

But Mr. Quill had noticed his peculiar appearance the moment he came to the quarter-deck.

And Mr. Quill's keen gimlet eye had singled him out at once. "Redmond!"

The first lieutenant's voice was cold and snappish.

He had forgiven Dick for his first escapade, at the captain's intercession, but at the bottom of his heart he still considered that the new midshipman would be all the better for a sound flogging.

And now, here was a fresh delinquency, and the crabby first lieutenant was not slow to take advantage of it.

"What is the matter with your face, Redmond?"

"My face, sir?"

"Yes, your face!" exclaimed Mr. Quill. "What have you been doing to it?"

"Doing to it, sir?"

"Yes, doing to it. What tricks have you been up to now?"

"Tricks, sir."

"Yes, tricks," roared Mr. Quill. "Are you a midshipman or a parrot, sir?"

"A midshipman, sir."

"Then don't repeat my words like a parrot."

"Yes, sir."

"Yes, sir," mimicked the first lieutenant. "Don't you know how to say 'Aye, aye, sir.'"

"Yes, sir."

"Then say it, fool."

"Aye, aye, sir."

"Mind you say aye, aye, whenever I speak to you."

"Aye, aye, sir."

"Now, what have you been doing? Fighting?"

"Yes, sir. I mean, aye, aye, sir."

"And you think you can appear upon His Majesty's quarter deck with your face in that state?"

"Aye, aye, sir."

"Are you making fun of me?" roared Mr. Quill.

"Aye, aye, sir."

"Redmond! What do you mean? Do you take me for a dummy you can play tricks on and be impertinent to just as you please?"

"Aye, aye, sir."

The first lieutenant stood astounded.

He had never come across anything like this before in the course of an amphibious career extending over the best part of half-a-century.

"By Jove!" he gasped. "The boy's mad! Mad as a hatter! Captain Cleveland!" The Captain had just come on deck. "Captain Cleveland, this midshipman is a mad-man."

"Indeed," said the captain. "What is the matter now?"

"He has just called me, sir, a dummy, sir! The Service is going to the devil, I think, sir, when a midshipman calls a first lieutenant a dummy on the quarter deck of one of His Majesty's ships!" exclaimed Mr. Quill.

"Redmond! You must be mad, I think, to insult a first lieutenant."

"I did not mean to insult Mr. Quill, sir," said Dick, meekly. "I only said what he told me to say, sir. I only wanted to obey orders. I was told before I came to sea that I must obey all orders of a superior officer, sir, without stopping to ask whether they were right or wrong, even at the risk of life."

"Quite right," said the captain, with an approving nod. "Quite right, Redmond. But you do not mean to say that Mr. Quill ordered you to call him impertinent names."

"He ordered me to say 'aye, aye, sir,'—to everything he said. Then he asked me if I took him for a dummy."

The captain smiled.

"Ah! this appears to be a misunderstanding," he remarked. The first lieutenant seemed about to choke.

"A wilful misunderstanding," he exclaimed. "The boy is not the utter fool he pretends to be."

"Aye, aye, sir," said Dick, dutifully.

"Go to the mast-head," shouted Mr. Quill, as the captain turned away to hide his laughing. "Go to the mast-head, Redmond, and don't dare to come down till I tell you."

"Aye, aye, sir."

Dick walked to the shrouds. He looked up with dismay. He was an active lad, and he had liked climbing trees on shore. But he had never been up anything like this before. He did not even know that it was necessary to climb on the weather side of the ship.

"Where are you going?" shouted Mr. Quill, as Dick walked to the wrong side of the frigate.

"To the mast-head, sir."

"You must go up the weather shrouds."

"Aye, aye, sir."

Dick answered cheerfully, but did not cross the deck.

"Don't you know what the weather shrouds are," shouted Mr. Quill. "Malone, what are you laughing at?"

"Was I laughing, sir?" said Pat, touching his hat.

"Yes, you were. Go to the mast-head with Redmond, and stay there till I call you down."

"Aye, aye, sir."

Pat beckoned to Dick, who crossed the deck to him. Pat jumped into the shrouds and gave Dick a helping hand.

"We have to go up the weather side, or we should be blown off by the wind," he remarked.

"What is the weather side?"

"My word! the side the wind is blowing from, of course."

"Oh! I see."

"Take care! You would be killed if you fell to the deck now."

Dick turned his head to look down. Pat gave him a sharp rap under the chin and knocked his head up again.

"Don't look down: your body will soon follow your eyes," he exclaimed.

"Yes, it was silly of me," said Dick. "I'll be more careful."

"Hold on the ratlines. You see now that the wind is keeping you against the rigging. If you were on the other side of the ship it would be blowing you away."

"I see."

"Here we are at the top."

The midshipman had reached the maintop, where the mainmast ended, and the main-topmast commenced. The round top was a welcome place of refuge to Dick.

"How do you get on it?" he asked.

"Climb up over the edge."

"Why not go through that hole in it?" Dick asked.

"It looks safer."

Pat laughed.

"That's the lubber's hole. You'd be the laughing stock of the ship if you crawled through that," he said.

"Oh, I see. But we have to lean back from the rigging to get over the edge of the maintop."

"It's easy enough when you know how to do it. Watch me."

Pat swung himself into the top.

Dick, who had plenty of nerve, followed his example. His heart was beating hard when he joined the Irish midshipman in the top.

"Now up again," said Pat, cheerily.

Up they went on the rigging to the summit of the main-topmast, and there, in the next top, they halted. Above them rose the royal mast, but up that they did not go.

"We won't go up topgallant or royal," said Pat. "We'll stay here in the cross-trees. Look at the sea and hold on!"

The new midshipman was holding on hard. To his inexperienced eyes it appeared that the frigate was making wide sweeps and drives in the tumbling waves, and he marvelled that she did not turn over.

As a matter of fact the *Edipus* was riding the waves gallantly, with a steady strong wind in her bellying canvas, driving her out into the Atlantic.

The keen breeze whistled and sang round the heads of the midshipmen, and Dick soon began to feel the exhilaration of it.

"Not sick?" asked Pat, with a smile.
 "Just a little qualm every now and then."
 "Good! you'll soon get over that."
 "What a glorious sight," exclaimed Dick, gazing round at the wide rolling stretch of water. "I can't see England now, though."

Dick gazed round on the wide sea. He hoped to catch sight of a French ship on the expanse of blue, rolling water.

New to naval life, Dick Redmond was full of keen enthusiasm, and he was too young to reflect upon the ethical side of the question.

The horror and wickedness of war, and the stupidity of governments in bringing about a terrible contest between two nations formed for friendship, had not occurred to him.

He was just a keen youngster, ready to follow the flag anywhere and fight for it, and die if needs were.

"I say, Malone," he exclaimed, suddenly. "What is that speck on the sea yonder? Is it a sail?"

"Where is it, Redmond?"
 The new middy pointed it out.
 Pat shaded his eyes with his hands and gazed steadily in the direction indicated.

"Sure and it's keen eyes ye have," he exclaimed. "It's a sail."

Dick's eyes blazed with excitement.
 "Do you think it's a French ship?"



The next moment the Frenchman fell dead.

"You won't see it again till this time next year," grinned Pat. "We're going to join Nelson's fleet in the Mediterranean, and it will be twelve months at the least before we bear up into Portsmouth harbour again."

"I suppose we shall see some fighting?"

"We shall, my son, and long before we get to the Mediterranean, I expect. The French are keen to get hold of our despatches. We have one of the fastest frigates in the Service, but some of the French cruisers are very fast, and we may meet some we cannot get away from."

"I hope we shan't run from the enemy?" exclaimed Dick.

"Ha, ha!" laughed Pat. "Haven't ye had enough fighting yet, alanna? Hasn't Crane given you enough for one day intirely?"

"I shouldn't like to see the *Edipus* showing her heels to a French craft," said Dick.

"Well, you will, I expect: we're carrying despatches, and we shan't fight if we can help it. But if we are attacked, my son, you'll see some fighting and no mistake."

"I hope so."

"Well, I don't see what an English ship would be doing so far over towards the French coast, unless she's a cruiser like ourselves," said Pat. He leaned back from the cross-trees in what seemed to Dick a very reckless way, and gazed up to the crow's nest at the top of the main royal mast, and hailed the look-out.

"Look-out, ahoy."
 The man in the cask fixed to the summit of the mast glanced downward.

"Aye, aye, sir."
 "What do you make of that sail nor-west and by north?"
 The look-out gazed in the direction given. He had evidently not observed the spot, but now he brought his glass to bear on it, and uttered an exclamation.

"A frigate, sir," he replied, quickly.
 Pat looked down to the deck, and placed his hands to his mouth.

"Sail ho!"
 In a moment there was commotion on the deck of the *Edipus*. The first-lieutenant left off bullying a midshipman, and

turned his head back till it seemed as if he must get a crick in the neck, to gaze aloft.

"Where away?" he roared.

"Nor-west-and-by-nor."

"What rig?"

"Frigate, looks like a Frenchman."

"Keep your eye on her."

"Aye, aye, sir."

Captain Cleveland came on deck with a bound. The deck was like a hive of bees: the whole crew rushing to their places as the drummer beat to quarters.

Swift, yet in perfect order, a hive of bees, in which every bee knew his place, and exactly what to do when he got there!

"How do you make her now?" shouted the captain.

"French colours," came back from the look-out. "She's taken them in now, sir."

"Ah! they don't want to be known."

Every eye on the *Edipus* was turned towards the strange ship now.

She was almost in the path of the *Edipus*, and unless the English frigate turned out of her way to avoid her, a meeting was inevitable.

The captain hurriedly consulted with the first-lieutenant.

"We must think of the despatches first," he said.

"But we shall lose time in avoiding her, sir," said the first-lieutenant, whose eyes were sparkling at the idea of a fight. Perhaps he scented his long-deferred promotion at last.

"Yes, but we have precise instructions. If we can avoid a fight without losing too great an amount of time, we must do it."

"Aye, aye, sir," said Mr. Quill, but far from cheerfully.

The French ship was now visible to the naked eye from the deck of the *Edipus*.

She was coming on gallantly under a press of snowy canvas.

The captain gnawed his lip thoughtfully.

"Fall off a couple of points," he said at last. "We will go so far to avoid her. At the same time see the guns ready for action."

"Aye, aye, sir."

The order was given to the helmsman, and the ship fell off two points. This took her away from the path of the stranger, but a minute later the French ship was seen to swing into a straight line for the *Edipus* again.

Mr. Quill smiled.

It was clear that the Frenchman was determined to come to a meeting.

The captain compressed his lips.

"It won't do," he muttered aloud. "She's fully our strength, and though I am sure we should beat her, we should be so knocked about we should have to be put back into Portsmouth, and another frigate sent with the despatches to Nelson."

Mr. Quill nodded.

"That would mean a great deal of delay, I know."

"Yes, and the despatches are most important."

"But if we quit our route, we lose time."

"We shall not do so."

The first-lieutenant brightened up.

"Ah! we shall keep on, and make it a running fight," he said.

"Yes, I think so."

"Anything so long as we exchange shots," exclaimed Mr. Quill.

The captain smiled and nodded.

The frigate resumed her former course, and stood right on. This brought her within gunshot of the stranger. The seamen were standing at the guns, all ready to fire at the word of command.

A round ball went flying up to the mast-head of the stranger, and it opened in the wind and floated out on the sea-breeze.

"The tricolour!"

A dozen voices uttered the words.

It was the French flag: the colours of the French Republic! There was no further possibility of doubt as to the identity of the stranger. She was a foe, and a fight was no longer to be avoided. Up went the English colours, and they floated out with gay defiance on the wind.

Boom!

The crash of a gun came thudding on the air, and a puff of white smoke sailed up from the bows of the French frigate.

Boom!

Another gun—and from the west!

In the excitement of watching the French frigate, the Englishmen had not noticed that a second sail had appeared on the horizon.

Pat gripped Dick Redmond's arm in the cross-trees.

"Look!"

"Another Frenchman?"

"Yes."

"By Jupiter! It will be a fight and no mistake."

Captain Cleveland compressed his lips again.

The first lieutenant gave him a meaning look.

"We shall have to fight both of them," said the captain, calmly. "Men, stand ready! We are going to fight two French ships of our own size, and we are going to beat them."

The crew gave a ringing cheer.

Boom!

It was another gun from the nearest Frenchman, and it flew over the cross-trees of the English ship—so close to the midshipmen that Dick Redmond felt the wind of it on his cheek, and with a startled cry the new middy relaxed his hold.

Pat gripped him just in time to save him from a fall to certain death.

FIGHTING THE FRENCH!

"Hold on, Redmond!"

Dick's grip fastened upon a rope, and he drew a quick breath.

"Thanks, Malone! I thought I was gone then."

"You were nearly. You lost your head."

"The cannon-shot came so close. It might have knocked one of our heads off."

A deafening roar came up from the sea.

The Frenchman had delivered his broadside, and at the same moment the side of the English frigate burst into smoke and flame.

The two terrible volleys of shot and shell crashed into the opposing ships.

A thick curtain of smoke now rose round the masts, and shut off what was passing below from the view of the middies at the mast-head.

It was as well, for the sight was fearful.

On the decks of the two ships men lay in attitudes of pain and anguish, torn by fearful wounds, groaning and twisting, while others lay still in death.

That fearful fire had done terrible execution on both sides. Groans and cries of pain filled the air, mingled with the booming echoes of the great guns, and the fall of shattered spars and cordage.

The English ship rushed on.

On and on, with belling canvas, and past the French, and passing within a cable's length of her bowsprit, and on towards the second foe.

The Frenchman tacked to come broadside on again.

There was a terrible crash, and her mainmast came down over her side, crowding the deck with canvas and tangled rigging.

The mast had been shot through in a dozen places, the English gunners specially aiming to cripple it, and they had succeeded.

The fall of the mast rendered the *Paris* perfectly helpless.

She floated like a log on the water, refusing to obey her helm, and Captain Cleveland, realising in a flash that his enemy was at his mercy, wore round in a flash and gave her another broadside, right into her ribs.

A terrible cry rose from the crowded deck of the French frigate.

In the confusion and helplessness of the *Paris*, not a single gun was fired in return.

The English broadside crashed through her, killing and maiming and wrecking, and the *Edipus* passed on leaving her little better than a wreck.

Had there been no other foe at hand, Captain Cleveland would have fired again and again into his adversary till the French hauled down their colours and surrendered, and then sent her into Portsmouth or Plymouth with a prize crew in her.

But the second French ship was coming up gallantly.

There was no time to give the *Paris* another shot, without leaving himself at the mercy of the approaching foe.

And so, unwillingly leaving the conquered opponent, the English ship rushed on to meet the new foe, with the men at the loaded guns.

Pat gave a frantic hurrah in the cross-trees.

"Baten thim, by thunder!" he shouted. "That's one settled, alanna."

Dick's eyes were blazing.

"Now for the other!" he cried.

Boom! boom!

Crash! crash!

The two ships were within pistol-shot, and the great guns were crashing away.

The *Edipus* shook and trembled with each tremendous discharge.

Crash! crash!

"My word, we're getting it hot," said Pat, striving in vain to penetrate the thick veil of smoke that hung like a pall over the ship. "I can't see anything," he went on. "But the French lead is hitting us hard."

"We shall beat them!"

"I hope so—Jupiter!"

"What's the matter?"

"We're running!"

"What?"

"We're running away."

Dick snapped his teeth.

It was true. Three broadsides had been exchanged, and now the *Edipus* was speeding on towards the Atlantic, with the Frenchman in hot pursuit.

Now that the guns were silent, the brisk breeze soon swept the smoke from the *Edipus*, and the middies in the cross-trees were able to see the deck once more.

Dick Redmond turned pale and sick at what he saw.

Unshipped guns, broken spars, men dead and dying, broken limbs, arms and legs torn from the bodies they belonged to, and planks red with blood!

It was the lad's first sight of red, real war, and it was no wonder that all the feelings in his nature revolted from the horrible cruelty, and pain, and folly of it.

Pat was more hardened to such sights. Young as he was, he had been through more than one deadly conflict on the wide salt waters.

"We've been hard hit," he commented. "Forty men down, at last; and half of them will lose the number of their mess."

Dick shuddered.

Pat's glance went back to the pursuing Frenchman.

"Our spars are all right, though," he went on. "We're able to run! Oh, murder! Fancy running from a Frenchman! It's the despatches the captain's thinking of."

The men on the deck of the *Edipus* were scowling.

They had suffered a great deal in the fight, but their blood was up.

They wanted to finish now that they had started, and they had little sympathy with the considerations that influenced the captain.

But the iron discipline of a man-of-war prevented a word from being said.

The *Edipus* stood straight on, with the Frenchman behind her, firing from his bow-chasers.

It was soon evident that in point of speed the two vessels were about equal.

It was clear, too, that the bow guns of the Frenchman could do little or no harm to the flying English ship.

The French captain realised it, and he swung round to deliver a broadside.

Boom! boom!

The storm of lead came screeching over the water from the Frenchman.

But Captain Cleveland was watchful.

The helmsman obeyed his signal, and the men were ready at the braces.

The *Edipus* swerved in time, and the greater part of the volley, which was intended to rake her fore and aft, went screaming away ineffectively over the sea.

The Frenchman swung into line again and continued the chase.

But she had lost a considerable distance in the manoeuvre, and it was clear now that the chase was hopeless.

Captain Cleveland's brow was wrinkled.

"I shall know that craft again!" he exclaimed. "She is the *Republic*; and we may meet the *Republic* again yet! Then we will show her that we did not run away because we were afraid to fight her to a finish."

Mr. Quill nodded, but rather gloomily.

The faces of the seamen were gloomy too.

Had the fight gone on to a finish, they believed that both

French ships would have been captured, and the *edlat* and the prize-money would have been great.

The captain gave a kindly glance at the discontented faces. "My lads!" he exclaimed. "I know you don't like running away. I don't like it either. But we are carrying important despatches to Sir Horatio Nelson, and the fate of the kingdom depends upon Nelson's fleet. My lads, when we have got rid of those despatches we are going to cruise against the French, and I promise you that you shall never see the *Edipus* show her stern to less than three foes? Are you satisfied?"

"Aye, aye, sir!" came a hearty shout from the seamen.

And a ringing hurrah followed.

On swept the English frigate, with the Frenchman hanging obstinately to her traces, though now with but slight hope of overtaking her.

Mr. Quill was giving rapid orders about the disposal of the wounded. He happened to glance up and see the midshipmen in the cross-trees, and signed to them to descend.

Gladly enough they came down from their perch.

"Make yourselves useful," said the first lieutenant, curtly.

And the lads set to work to help in carrying the wounded down into the cockpit, and long the work went on, while the day wore away and darkness descended upon the ocean. And in the gloom of night the pursuer disappeared; and when morning flushed red and rosy on the Atlantic, she was no longer in sight.

* DICK THRASHES THE BULLY!

"I wish the despatches were delivered, and we had a chance of a brush with the French!" exclaimed Pat Malone, a few days later, in the midshipmen's berth of the *Edipus*.

The frigate was making good speed across the Bay of Biscay.

The damage done in the fight with the two Frenchmen had been repaired as well as it could be done at sea, and the frigate had lost little time.

The dead had been buried in the salt water, sewn up in their hammocks, and during the following days more than one of the wounded had followed to their last rest.

But the crew were too accustomed to the chances of warfare to take the loss deeply to heart.

Ere long all was going on as usual, and the men were looking forward eagerly to another brush with the foe.

But that was not likely to come yet awhile.

In a few days the *Edipus* had shown her stern to four or five of the enemy's cruisers, and had been unsuccessfully chased by them.

Only on one occasion had she exchanged shots with the French, and then it was at long range with little damage done on either side.

Then, as usual, the *Edipus* had crowded on all sail and run.

All were longing for the Mediterranean's blue waters to flow round the prow of the frigate and for the time of flying to end, and that of fighting to commence.

None were more anxious for that time than the heroes of the middy's berth.

Pat only voiced the general sentiments when he uttered his exclamation, as he sat on a locker eating biscuits and drinking coffee from a can.

The young gentlemen of the *Edipus* were eating their supper, those of them who were off duty and discussing the prospects of the cruise.

"It's rotten, this carrying despatches," went on Pat. "I wish they were given to some other ship. What we want is a tussle with the enemy."

"You do, do you?" said Crane, with a sneer.

"Yes, I do," said Pat, looking at him. "Sure and what's that amiable expression on your face for, Crane, me boy? Do you doubt me?"

"Yes, I do! You and Redmond were skulking in the cross trees while the fight was going on," said Crane, scoffingly. "You didn't come down till that tussle was over, last time."

Pat's eyes flashed.

"We didn't come down till Mr. Quill called us down," he replied.

"You took good care not to."

"He had ordered us to stay there till we were called down."

"Good excuse!"

"You know we couldn't have come down against orders."

"I know you didn't want to."

"Then it's a liar ye are!" flashed out Pat.

Crane shrugged his shoulders.

"I'd rather be a liar than a coward," he said, sneeringly,

"and you're a coward, and Dick Redmond's another."

Dick entered the berth at this moment.

He had just received his rations, and he had a can of steaming hot coffee in one hand, and some ship's biscuits and salt pork in the other.

He heard Crane's words, and a hot flush went over his face.

"What's that you say, Crane?" he exclaimed.

Crane stared at him.

"I was talking to Paddy Malone."

"I said you were a coward."

"Good, you want an answer to that, and there it is."

And with a jerk of his hand Dick flung the contents of the coffee-can into the face of the bully of the middy's berth.

Crane staggered back as the hot fluid splashed into his face.

He gave a yell of surprise and pain, and threw out his hands and the back of one of them smote Pat on the cheek.

Pat promptly gave him a shove which sent him reeling across the berth.

He brought up against Brown, who gave him another shove with equal promptness, and Crane staggered away and sat down with suddenness on the planks.

He sat down heavily, and sat there rubbing the coffee out of his eyes with his knuckles.

The whole berth laughed at the ridiculous figure he cut.

Dick Redmond laid down his can, and his provisions. He had known that another tussle with the bully must come, and now that it had come he was prepared for it. Both the middies had nearly got over the effects of the first fight by this time, so they were both ready for another.

Dick threw off his coat.

"I say, this is my affair intirely," exclaimed Pat Malone.

"He called me a coward."

"He called me one too."

"Sure and I'm going to fight him."

"So am I; and he can't fight the two of us."

"I tell you I'm going to have him first."

"Leave him to me."

"Shan't! Get out!"

"Bosh! You get out."

"Let him choose himself," suggested Brown.

"Sure and that's a good idea," exclaimed Pat. "I agree. Which of us would you prefer to give you a licking, Crane, darlint?"

The bully staggered to his feet. His face was dark and convulsed with rage.

"I'm going to fight Redmond," he shouted, "and to-morrow I'll fight you, Malone, and give you the biggest licking you ever had in your life."

"Sure and if you fight Redmond to-night, you won't feel much like licking anything to-morrow," said Pat, "unless its licking the dust ye are."

"Get out of the way."

"Certainly, acushla. Don't get excited. There's toime of toime."

"Are you ready, Dick Redmond?"

"Quite."

"I'm going to half-kill you."

"Make a start then," said Dick, coolly. "You'll find me in better condition than you did last time, and I think you won't find me so easy to handle, you bully."

"I'll soon show you."

And Crane rushed at the new midshipman.

Dick's prediction proved to be correct.

For a few days on the sea had made Dick quite accustomed to his new surroundings, and he was feeling more fresh and vigorous than he had ever felt on land.

Crane had not found him exactly easy to encounter in their previous meeting, but on this occasion he found him a harder nut to crack than ever.

He was strong and sturdy, and a good boxer, and full of boundless pluck, and so the bully's extra size and strength did not count for so much as upon the former occasion.

Crane's rush was stopped by a heavy blow which took effect upon his chin, and sent him staggering back.

Dick followed up that reception by an onslaught which drove the bully right round the berth, and after a few minutes of that, Crane dazedly staggered over the outstretched legs of a seated middy, and rolled on the planks.

A loud laugh greeted his downfall.

It was looking decidedly as if he were no match for the new middy, and the fear he had previously inspired was at an end.

While his power lasted, he had used it too brutally and selfishly for anyone to pity him now that the hour of his fall had come.

He fell, and as he lay dazed and blinking, confused by the shower of blows that had rained on his face, he realised that he had not a friend in the berth, and that there was not one middy there who would not have been glad to see him soundly licked.

But he was not licked yet.

The life of a fallen and despised bully was not to be lightly endured, and he meant to make a desperate struggle to regain his supremacy.

He rose slowly to his feet and came up to the scratch again.

This time he was more cautious.

But his knowledge of boxing was too rudimentary for him to gain much by his caution. Unless he could carry the conflict by main strength he had little chance, and he had already learned that he could not do that.

But he fought on doggedly and obstinately.

Dick fought steadily, determinedly. He was resolved to win, and to put down Crane's bullying for ever in the middy's berth of the *Edipus*.

And when Crane was beaten, and his bullying at an end, Dick had mentally resolved that there should be no more of it, and to keep a careful guard over himself lest he should fall into the same habits—an easy thing for the victor in the fight to do.

Steadily Dick pressed his enemy, punishing him severely all the time, and his own guard was so good that few of Crane's blows reached his face.

It was apparent to all at last that Crane was beaten, yet he fought on doggedly, and refused to give in.

But at last a tremendous right-hander laid him upon his back with a crash that shook the midshipman's berth, and when he tried to rise he fell back dazedly.

"He's done," said half-a-dozen voices.

Crane made another effort to rise, and again dropped back.

"Are you done, Crane?" asked Pat Malone.

"Yes, curse you!" snarled Crane. "Oh! I'll have revenge for this, Dick Redmond. I'll make you suffer for it. I'll make you sorry for it."

Dick smiled contemptuously.

"I'm not afraid," he replied, "I don't want to be on ill terms with anybody, but I won't stand bullying, and what's more, I won't allow it to go on in the berth at all."

"Bravo!" shouted Pat.

Dick looked round at the middies, of whom six or seven were present.

"You hear that," he said. "I've licked Crane, but I'm not going to take his place. If any of you find me bullying just slog me in the eye to remind me. There's no reason why we can't live in peace that I can see. I want to be friends with all, Crane included."

"Never!" hissed Crane. "I am your enemy from this hour."

"Well, you won't hurt me much, I suppose. Give me that cob you carry in your pocket."

"I won't."

"Give it me!"

Crane was on his feet now. With a curse he flung the cob to the floor at Dick's feet as the latter advanced threateningly towards him.

Dick Redmond stooped and picked it up.

"You're not going to——" began Pat Malone.

Dick laughed.

"I'm not going to do what he would have done to me the other day, no," he replied. "There's going to be no more clobbering while I'm about to stop it, that's all."

He threw the knotted rope out of the nearest porthole.

"There's the end of that. Now, Crane, if you care to shake hands with me, I'm willing to be your friend, and go on on an equal footing."

Crane's reply was a curse, and he slouched out of the berth.

"You've made an enemy there, Redmond," Brown remarked. "Crane will do you all the harm he can."

Dick laughed carelessly.

"Oh, I'm not afraid of what he will do."

"I don't know. He's a master's mate, and has the ear of the officers. I believe he has already done you an ill turn with the first lieutenant. He'll do all he can."

"Then he'll have to have another licking, intirely," said Pat. "He's wanted that for a long toime, and no mistake. He's a baste."

Dick was looking thoughtful.

Crane, as a master's mate or senior midshipman, had the ear of the officers to some extent, and it was quite probable that he would be able to do the junior middy harm there.

Still, it could not be helped.

Dick had acted as well as he could, and nothing would have made him act otherwise if he had had the choice over again. Anything was better than submitting to bullying.

After the fight in which he had been so completely licked, Crane was careful to keep from any open quarrel with Dick Redmond.

ONE AGAINST THREE!

Sunny skies and blue waters awaited the *Edipus* as soon as she passed the stormy wastes of the Bay of Biscay.

More than one foe was sighted ere she touched at Gibraltar, but the frigate showed them a clean pair of heels, and at last dropped her anchor at the great rock fortress that frowns over the blue waters of the Mediterranean where that inland sea meets the vast Atlantic.

At Gibraltar the *Edipus* stayed only one day, and none of the midshipmen, much to their disappointment, were allowed to run ashore.

"Never mind," said Pat Malone. "We shall get a run ashore at a good many of the Italian and Silician ports, I expect, Dick."

"I hope so," said Dick, with a wistful glance at the busy shore. "I like the sea, but I should be glad to stretch my legs on the land again."

"You'll have the chance at Palermo."

The *Edipus* weighed anchor in the dawn and sailed for the inland sea.

The blue waters of the Mediterranean flowed round her prow, and the blue islands of shores dazzled the eyes of those who, like Midshipman Dick, were new to such scenes.

And now every eye on board the frigate was more alert than ever for foes.

In the narrow seas the French cruisers were very thick, and it was pretty certain that a good many of them would be on the look-out for the *Edipus*.

Nelson at that time was supposed to be at Naples, and it was to the Neapolitan port that the swift frigate was winging her flight.

Midshipman Dick was taking things very easily on board the *Edipus*, and finding his new life a pleasant one.

Since he had licked Crane the midshipmen's berth had been a much more pleasant place, but on the quarterdeck he did not find things very pleasant.

For Mr. Quill was still down upon him, very heavily.

The new middy's coolness Mr. Quill set down in his mind as impertinence, and nothing that Dick did seemed quite right to the first lieutenant.

This was partly due to the ill offices of Crane.

The senior midshipman was more in contact with the first lieutenant, and he was never tired of doing Dick all the harm he could with Mr. Quill.

The consequence was that the first lieutenant became extremely exacting and prone to find fault, and Dick sometimes found him very trying.

"How dare you come on deck in that state, Redmond?" he demanded, fixing a glare upon the middy.

Dick looked at him, and touched his hat.

"What is the matter, sir?"

"The matter!" The first lieutenant pointed to a speck of tar on Dick's white duck trousers. "Look at the filthy condition of your clothes, sirrah."

Dick looked down at the speck of tar.

"Aye, aye, sir."

"Do you think you are sailing on a Thames coal-barge?" roared Mr. Quill; "or are you deliberately attempting to bring discredit upon His Majesty's cloth?"

"No, sir."

"How dare you come on the quarter deck with tarry trousers like a foremast hand?"

"It must have got there by accident, sir."

"Accident be hanged."

"It is only a spot, sir."

"A spot!" shouted Mr. Quill. "It is slovenly, sir, and a single spot is just as slovenly as a whole tar-bucket emptied over your trousers."

"Aye, aye, sir."

"Don't stand there saying 'aye, aye, sir,' like a parrot. You have come on the deck on duty in a filthy and disre-

putable state. Do you call yourself an officer and a gentleman?"

"I hope so, sir."

"Then how dare you appear like a tarry fore-castle swab?"

"I—"

"Don't answer me. Go to the mast-head, and don't come down till noon."

"Aye, aye, sir."

At moments he looked round to scan the sea with a pair of pocket-glasses, and on one of these occasions he sighted something that made him close the book and slip it into his pocket, and then look again with earnest attention.

What looked like a dark, thick cloud was rising from the sea to the northward.

Dick examined it carefully, and his eyes flashed.

"A ship on fire!" he exclaimed aloud.

He took another long look to make sure that he was not mistaken. He did not wish to hail the deck, and he laughed at for his pains if the cloud turned out to be simply a cloud. But he was not mistaken. It was a column of smoke from a burning ship that was rising from the blue waters over in the direction of the French coast.

Dick hallowed his hands and shouted down to the deck.

"Aho, the deck!"

The first lieutenant looked up as quickly as a parrot.

"Sail ho!" Dick shouted. "A ship on fire, north by west."

"Aye, aye!"

The captain was called. He looked very thoughtful, and turned his binoculars in the direction of the burning ship. He could just discern the smoke from the deck with the aid of the glasses.

"We cannot pass her by," he said, at length. "I do not care to lose time, but humanity has a claim. Bring us a few points nearer, Mr. Quill, and we will ascertain, at all events if there are any left living on board."

"Aye, aye, sir."

The *Edipus* swung round to come in a direct line with the stranger.

Then she rushed on swiftly under a cloud of canvas.

The smoke of the burning ship was soon visible to all.

It was a brig that was burning, and from her build the captain judged her to be an English merchantman.

She was on fire fore and aft, and red flames mingled with the smoke that poured up from her entire length. The captain frowned as he looked at her.

"That is no accidental fire!" he exclaimed. "She has been set afire purposely by some scoundrels. This looks like piratical work."

"There are living men on board of her!" exclaimed Mr. Quill, excitedly. "Do you see the signal of distress, sir?"

A white flag was fluttering from the brig's side against the sable background of smoke.

The captain nodded.

"Yes. We must save them. Have the longboat lowered Mr. Quill."

"Aye, aye, sir."

The long boat was soon manned and lowered. The frigate lay to while it pulled to the burning brig.

Dick, being still in the cross-trees, could not go with the boat, much to his chagrin, but Pat Malone was delighted by being ordered to go in her.

The longboat pulled rapidly for the burning brig.

Dick watched her go, and waved his hand to Pat, who however did not see him. He followed the boat with his eyes as the look-out above him was doing. Suddenly the wind for a moment shifted the veil of black smoke, and Dick uttered a cry.

In an exact line with the burning ship, and concealed from view by the pall of smoke, a French frigate was coming on under a press of sail.

"The enemy!" gasped Dick.

He understood at once.

The smoke of the burning brig had attracted the French ship from the opposite direction, and the Frenchmen were doubtless coming to render aid, just as the Englishmen were.

The thick, spreading mass of smoke concealed both frigates from each other, as they advanced from exactly opposite directions.

Dick hailed the deck.

"Sail ho!"

"What do you mean?"

"A French frigate, sir, coming up behind the smoke."

"Heaven! Are you sure?"

"Quite sure, sir."

"Look-out, do you see her?"

"Can't see anything unless the smoke shifts, sir."

"I saw her, sir!" cried Dick. "The smoke opened for a second. I wear it!"

"Better prepare for action," said Captain Cleveland, quietly. "I think the boy was not mistaken, Mr. Quill."

"Very good, sir."

The *Edipus* was soon cleared for action.

Most of the sails were furled, leaving only some of the top and topgallant sail to handle the ship, and then the *Edipus* wore round so as to get a sight of the Frenchman.

Captain Cleveland had hesitated whether to recall the long-boat.

But the cries from the brig, which the seamen could now hear, had decided him to let the work of rescue proceed.

Once past the intervening clouds of smoke, the sight of the French frigate burst suddenly upon the English seamen.

Captain Cleveland looked at her attentively.

The French were evidently surprised by the sight of the English frigate, for they were not prepared for action.

Had they been allowed to approach nearer unseen, they would have sighted the English ship, and had as much chance to prepare for action as the *Edipus*.

As it was, they were at a great disadvantage.

Captain Cleveland steered straight on towards the foe, and the Frenchmen rushed to quarters with frantic haste.

But the Englishmen gave them no time.

Right up rushed the *Edipus*, and her broadside burst forth in a sheet of flame and smoke and crashing shot and shell.

A terrible cry rose from the deck of the Frenchman.

But, with the dashing courage of their race, the French rushed fiercely to their guns, undeterred by the fearful blow they had received.

A volley, feeble indeed after that of the *Edipus*, but loud and terrible nevertheless, burst from the side of the French frigate.

The heavy shot crashed into the *Edipus*, and by chance or fate, the mainmast was shot in two, and came tumbling down.

As the spar reeled under the fire, Dick Redmond swung himself along a stay, and safely landed in the foretop before the main-topmast came down.

Then he slid down the rigging to the deck in a twinkling.

The crash of the fallen mast followed, and the frigate was cumbered with a mass of tangled rigging.

Captain Cleveland gritted his teeth.

He had intended to deal a heavy blow to prevent pursuit, and then set sail and escape without a conflict, having taken off the survivors from the burning brig.

The wreck of the topmast prevented that.

Till the ship could be cleared she was practically helpless and she lay there within range of the guns of the French.

A shout of triumph rose from the French ship at the sight of the *Edipus*'s disaster.

She ranged closer to the English ship, and was met with a stunning volley, but she returned it pluckily, and the two ships were soon at it hammer and tongs.

Suddenly, in the midst of the furious firing, came a fresh sound of a booming gun from the direction of the French coast.

Captain Cleveland started.

The wind shifted the smoke of the cannonade, and he saw a French frigate rushing up from the north, her bow-chasers pitting out vengeful shots as she came.

Boom! boom!

It was a crash of fire from the southern sea.

"Three!" cried Captain Cleveland, and he set his teeth.

From the south came a corvette under bellying canvas. In the narrow seas the French cruisers were numerous, and the deafening roar of the guns carried far. From two directions fresh foes were hurrying to the scene of the conflict.

The English crew gave a shout.

"We'll fight them, sir!"

The captain's eyes gleamed.

"Aye, aye, my lads!" he cried. "We'll fight them and beat them, for the glory of old England! Stand to your guns!"

FOR THE OLD FLAG!

Captain Cleveland rapped out sharp orders. The men obeyed him promptly and willingly. Had escape been possible, the captain would have deemed it his duty to flee.

But he was surrounded, and he could only fight like a cornered lion to save his ship and his despatches.

And that was what he meant to do.

The longboat, meanwhile, had taken off the survivors from the burning brig, and had pulled back to the *Edipus*. While one side of the frigate was belching flame and smoke at the French frigate, *La Gloire*, the boat was swung up on the other. Fifteen seamen had been saved from the burning ship, and they were immediately ordered to quarters, to reinforce the crew of the *Edipus*. More than that number of the English crew had already fallen.

Pat Malone joined Dick on the lee side of the quarter-deck. The Irish lad's eyes were gleaming with fun and excitement.

"Sure and we're in for it now, Dicky, my boy!" he exclaimed. "One against three, and we've got to fight and we can't run, and all the better say I."

"So do I," exclaimed Dick. "We'll beat them."

"Sure we'll bate thim intirely. Hark! How they're going it."

"They are, rather. But I say, Pat, how did that craft get on fire?"

"Pirates, my boy—a set of Maltese and Italian cut-throats the skipper told us. They fought the brig, and were disappointed to find she was laden only with hides and tallow, no use to the scoundrels. They scuttled her boats, and set fire to her, out of sheer spite, the blaggards. The *Black Dolphin* was the name of her. I hope we shall meet that craft before we leave the narrow seas."

"We've got our hands full at present, without thinking of the pirates," laughed Dick.

Crash! Crash!

"The Frenchman's mainmast's down!" shouted Pat, gleefully.

It was true.

The mainmast of *La Gloire* had come down with a fearful crash, and the frigate lay like a helpless log on the sea, under the mass of wreckage.

A boarding party could have captured her then with a short tussle.

But there was no time.

The second frigate and the corvette were rapidly approaching.

"We shall deal with the smaller fry first," said Captain Cleveland, grimly.

The *Edipus* had the wind of the French corvette, and she bore down with a rush upon the twenty-gun Frenchman.

The corvette was cleared for action, and she met the big Englishman bravely.

The *Edipus* ranged alongside, and the two ships belched fire and lead at each other. *La Gloire* lay rocking helplessly. The other French frigate rushed to the aid of the corvette. She ranged up on the other side of the *Edipus* and poured in her fire.

The English guns were now manned on both sides, and on either side was a fierce foe, the English seamen facing both foes with undiminished pluck and determination.

And now raged a conflict more terrible than ever Dick had dreamed of.

He had heard tales of battle and carnage, but he had never realised anything like this fearful truth.

From both sides broadsides crashed into the *Edipus*, and bravely she replied. But the crash of the volleys of grape shot and canister was followed by the breaking of spars, the fall of men wounded and dying, the screams and groans of unfortunate wretches torn and mangled with frightful wounds. Pandemonium reigned on the blood-drenched deck of the *Edipus*. Men lay about in every attitude of frightful pain, and on the reddened planks torn limbs lay wrenched from bodies, and limbless trunks were stretched in pools of blood. Dick was sick with horror, till the mad excitement of the fight worked him, like the rest, to a furious frenzy, and then he forgot everything in the rage of battle.

He had flung off coat and hat, and rushed to one of the guns that had been swept clear of gunners by the French fire. Round the gun lay mangled bodies of dead and dying. Dick sprang to the gun, and a couple of other middies followed him. A marine rushed to join, and a couple of seamen and a lieutenant. In the carnage ranks and duties were mingled and mixed, and officers slaved beside the seamen. Dick rammed the charge home, the second lieutenant of the *Edipus* and the rest ran the gun out, and Pat applied the match. And so the voice of the gun was added once more to the din.

Many of the other guns were served by equally mixed crews. Some of them were silent. But most of them crashed out,

and crashed again. And presently a ringing cheer rang from the throats of the English seamen.

"The corvette's going."

The heavy fire of the English frigate had been too much for the smaller French ship. The grape had torn her through and through, and now suddenly she had given a terrible lurch and her bowsprit sank down towards the water.

"Hurrah !"

One foe was going ; and now the gunners rushed across to man the silenced guns on the other side, careless of the corvette now. Heavier rang the English fire on the side turned to the frigate ; not a shot more was wasted on the sinking corvette.

The corvette was gone, with her crew. But the *Edipus* had been shot through and through by her fire, and was in a far more damaged condition than her remaining foe. And *La Gloire* was rapidly repairing her damage and preparing to come to the frigate's aid.

"Stand to your guns !"

Captain Cleveland's voice rang through the storm of firing. A ringing cheer answered him.

The Frenchman's foremast, pierced through and through had gone by the board, and for the moment the French ship refused to obey her helm.

The *Edipus* did not lose her chance.

She passed the Frenchman's stern, and raked her fore and aft with sweeping discharge.

The terrible broadside raked the French ship from end to end, sweeping away officers and men. The wheel was smashed the helmsman swept away, guns unshipped, and two score of seamen laid in wounds and death upon the deck.

As if stunned by the terrible blow, the Frenchman ceased fire. The *Edipus* passed on, and rounded to again, and resumed firing, sending every shot crashing right into the reeling Frenchman.

The French guns were silenced, and though one or two spat fire again, the heavy firing was over. But the gallant Frenchmen were not beaten. The frigate swung round with her broadside to the *Edipus*, and, undeterred by a terrible discharge of grape and cannister, drove into her, broadside on and hurled grappling irons.

"Stand by to repel boarders !"

The English seamen grasped musket and cutlass and pike as a crowd of furious Frenchmen hurled themselves upon her quarter.

Foremost among those who rushed to meet the boarders was the fat form of Mr. Quill, the first lieutenant, and a good second was Midshipman Dick.

[A terrible hand-to-hand conflict raged.

Once the resistance seemed to slacken, and the French gained a footing, and came on with a rush. Mr. Quill brandished his cutlass.

"Forward, lads !"

He rushed recklessly on. A French seaman struck up his cutlass, and made a savage thrust at his heart.

A second more, and Mr. Quill would have laid dead on the deck.

But a nimble figure sprang forward ; a dirk interposed. The Frenchman's blade was knocked aside, and the next moment the Frenchman fell dead with a middy's dirk through his heart.

Mr. Quill gave a gasp.

"Thank you, Redmond !"

And Midshipman Dick, who had saved his life, grinned and rushed on into the fight.

The English seamen were rushing on behind him, and the rush of the English followed them into their own vessel. There they fought obstinately, till the survivors were driven below, and the hatches closed upon them.

The frigate was taken.

Leaving a dozen men to guard her, Captain Cleveland returned to *La Gloire*, and attacked her with shot and shell before the French were ready for a renewal of the fight, with the result that she soon hauled down her flag.

The fight was over.

The corvette was at the bottom of the sea, and the two frigates were the prizes of the *Edipus*.

The victory had cost the English dear ; but they did not think of that now. Loud rang their triumphant hurrah across the blue waters.

Mr. Quill grasped Midshipman Dick by the hand.

"You saved my life, Redmond."

"Aye, aye, sir."

"And I'm your friend from this hour, my boy !"

* * * *

Mr. Quill kept his word. The *Edipus* put into Malta with her prizes, and refitted there to continue her voyage to join Nelson's fleet, which she did a week later, and the despatches were safely delivered. The first lieutenant did not forget. Midshipman Dick had a friend now in Mr. Quill, and he found matters a great deal pleasanter in consequence. The *Edipus* cruised in the blue Mediterranean waters for the French foe, and of the adventures of that cruise we may write again in another story of MIDSHIPMAN DICK.

THE END.

THE CHUMS OF NORMANHEIGHT.

By S. CLARKE HOOK.

No. 8.—THE SILENT SPECTRE.

"Listen to me, you chaps !" whispered Bob to Tom and Willie, who were seated next to him in class. "Those bullies—"

"Silence !" cried Mr. Smithers, angrily.

"Those bullies, Snaggs and Giles, are going to break bounds to-night."

"Robson, are you talking ?"

"No, sir," answered Tim.

"Why I saw you talking to the boy next to you !"

"Yes, sir ! But you didn't hear me. You might have heard Bob Saunders."

"Write a hundred lines, Robson. Saunders, if you speak again I shall severely punish you."

"Yes, sir—I've heard them planning it. They have tipped Sarl, the porter, to let them in and—"

"I don't see why I should be punished for talking when Bob Saunders is gassing away like—Jewillikins—Woo-hoo !" shrieked Tim. "Some one has jabbed six inches of pen into the seat of my pants. Oh ! ooh !"

"How dare you make this noise in class ?" snarled Mr. Smithers, picking up his cane.

"If you please sir, it wasn't my fault. You'd make a row if someone prodded your kickies with an inky pen. I'll be—tattooed."

Then Tim started yelling again, for Mr. Smithers brought his cane to bear on the tattoo mark.

"Boohoo !" blubbered the sneak, "it wa—wasn't my fault. Why don't you whack the boy who did it, sir ?"

"Who was it ?"

"I don't know, sir."

"Then find out, and I will cane him," retorted Mr. Smithers, going back to his desk.

"Was it you, Freddy Barnes ?"

"What, me ? How could I do it ?"

"With a pen, of course. I believe it was you—"

"Robson, write another hundred lines for talking."

"Why, sir, how am I to find out who it was if I don't ask ? You told me to—"

"Three hundred lines, Robson."

"All right, Freddy Barnes. I'll make you smart—"

"Five hundred lines, Robson."

"Well, I'm blest. It ain't fair. But you'll be sorry for this Barnes, you see if you—"

"A thousand lines, Robson."

"Ain't you getting them piled on a treat, Tim !" murmured Bob. "This comes of sneaking. I'm joyful."

"Other fellows can talk. Here's—"

"Two thousand lines, Robson. If you utter another

word I shall cane you again. You will not go out until those lines are finished. You will remain in all this afternoon. Now go on construing."

The way Tim snuffled over his task made the boys laugh. At the best of times he was not much good at construing, now he was sadly handicapped.

"Andriscus—booboo, I'm hurt—Andriscus whose—which—oh! no, whose parents were very black—"

"You insensate blockhead," snarled Mr. Smithers. "Andriscus, whose origin is said to have been very obscure. There is nothing about his parents being very black. Go on, you dolt. I do not believe you have prepared this lesson."

"Having—oh—assum—er—no—Phillipus having called him an ass, Macedonia commonvated—"

Here Tom uttered a howl of laughter that brought him a hundred lines.

"It is a pity Phillipus could not be here to call you an ass, Robson," said Mr. Smithers. "Now, just write down the correct rendering of that sentence, as I dictate it. 'Andriscus, whose origin is said to have been very obscure, having assumed the noble name of Phillipus, stirred up a great rebellion in Macedonia.' Have you got that?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well. Consider the two thousand lines I gave you are cancelled—"

"Thank you very much, sir. I knew—"

"And write that sentence out two thousand times instead."

"Well, I'm blowed!" gasped Tim, "that's about eight thousand lines."

"Your half holidays will be stopped until your task is done. Go on, Lorn!"

Tom groaned a little, but he managed it all right.

"Go slowly, old chap," whispered Bob. "cos it will be my turn next, and I don't know a word of the hanged stuff."

So Tom spun his work out, and, as Bob put it, just said his bacon.

"Now, listen to me," exclaimed Bob, when they were in the Close. "Snaggs and Giles are about as brave as they make them. At least, they are in their own estimation. Now, it is only right that we should test their bravery."

"Quite so!" answered Tom; "but I happen to know Giles is down for detention."

"Then Snaggs will go alone, bless his little heart; and naturally he will return alone. You are also marked for detention for guffawing. Very well, you mustn't be detained. We must do a simple side scoot. See! It's easy."

"True, old chap. It will not be so easy when I come in. However, I don't mind that. Surly won't know I'm detained, so we will get out right enough. Smithers can only double my lines, or something like that."

The chums succeeded. It is surprising how easy it is to succeed in doing what one ought not to do.

Snaggs went out later, and remained in the village, amusing himself in his own way. He chanced being missed, and did not start for the college until past ten that night. Surly had promised, for a consideration, not to lock the gates until eleven o'clock.

As some of my readers may know, the narrow lane, leading from the village to Normanheight, is a very lone one. But Snaggs, like all bullies, was remarkably brave—in his own estimation. He knew no fear. Why, he actually whistled! Perhaps he was a little out of tune when he approached the old churchyard; but ninety-nine out of the hundred of the bravest men who ever lived could not whistle in tune, even if they were going to be shot for a few flat notes. In fact, such knowledge might have the same effect on them as the churchyard did on Snaggs.

The night was dark and very silent. Not a leaf on the gnarled branches of the trees stirred. Possibly this was because there was no wind, and because there were no leaves yet upon the aforesaid gnarled branches. The only thing that stirred was Snaggs, and he stirred at the rate of upwards of four miles an hour, which is as fast as one walks with comfort even past a graveyard on a dark and silent night.

Now, a strange thing happened. From one of those graves a hollow moan arose.

Was Snaggs frightened? Why, certainly not! But it was getting late, so he stopped whistling and commenced running.

And as he ran an awful spectre came after him. It looked ten feet high; it was white, all fluttering, and extremely ghostly. Then it swept after him without a sound. No living thing could have traversed that lane so silently. It came on with a big flutter, but as noiselessly as an oyster

suffocated by sewage, and served up in sauce. But like such unlucky wights who swallow such oysters, it caused Snaggs to make a noise.

He yelled "Murder!" at the top of his voice, and fled at the top of his speed; but that silent, shadowy spectre came on with the speed of the wind, and with as little noise as the lightest breeze. Snaggs, however, was attending to the noise. He hooted like a fog-horn, and anyone not knowing how brave he was, would have declared he was terrified.

Towards the college gates he rushed, and flung them wide open.

"The ghost! the ghost!" he howled, making a wild rush towards Surly's lodge, just as the porter was taking in a tray on which was a jug of hot water, a glass, and a large plate of sandwiches.

Snaggs dived into his chest, then the awful phantom yelled:

"Hellup!"

And with a mighty crash, it hurled itself upon those posture forms.

Surly's light was extinguished, and he got a pint or so of scalding water in his face, while sandwiches and broken crockery were scattered all ground him. The top of Snaggs' head had struck Surly's nose, causing it to bleed copiously.

The ghost appeared to be convulsed with laughter, though it was quite invisible in the darkness, and there was a strange clanking of iron. Then arose a scuffling of feet, and Surly's fine flow of language might almost have flickered in the darkness.

Seizing Snaggs by the hair, he wrenched him off his chest, then rising, got a light, and a strange scene met his astonished gaze.

Snaggs had got his legs through the wheels of a bicycle, which looked as though it needed a fearful lot of repairs. So did Snaggs for the matter of that. He had hurt himself with broken china.

"Drat you!" bowled Surly, seizing him by the collar as he rose, and kicking him round in a circle. "I'll teach you to ride yer bicycles into my stomach."

"Stop! you villain. Stop! It wasn't me."

"Who the thunder was it then?" panted Surly, releasing his victim, and dabbing his nose. "I'm fair bust up."

"How should I know who it was?" snarled Snaggs, stamping amongst the spokes of the bicycle. "Some villain ran into me. I'll smash his bicycle though. He shant never ride it again."

In his blind fury he wrenched at the wheels, which he doubled up, then he smashed the fork.

"You ain't doing much damage to that 'ere machine. What oh! Not 'arf! There's only one thing as I'd like to point out. It's jist possible it might belong to one of the masters."

"What! Belong to— Why— Fury!" howled Snaggs, dancing about. "It's mine!"

"Haw, haw, haw!" howled Surly. "Ho, ho, ho! Well, you have served it special rough. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Perdition!"

"If that means smashed, I'd say that 'ere bicycle is about as bad and perditid as ever was."

"You fool! You dunderheaded idiot!"

"May be! But I ain't so stupid as to smash up my own property. I never seed a bicycle more flummoxed in all my natural. May be you'll get a few pence for it as scrap-iron."

And while Snaggs was giving vent to his fury, Tom and Bob might have been seen darting up the stairs carrying a sheet, which they flung into Snaggs' dormitory. Bob also carried a bump on his forehead, while Tom seemed to be going a little lame; but both were nearly convulsed with laughter.

"He's smashing his own bike."

"Ha—ahem—yes! Let's get to bed. Oh crumbs! Ain't he prodigious brave?"

"What made you bash into him, old chap?"

"Ha, ha! I could see where I was going with that sheet flopping in my face; then I couldn't steer very well with you clinging round me. However, it doesn't matter. If he chooses to smash his own bike, it has nothing to do with us; only it's a thumping lucky tiffing we had the presence of mind to take his machine instead of one of our own. Do you think there'll be a row?"

"I think not. He had no right to be out that time of night, and wouldn't care to report the matter. No! I believe the affair, like his bicycle, will die a natural death."

THE END.