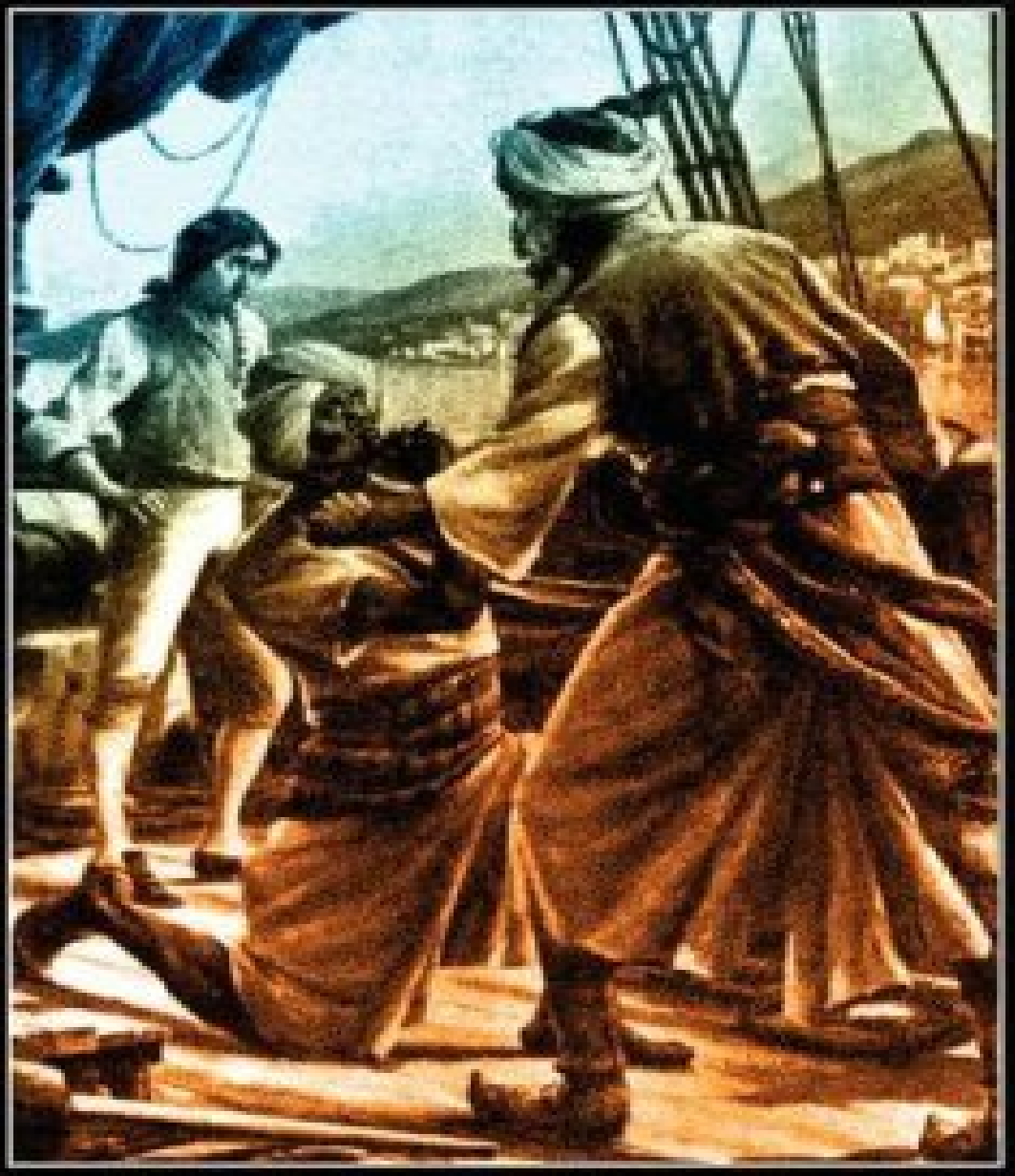

The Middy and the Moors

Illustrated Edition

R. M. Ballantyne

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An Algerine Story

Author: R.M. Ballantyne

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"The Middy and the Moors"

Chapter One.

An Algerine Story.

The Hero is Blown away, Captured, Crushed, Comforted, and Astonished.

One beautiful summer night, about the beginning of the present century, a young naval officer entered the public drawing-room of a hotel at Nice, and glanced round as if in search of some one.

Many people were assembled there—some in robust, others in delicate, health, many in that condition which rendered it doubtful to which class they belonged, but all engaged in the quiet buzz of conversation which, in such a place, is apt to set in after dinner.

The young Englishman, for such he evidently was, soon observed an elderly lady beckoning to him at the other end of the *salon*, and was quickly seated between her and a fragile girl whose hand he gently took hold of.

“Mother,” he said, to the elderly lady, “I’m going to have a row on the Mediterranean. The night is splendid, the air balmy, the stars gorgeous.”

“Now, George,” interrupted the girl, with a little smile,

"don't be flowery. We know all about that."

"Too bad," returned the youth; "I never rise to poetry in your presence, Minnie, without being snubbed. But you cannot cure me. Romance is too deeply ingrained in my soul. Poetry flows from me like—like anything! I am a midshipman in the British Navy, a position which affords scope for the wildest enthusiasm, and—and—I'll astonish you yet, see if I don't."

"I am sure you will, dear boy," said his mother; and she believed that he would!

"Of course you will," added his sister; and she at least hoped that he would.

To say truth, there was nothing about the youth—as regards appearance or character—which rendered either the assurance or the hope unwarrantable. He was not tall, but he was strong and active. He was not exactly handsome, but he was possessed of a genial, hearty disposition, a playful spirit, and an earnest soul; also a modestly reckless nature which was quite captivating.

"You won't be anxious about me, mother, if I don't return till pretty late," he said, rising. "I want a good long, refreshing pull, but I'll be back in time to say good-night to you, Minnie, before you go to sleep."

"Your leave expires on Thursday, mind," said his sister; "we cannot spare you long."

"I shall be back in good time, trust me. *Au revoir*," he said, with a pleasant nod, as he left the room.

And they did trust him; for our midshipman, George

Foster, was trustworthy; but those "circumstances" over which people have "no control" are troublesome derangers of the affairs of man. That was the last the mother and sister saw of George for the space of nearly two years!

Taking his way to the pebbly shore, young Foster hired a small boat, or punt, from a man who knew him well, declined the owner's services, pushed off, seized the oars, and rowed swiftly out to sea. It was, as he had said, a splendid night. The stars bespangled the sky like diamond-dust. The water was as clear as a mirror, and the lights of Nice seemed to shoot far down into its depths. The hum of the city came off with ever-deepening softness as the distance from the shore increased. The occasional sound of oars was heard not far off, though boats and rowers were invisible, for there was no moon, and the night was dark notwithstanding the starlight.

There was no fear, however, of the young sailor losing himself while the city lights formed such a glorious beacon astern.

After pulling steadily for an hour or more he rested on his oars, gazed up at the bright heavens, and then at the land lights, which by that time resembled a twinkling line on the horizon.

"Must 'bout ship now," he muttered. "Won't do to keep Minnie waiting."

As he rowed leisurely landward a sudden gust of wind from the shore shivered the liquid mirror into fragments. It was the advance-guard of a squall which in a few minutes rushed down from the mountains of the Riviera

and swept out upon the darkening sea.

Young Foster, as we have said, was strong. He was noted among his fellows as a splendid oarsman. The squall, therefore, did not disconcert him, though it checked his speed greatly. After one or two lulls the wind increased to a gale, and in half an hour the youth found, with some anxiety, that he was making no headway against it.

The shore at that point was so much of a straight line as to render the hope of being able to slant-in a faint one. As it was better, however, to attempt that than to row straight in the teeth of the gale, he diverged towards a point a little to the eastward of the port of Nice, and succeeded in making better way through the water, though he made no perceptible approach to land.

"Pooh! It's only a squall—be over in a minute," said the middy, by way of encouraging himself, as he glanced over his shoulder at the flickering lights, which were now barely visible.

He was wrong. The gale increased. Next time he glanced over his shoulder the lights were gone. Dark clouds were gathering up from the northward, and a short jabble of sea was rising which occasionally sent a spurt of spray inboard. Feeling now that his only chance of regaining the shore lay in a strong, steady, persevering pull straight towards it, he once more turned the bow of the little boat into the wind's eye, and gave way with a will.

But what could human muscle and human will, however powerful, do against a rampant nor'wester? Very soon our hero was forced to rest upon his oars from sheer exhaustion, while his boat drifted slowly out to sea. Then

the thought of his mother and Minnie flashed upon him, and, with a sudden gush, as it were, of renewed strength he resumed his efforts, and strained his powers to the uttermost—but all in vain.

Something akin to despair now seized on him, for the alternative was to drift out into the open sea, where no friendly island lay between him and the shores of Africa. The necessity for active exertion, however, gave him no time either to rest or think. As the distance from land increased the seas rose higher, and broke so frequently over the boat that it began to fill. To stop rowing—at least, to the extent of keeping the bow to the wind—would have risked turning broadside-on, and being overturned or swamped; there was nothing, therefore, to be done in the circumstances except to keep the boat's head to the wind and drift.

In the midst of the rushing gale and surging seas he sat there, every gleam of hope almost extinguished, when there came to his mind a brief passage from the Bible—"Hope thou in God." Many a time had his mother tried, in days gone by, to impress that text on his mind, but apparently without success. Now it arose before him like a beacon-star. At the same time he thought of the possibility that he might be seen and picked up by a passing vessel.

He could not but feel, however, that the chances of this latter event occurring were small indeed, for a passing ship or boat would not only be going at great speed, but would be very unlikely to see his cockle-shell in the darkness, or to hear his cry in the roaring gale. Still he grasped that hope as the drowning man is said to clutch at a straw.

And the hope was quickly fulfilled, for scarcely had another half-hour elapsed when he observed a sail—the high-peaked sail peculiar to some Mediterranean craft—rise, ghost-like, out of the driving foam and spray. The vessel was making almost straight for him; he knew that it would pass before there could be time to heave a rope. At the risk of being run down he rowed the punt in front of it, as if courting destruction, but at the same time guided his little craft so skilfully that it passed close to leeward, where the vessel's bulwarks were dipping into the water. Our middy's aim was so exact that the vessel only grazed the boat as it flew past. In that moment young Foster sprang with the agility of a cat, capsized the boat with the impulse, caught the bulwarks and rigging of the vessel, and in another moment stood panting on her deck.

"Hallo! Neptune, what do *you* want here?" cried a gruff voice at Foster's elbows. At the same time a powerful hand grasped his throat, and a lantern was thrust in his face.

"Let go, and I will tell you," gasped the youth, restraining his indignation at such unnecessary violence.

The grasp tightened, however, instead of relaxing.

"Speak out, baby-face," roared the voice, referring, in the latter expression, no doubt, to our hero's juvenility.

Instead of speaking out, George Foster hit out, and the voice with the lantern went down into the lee scuppers!

Then, the glare of the lantern being removed from his eyes, George saw, by the light of the binnacle lamp, that his adversary, a savage-looking Turk—at least in dress—

was gathering himself up for a rush, and that the steersman, a huge negro, was grinning from ear to ear.

"Go below!" said a deep stern voice in the Arabic tongue.

The effect of this order was to cause the Turk with the broken lantern to change his mind, and retire with humility, while it solemnised the negro steersman's face almost miraculously.

The speaker was the captain of the vessel; a man of grave demeanour, herculean mould, and clothed in picturesque Eastern costume. Turning with quiet politeness to Foster, he asked him in broken French how he had come on board.

The youth explained in French quite as much broken as that of his interrogator.

"D'you speak English?" he added.

To this the captain replied in English, still more shattered than his French, that he could, "a ver' leetil," but that as he, (the youth), was a prisoner, there would be no occasion for speech at all, the proper attitude of a prisoner being that of absolute silence and obedience to orders.

"A prisoner!" ejaculated Foster, on recovering from the first shock of surprise. "Do you know that I am an officer in the Navy of his Majesty the King of Great Britain?"

A gleam of satisfaction lighted up the swarthy features of the Turk for a moment as he replied—

"Ver goot. Ransum all de more greater." As he spoke, a

call from the look-out at the bow of the vessel induced him to hurry forward.

At the same instant a slight hissing sound caused Foster to turn to the steersman, whose black face was alive with intelligence, while an indescribable hitch up of his chin seemed to beckon the youth to approach with caution.

Foster perceived at once that the man wished his communication, whatever it was, to be unobserved by any one; he therefore moved towards him as if merely to glance at the compass.

"Massa," said the negro, without looking at Foster or changing a muscle of his now stolid visage, "you's in a dreffle fix. Dis yer am a pirit. But *I's* not a pirit, bress you! I's wuss nor dat: I's a awrful hyperkrite! an' I wants to give you good adwice. Wotiver you doos, *don't resist*. You'll on'y git whacked if you do."

"Thank you, Sambo. But what if I do resist in spite of being whacked?"

"Den you bery soon change your mind, das all. Moreober, my name's not Sambo. It am Peter de Great."

As he said so Peter the Great drew himself up to his full height, and he drew himself up to six feet four when he did that!

The captain coming aft at that moment put an abrupt end to the conversation. Two powerful Moorish seamen accompanied him. These, without uttering a word, seized Foster by the arms. In the strength of his indignation our middy was on the point of commencing a tremendous

struggle, when Peter the Great's "*don't resist*," and the emphasis with which it had been spoken, came to mind, and he suddenly gave in. His hands were tied behind his back, and he was led down into a small, dimly-lighted cabin, where, being permitted to sit down on a locker, he was left to his own reflections.

These were by no means agreeable, as may well be supposed, for he now knew that he had fallen into the hands of those pests, the Algerine pirates, who at that time infested the Mediterranean.

With the thoughtlessness of youth Foster had never troubled his mind much about the piratical city of Algiers. Of course he knew that it was a stronghold on the northern coast of Africa, inhabited by Moorish rascals, who, taking advantage of their position, issued from their port and pounced upon the merchantmen that entered the Mediterranean, confiscating their cargoes and enslaving their crews and passengers, or holding them to ransom. He also knew, or had heard, that some of the great maritime powers paid subsidies to the Dey of Algiers to allow the vessels of their respective nations to come and go unmolested, but he could scarcely credit the latter fact. It seemed to him, as indeed it was, preposterous. "For," said he to the brother middy who had given him the information, "would not the nations whom the Dey had the impudence to tax join their fleets together, pay him an afternoon visit one fine day, and blow him and his Moors and Turks and city into a heap of rubbish?"

What the middy replied we have now no means of knowing, but certain it is that his information was correct, for some of the principal nations did, at that

time, submit to the degradation of this tax, and they did *not* unite their fleets for the extinction of the pirates.

Poor George Foster now began to find out that the terrible truths which he had refused to believe were indeed great realities, and had now begun to affect himself. He experienced an awful sinking of the heart when it occurred to him that no one would ever know anything about his fate, for the little boat would be sure to be found bottom up, sooner or later, and it would of course be assumed that he had been drowned.

Shall it be said that the young midshipman was weak, or wanting in courage, because he bowed his head and wept when the full force of his condition came home to him? Nay, verily, for there was far more of grief for the prolonged agony that was in store for his mother and sister than for the fate that awaited himself. He prayed as well as wept. "God help me—and them!" he exclaimed aloud. The prayer was brief but sincere,—perhaps the more sincere because so brief. At all events it was that acknowledgment of utter helplessness which secures the help of the Almighty Arm.

Growing weary at last, he stretched himself on the locker, and, with the facility of robust health, fell into a sound sleep. Youth, strength, and health are not easily incommoded by wet garments! Besides, the weather was unusually warm at the time.

How long he slept he could not tell, but the sun was high when he awoke, and his clothes were quite dry. Other signs there were that he had slept long, such as the steadiness of the breeze and the more regular motion of the vessel, which showed that the gale was over and the sea going down. There was also a powerful sensation in

what he styled his "bread-basket"—though it might, with equal truth, have been called his meat-and-vegetable basket—which told him more eloquently than anything else of the lapse of time.

Rising from his hard couch, and endeavouring to relieve the aching of the bound arms by change of position, he observed that the cabin hatch was open, and that nothing prevented his going on deck, if so disposed. Accordingly, he ascended, though with some difficulty, owing to his not having been trained to climb a ladder in a rough sea without the use of his hands.

A Moor, he observed, had taken his friend Peter the Great's place at the tiller, and the captain stood near the stern observing a passing vessel. A stiffish but steady breeze carried them swiftly over the waves, which, we might say, laughingly reflected the bright sunshine and the deep-blue sky. Several vessels of different rigs and nationalities were sailing in various directions, both near and far away.

Going straight to the captain with an air of good-humoured *sang froid* which was peculiar to him, Foster said—

"Captain, don't you think I've had these bits of rope-yarn on my wrists long enough? I'm not used, you see, to walking the deck without the use of my hands; and a heavy lurch, as like as not, would send me slap into the lee scuppers—sailor though I be. Besides, I won't jump overboard without leave, you may rely upon that. Neither will I attempt, single-handed, to fight your whole crew, so you needn't be afraid."

The stern Moor evidently understood part of this speech,

and he was so tickled with the last remark that his habitual gravity gave place to the faintest flicker of a smile, while a twinkle gleamed for a moment in his eye. Only for a moment, however. Pointing over the side, he bade his prisoner "look."

Foster looked, and beheld in the far distance a three-masted vessel that seemed to bear a strong resemblance to a British man-of-war.

"You promise," said the captain, "not shout or ro–ar."

"I promise," answered our middy, "neither to 'Shout' nor 'ro–ar'—for my doing either, even though like a bull of Bashan, would be of no earthly use at this distance."

"Inglesemans," said the captain, "niver brok the word!" After paying this scarcely-deserved compliment he gave an order to a sailor who was coiling up ropes near him, and the man at once proceeded to untie Foster's bonds.

"My good fellow," said the midshipman, observing that his liberator was the man whom he had knocked down the night before, "I'm sorry I had to floor you, but it was impossible to help it, you know. An Englishman is like a bull-dog. He won't suffer himself to be seized by the throat and choked if he can help it!"

The Turk, who was evidently a renegade Briton, made no reply whatever to this address; but, after casting the lashings loose, returned to his former occupation.

Foster proceeded to thank the captain for his courtesy and make him acquainted with the state of his appetite, but he was evidently not in a conversational frame of mind. Before a few words had been spoken the captain

stopped him, and, pointing down the skylight, said, sharply—

"Brukfust! Go!"

Both look and tone admonished our hero to obey. He descended to the cabin, therefore, without finishing his sentence, and there discovered that "brukfust" consisted of two sea-biscuits and a mug of water. To these dainties he applied himself with infinite relish, for he had always been Spartan-like as to the quality of his food, and hunger makes almost any kind of dish agreeable.

While thus engaged he heard a hurried trampling of feet on deck, mingled with sharp orders from the captain. At first he thought the sounds might have reference to taking in a reef to prepare for a squall, but as the noise rather increased, his curiosity was roused, and he was about to return on deck when Peter the Great suddenly leaped into the cabin and took hurriedly from the opposite locker a brace of highly ornamented pistols and a scimitar.

"What's wrong, Peter?" asked Foster, starting up.

"We's a-goin' to fight!" groaned the negro.

"Oh! I's a awrful hyperkrite! You stop where you am, massa, else you'll get whacked."

Despite the risk of being "whacked," the youth would have followed the negro on deck, had not the hatch been slammed in his face and secured. Next moment he heard a volley of musketry on deck. It was instantly replied to by a distant volley, and immediately thereafter groans and curses showed that the firing had not been without

effect.

That the pirate had engaged a vessel of some sort was evident, and our hero, being naturally anxious to see if not to share in the fight, tried hard to get out of his prison, but without success. He was obliged, therefore, to sit there inactive and listen to the wild confusion overhead. At last there came a crash, followed by fiercer shouts and cries. He knew that the vessels had met and that the pirates were boarding. In a few minutes comparative silence ensued, broken only by occasional footsteps and the groaning of the wounded.

Chapter Two.

Among Pirates—Enslaved.

When George Foster was again permitted to go on deck the sight that he beheld was not calculated to comfort him in his misfortunes.

Several Moorish seamen were going about with bared legs and arms, swishing water on the decks and swabbing up the blood with which they were bespattered. Most of these men were more or less wounded and bandaged, for the crew of the merchantman they had attacked had offered a desperate resistance, knowing well the fate in store for them if captured.

The said merchantman, a large brig, sailed close alongside of the pirate vessel with a prize crew on board. Her own men, who were Russians, had been put in chains

in the fore part of their vessel under the forecastle, so as to be out of sight. Her officers and several passengers had been removed to the pirate's quarter-deck. Among them were an old gentleman of dignified bearing, and an elderly lady who seemed to be supported, physically as well as mentally, by a tall, dark-complexioned, noble-looking girl, who was evidently the daughter of the old gentleman, though whether also the daughter of the elderly lady young Foster could not discover, there being little or no resemblance between them. The memory of his mother and sister strongly inclined the sympathetic midshipman to approach the party and offer words of consolation to the ladies. As he advanced to them for that purpose, a doubt as to which language he should use assailed him. French, he knew, was the language most likely to be understood, but a girl with such magnificent black eyes must certainly be Spanish! His knowledge of Spanish was about equal to that of an ill-trained parrot, but what of that? Was he not a Briton, whose chief characteristic is to go in for anything and stick at nothing?

We do not venture to write down what he said, but when he had said it the blank look of the elderly lady and the peculiar look of the girl induced him to repeat the speech in his broken—his very much broken—French, whereupon the old gentleman turned to him gravely and said—

"My vife is Engleesh, an' my datter is Danish—no, not joost—vell, she is 'af-an'-'af. Speak to dem in your nattif tong."

"*You* are not English, anyhow, old boy," thought Foster, as he turned with a mingled feeling of confusion and recklessness to the elderly lady.

"Pardon me, madam," he said, "but from the appearance of—of—your—"

He was interrupted at this point by the captain, who, flushed and blood-bespattered from the recent fight, came aft with a drawn scimitar in his hand, and sternly ordered the young midshipman to go forward.

It was a humiliating position to be placed in; yet, despite the "stick-at-nothing" spirit, he felt constrained to obey, but did so, nevertheless, with an air of defiant ferocity which relieved his feelings to some extent. The said feelings were utterly ignored by the pirate captain, who did not condescend even to look at him after the first glance, but turned to the other captives and ordered them, in rather less stern tones, to "go below," an order which was promptly obeyed.

On reaching the fore part of the vessel, Foster found several of the crew engaged in bandaging each other's wounds, and, from the clumsy way in which they went to work, it was very clear that they were much more accustomed to inflict wounds than to bandage them.

Now it must be told that, although George Foster was not a surgeon, he had an elder brother who was, and with whom he had associated constantly while he was studying and practising for his degree; hence he became acquainted with many useful facts and modes of action connected with the healing art, of which the world at large is ignorant. Perceiving that one of the pirates was bungling a very simple operation, he stepped forward, and, with that assurance which results naturally from the combination of conscious power and "cheek," took up the dressing of the wound.

At first the men seemed inclined to resent the interference, but when they saw that the "Christian" knew what he was about, and observed how well and swiftly he did the work, they stood aside and calmly submitted.

Foster was interrupted, however, in the midst of his philanthropic work by Peter the Great, who came forward and touched him on the shoulder.

"Sorry to 't'rupt you, sar, but you come wid me."

"Mayn't I finish this operation first?" said Foster, looking up.

"No, sar. My orders is prumptory."

Our amateur surgeon dropped the bandage indignantly and followed the negro, who led him down into the hold, at the further and dark end of which he saw several wounded men lying, and beside them one or two whose motionless and straightened figures seemed to indicate that death had relieved them from earthly troubles.

Amongst these men he spent the night and all next day, with only a couple of biscuits and a mug of water to sustain him. Next evening Peter the Great came down and bade him follow him to the other end of the hold.

"Now, sar, you go in dere," said the negro, stopping and pointing to a small door in the bulkhead, inside of which was profound darkness.

Foster hesitated and looked at his big conductor.

"'Bey orders, sar!" said the negro, in a loud, stern voice

of command. Then, stooping as if to open the little door, he added, in a low voice, "Don' be a fool, massa. *Submit*! Das de word, if you don' want a whackin'. It's a friend advises you. Dere's one oder prisoner dere, but he's wounded, an' won't hurt you. *Go* in! won't you?"

Peter the Great accompanied the last words with a violent thrust that sent the hapless middy headlong into the dark hole, but as he closed and fastened the door he muttered, "Don' mind my leetle ways, massa. You know I's bound to be a hyperkrite."

Having thus relieved his conscience, Peter returned to the deck, leaving the poor prisoner to rise and, as a first consequence, to hit his head on the beams above him.

The hole into which he had been thrust was truly a "black hole," though neither so hot nor so deadly as that of Calcutta. Extending his arms cautiously, he touched the side of the ship with his left hand; with the other he felt about for some time, but reached nothing until he had advanced a step, when his foot touched something on the floor, and he bent down to feel it, but shrank hastily back on touching what he perceived at once was a human form.

"Pardon me, friend, whoever you are," he said quickly, "I did not mean to—I did not know—are you badly hurt?"

But no reply came from the wounded man—not even a groan.

A vague suspicion crossed Foster's mind. The man might be dying of his wounds. He spoke to him again in French and Spanish, but still got no reply! Then he listened intently for his breathing, but all was as silent as the

tomb. With an irresistible impulse, yet instinctive shudder, he laid his hand on the man and passed it up until it reached the face. The silence was then explained. The face was growing cold and rigid in death.

Drawing back hastily, the poor youth shouted to those outside to let them know what had occurred, but no one paid the least attention to him. He was about to renew his cries more loudly, when the thought occurred that perhaps they might attribute them to fear. This kept him quiet, and he made up his mind to endure in silence.

If there had been a ray of light, however feeble, in the hold, he thought his condition would have been more bearable, for then he could have faced the lifeless clay and looked at it; but to know that it was there, within a foot of him, without his being able to see it, or to form any idea of what it was like, made the case terrible indeed. Of course he drew back from it as far as the little space allowed, and crushed himself up against the side of the vessel; but that did no good, for the idea occurred to his excited brain that it might possibly come to life again, rise up, and plunge against him. At times this thought took such possession of him that he threw up his arms to defend himself from attack, and uttered a half-suppressed cry of terror.

At last nature asserted herself, and he slept, sitting on the floor and leaning partly against the vessel's side, partly against the bulkhead. But horrible dreams disturbed him. The corpse became visible, the eyes glared at him, the blood-stained face worked convulsively, and he awoke with a shriek, followed immediately by a sigh of relief on finding that it was all a dream. Then the horror came again, as he suddenly

remembered that the dead man was still there, a terrible reality!

At last pure exhaustion threw him into a dreamless and profound slumber. The plunging of the little craft as it flew southward before a stiff breeze did not disturb him, and he did not awake until some one rudely seized his arm late on the following day. Then, in the firm belief that his dream had come true at last, he uttered a tremendous yell and struggled to rise, but a powerful hand held him down, and a dark lantern revealed a coal-black face gazing at him.

"Hallo! massa, hold on. I did tink you mus' be gone dead, for I holler'd in at you 'nuff to bust de kittle-drum ob your ear—if you hab one!"

"Look there, Peter," said Foster, pointing to the recumbent figure, while he wiped the perspiration from his brow.

"Ah! poor feller. He gone de way ob all flesh; but he hoed sooner dan dere was any occasion for—tanks to de captain."

As he spoke he held the lantern over the dead man and revealed the face of a youth in Eastern garb, on whose head there was a terrible sword-cut. As they looked at the sad spectacle, and endeavoured to arrange the corpse, the negro explained that the poor fellow had been a Greek captive who to save his life had joined the pirates and become a Mussulman; but, on thinking over it, had returned to the Christian faith and refused to take part in the bloody work which they were required to do. It was his refusal to fight on the occasion of the recent attack on the merchantman that had induced the captain

to cut him down. He had been put into the prison in the hold, and carelessly left there to bleed to death.

"Now, you come along, massa," said the negro, taking up the lantern, "we's all goin' on shore."

"On shore! Where have we got to?"

"To Algiers, de city ob pirits; de hotbed ob wickedness; de home ob de Moors an' Turks an' Cabyles, and de cuss ob de whole wurld."

Poor Foster's heart sank on hearing this, for he had heard of the hopeless slavery to which thousands of Christians had been consigned there in time past, and his recent experience of Moors had not tended to improve his opinion of them.

A feeling of despair impelled him to seize the negro by the arm as he was about to ascend the ladder and stop him.

"Peter," he said, "I think you have a friendly feeling towards me, because you've called me massa more than once, though you have no occasion to do so."

"Dat's 'cause I'm fond o' you. I always was fond o' a nice smood young babby face, an' I tooked a fancy to you de moment I see you knock Joe Spinks into de lee scuppers."

"So—he was an Englishman that I treated so badly, eh?"

"Yes, massa, on'y you didn't treat him bad 'nuff. But you obsarve dat I on'y calls you massa w'en we's alone an' friendly like. W'en we's in public I calls you 'sar' an'

speak gruff an' shove you into black holes."

"And why do you act so, Peter?"

"'Cause, don't you see, I's a hyperkrite. I tole you dat before."

"Well, I can guess what you mean. You don't want to appear too friendly? Just so. Well, now, I have got nobody to take my part here, so as you are a free man I wish you would keep an eye on me when we go ashore, and see where they send me, and speak a word for me when it is in your power. You see, they'll give me up for drowned at home and never find out that I'm here."

"'A free man!'" repeated the negro, with an expansion of his mouth that is indescribable. "You tink I's a free man! but I's a slabe, same as yourself, on'y de diff'rence am dat dere's nobody to ransum *me*, so dey don't boder deir heads 'bout me s'long as I do my work. If I don't do my work I'm whacked; if I rebel and kick up a shindy I'm whacked wuss; if I tries to run away I'm whacked till I'm dead. Das all. But I's not free. No, no not at all! Hows'ever I's free-an'-easy, an' dat make de pirits fond o' me, which goes a long way, for dere's nuffin' like lub!"

Foster heartily agreed with the latter sentiment and added—

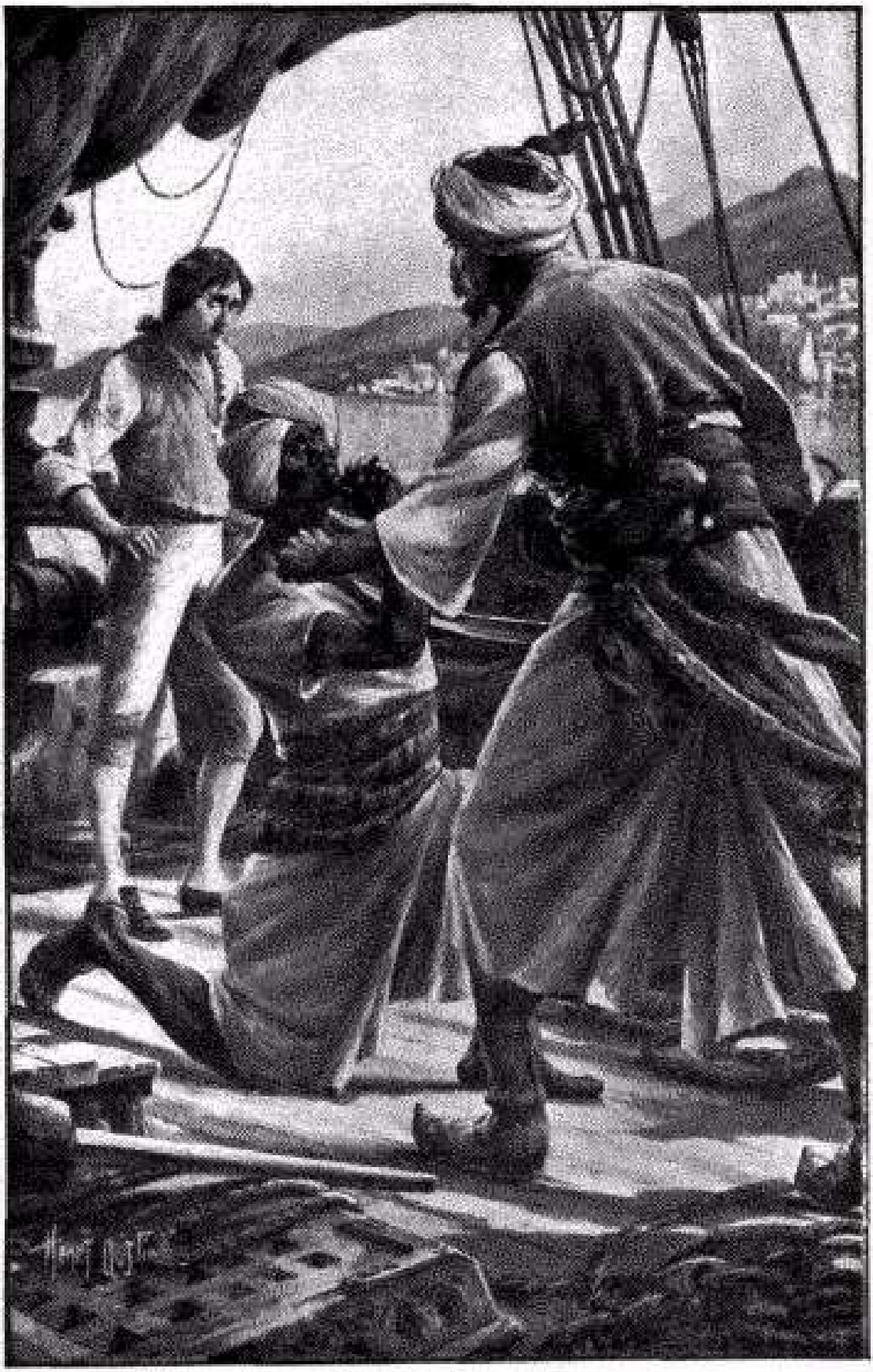
"Well, now, Peter, I will say no more, for as you profess to be fond of me, and as I can truly say the same in regard to you, we may be sure that each will help the other if he gets the chance. But, tell me, are you really one of the crew of this pirate vessel?"

"No, massa, only for dis viage. I b'longs to a old sinner

called Hassan, what libs in de country, not far from de town. He not a bad feller, but he's obs'nit—oh! as obs'nit as a deaf an' dumb mule. If you want 'im to go one way just tell him to go toder way—an' you've got 'im."

At that moment the captain's voice was heard shouting down the hatchway, demanding to know what detained the negro and his prisoners. He spoke in that jumble of languages in use at that time among the Mediterranean nations called Lingua Franca, for the negro did not understand Arabic.

"Comin', captain, comin'," cried the negro, in his own peculiar English—which was, indeed, his mother tongue, for he had been born in the United States of America. "Now, den, sar," (to Foster), "w'en you goin' to move you stumps? Up wid you!"



PETER THE BLACK IN JEOPARDY Page 26

Peter emphasised his orders with a real kick, which

expedited his prisoner's ascent, and, at the same time, justified the negro's claim to be a thorough-paced "hyperkrite!"

"Where's the other one?" demanded the captain angrily.

"Escaped, captain!" answered Peter.

"How? You must have helped him," cried the captain, drawing his ever-ready sword and pointing it at the breast of the negro, who fell upon his knees, clasped his great hands, and rolled his eyes in an apparent agony of terror.

"Don't, captain. I isn't wuth killin', an' w'en I's gone, who'd cook for you like me? De man escaped by jumpin' out ob his body. He's gone dead!"

"Fool!" muttered the pirate, returning his sword to its sheath, "bind that prisoner, and have him and the others ready to go on shore directly."

In a few seconds all the prisoners were ranged between the cabin hatchway and the mast. The hands of most of the men were loosely tied, to prevent trouble in case desperation should impel any of them to assault their captors, but the old Dane and the women were left unfettered.

And now George Foster beheld, for the first time, the celebrated city, which was, at that period, the terror of the merchant vessels of all nations that had dealings with the Mediterranean shores. A small pier and breakwater enclosed a harbour which was crowded with boats and shipping. From this harbour the town rose abruptly on the side of a steep hill, and was surrounded

by walls of great strength, which bristled with cannon. The houses were small and square-looking, and in the midst, here and there, clusters of date-palms told of the almost tropical character of the climate, while numerous domes, minarets, and crescents told of the Moor and the religion of Mohammed.

But religion in its true sense had little footing in that piratical city, which subsisted on robbery and violence, while cruelty and injustice of the grossest kind were rampant. Whatever Islamism may have taught them, it did not produce men or women who held the golden rule to be a virtue, and certainly few practised it. Yet we would not be understood to mean that there were none who did so. As there were Christians in days of old, even in Caesar's household, so there existed men and women who were distinguished by the Christian graces, even in the Pirate City. Even there God had not left Himself without a witness.

As the vessel slowly entered the harbour under a very light breeze, she was boarded by several stately officers in the picturesque costume—turbans, red leathern boots, etcetera—peculiar to the country. After speaking a few minutes with the captain, one of the officers politely addressed the old Dane and his family through an interpreter; but as they spoke in subdued tones Foster could not make out what was said. Soon he was interrupted by a harsh order from an unknown Moor in an unknown tongue.

An angry order invariably raised in our hero the spirit of rebellion. He flushed and turned a fierce look on the Moor, but that haughty and grave individual was accustomed to such looks. He merely repeated his order

in a quiet voice, at the same time translating it by pointing to the boat alongside. Foster felt that discretion was the better part of valour, all the more that there stood at the Moor's back five or six powerful Arabs, who seemed quite ready to enforce his instructions.

The poor middy glanced round to see if his only friend, Peter the Great, was visible, but he was not; so, with a flushed countenance at thus being compelled to put his pride in his pocket, he jumped into the boat, not caring very much whether he should break his neck by doing so with tied hands, or fall into the sea and end his life in a shark's maw!

In a few minutes he was landed on the mole or pier, and made to join a band of captives, apparently from many nations, who already stood waiting there.

Immediately afterwards the band was ordered to move on, and as they marched through the great gateway in the massive walls Foster felt as if he were entering the portals of Dante's Inferno, and had left all hope behind. But his feelings misled him. Hope, thank God! is not easily extinguished in the human breast. As he tramped along the narrow and winding streets, which seemed to him an absolute labyrinth, he began to take interest in the curious sights and sounds that greeted him on every side, and his mind was thus a little taken off himself.

And there was indeed much there to interest a youth who had never seen Eastern manners or customs before. Narrow and steep though the streets were—in some cases so steep that they formed flights of what may be styled broad and shallow stairs—they were crowded with bronzed men in varied Eastern costume; Moors in fez and gay vest and red morocco slippers; Turks with turban and

pipe; Cabyles from the mountains; Arabs from the plains; water-carriers with jar on shoulder; Jews in sombre robes; Jewesses with rich shawls and silk kerchiefs as headgear; donkeys with panniers that almost blocked the way; camels, and veiled women, and many other strange sights that our hero had up to that time only seen in picture-books.

Presently the band of captives halted before a small door which was thickly studded with large nails. It seemed to form the only opening in a high dead wall, with the exception of two holes about a foot square, which served as windows. This was the Bagnio, or prison, in which the slaves were put each evening after the day's labour was over, there to feed and rest on the stone floor until daylight should call them forth again to renewed toil. It was a gloomy courtyard, with cells around it in which the captives slept. A fountain in the middle kept the floor damp and seemed to prove an attraction to various centipedes, scorpions, and other noisome creatures which were crawling about.

Here the captives just arrived had their bonds removed, and were left to their own devices, each having received two rolls of black bread before the jailor retired and locked them up for the night.

Taking possession of an empty cell, George Foster sat down on the stone floor and gazed at the wretched creatures around him, many of whom were devouring their black bread with ravenous haste. The poor youth could hardly believe his eyes, and it was some time before he could convince himself that the whole thing was not a dream but a terrible reality.

Chapter Three.

The Bagnio—Our Hero sees something of Misery, and is sold as a Slave.

There are some things in this world so unbelievable that even when we know them to be true we still remain in a state of semi-scepticism.

When our unfortunate midshipman awoke next morning, raised himself on his elbow, and felt that all his bones and muscles were stiff and pained from lying on a stone floor, it was some time before he could make out where he was, or recall the events of the last few days. The first thing that revived his sluggish memory was the scuttling away, in anxious haste, of a scorpion that had sought and found comfortable quarters during the night under the lee of his right leg. Starting up, he crushed the reptile with his foot.

"You will get used to that," said a quietly sarcastic voice with a slightly foreign accent, close to him.

The speaker was a middle-aged man with grey hair, hollow cheeks, and deep sunken eyes.

"They trouble us a little at first," he continued, "but, as I have said, we get used to them. It is long since I cared for scorpions."

"Have you, then, been long here?" asked Foster.

"Yes. Twelve years."

"A prisoner?—a slave?" asked the midshipman anxiously.

"A prisoner, yes. A slave, yes—a mummified man; a dead thing with life enough to work, but not yet quite a brute, more's the pity, for then I should not care! But here I have been for twelve years—long, long years! It has seemed to me an eternity."

"It *is* a long time to be a slave. God help you, poor man!" exclaimed Foster.

"You will have to offer that prayer for yourself, young man," returned the other; "you will need help more than I. At first we are fools, but time makes us wise. It even teaches Englishmen that they are not unconquerable."

The man spoke pointedly and in a harsh sarcastic tone which tended to check Foster's new-born compassion; nevertheless, he continued to address his fellow-sufferer in a sympathetic spirit.

"You are not an Englishman, I think," he said, "though you speak our language well."

"No, I am French, but my wife is English."

"Your wife! Is she here also?"

"Thank God—no," replied the Frenchman, with a sudden burst of seriousness which was evidently genuine. "She is in England, trying to make up the sum of my ransom. But she will never do it. She is poor. She has her daughter to provide for besides herself, and we have no friends. No, I have hoped for twelve years, and hope is now dead—nearly dead."

The overwhelming thoughts that this information raised in Foster's mind rendered him silent for a few minutes. The idea of the poor wife in England, toiling for twelve years almost hopelessly to ransom her husband, filled his susceptible heart with pity. Then the thought of his mother and Minnie—who were also poor—toiling for years to procure his ransom, filled him with oppressive dread. To throw the depressing subject off his mind, he asked how the Frenchman had guessed that he was an Englishman before he had heard him speak.

"I know your countrymen," he answered, "by their bearing. Besides, you have been muttering in your sleep about 'Mother and Minnie.' If the latter is, as I suppose, your sweetheart—your *fiancée*—the sooner you get her out of your mind the better, for you will never see her more."

Again Foster felt repelled by the harsh cynicism of the man, yet at the same time he felt strangely attracted to him, a fact which he showed more by his tones than his words when he said—

"My friend, you are not yet enrolled among the infallible prophets. Whether I shall ever again see those whom I love depends upon the will of God. But I don't wonder that with your sad experience you should give way to despair. For myself, I will cling to the hope that God will deliver me, and I would advise you to do the same."

"How many I have seen, who had the sanguine temperament, like yours, awakened and crushed," returned the Frenchman. "See, there is one of them," he added, pointing to a cell nearly opposite, in which a form was seen lying on its back, straight and motionless. "That young man was such another as you are when he

first came here."

"Is he dead?" asked the midshipman, with a look of pity.

"Yes—he died in the night while you slept. It was attending to him in his last moments that kept me awake. He was nothing to me but a fellow-slave and sufferer, but I *was* fond of him. He was hard to conquer, but they managed it at last, for they beat him to death."

"Then they did *not* conquer him," exclaimed Foster with a gush of indignant pity. "To beat a man to death is to murder, not to conquer. But you called him a young man. The corpse that lies there has thin grey hair and a wrinkled brow."

"Nevertheless he was young—not more than twenty-seven—but six years of this life brought him to what you see. He might have lived longer, as I have, had he been submissive!"

Before Foster could reply, the grating of a rusty key in the door caused a movement as well as one or two sighs and groans among the slaves, for the keepers had come to summon them to work. The Frenchman rose and followed the others with a hook of sullen indifference. Most of them were without fetters, but a few strong young men wore chains and fetters more or less heavy, and Foster judged from this circumstance, as well as their expressions, that these were rebellious subjects whom it was difficult to tame.

Much to his surprise, the youth found that he was not called on to join his comrades in misfortune, but was left behind in solitude. While casting about in his mind as to what this could mean, he observed in a corner the two

rolls of black bread which he had received the previous night, and which, not being hungry at the time, he had neglected. As a healthy appetite was by that time obtruding itself on his attention, he took hold of one and began to eat. It was not attractive, but, not being particular, he consumed it. He even took up the other and ate that also, after which he sighed and wished for more! As there was no more to be had, he went to the fountain in the court and washed his breakfast down with water.

About two hours later the door was again opened, and a man in the uniform of a janissary entered. Fixing a keen glance on the young captive, he bade him in broken English rise and follow.

By this time the lesson of submission had been sufficiently impressed on our hero to induce him to accord prompt obedience. He followed his guide into the street, where he walked along until they arrived at a square, on one side of which stood a large mosque. Here marketing was being carried on to a considerable extent, and, as he threaded his way through the various groups, he could not help being impressed with the extreme simplicity of the mode of procedure, for it seemed to him that all a man wanted to enable him to set himself up in trade was a few articles of any kind—old or new, it did not matter which—with a day's lease of about four feet square of the market pavement. There the retail trader squatted, smoked his pipe, and calmly awaited the decrees of Fate!

One of these small traders he noted particularly while his conductor stopped to converse with a friend. He was an old man, evidently a descendant of Ishmael, and clothed

in what seemed to be a ragged cast-off suit that had belonged to Abraham or Isaac. He carried his shop on his arm in the shape of a basket, out of which he took a little bit of carpet, and spread it close to where they stood. On this he sat down and slowly extracted from his basket, and spread on the ground before him, a couple of old locks, several knives, an old brass candlestick, an assortment of rusty keys, a flat-iron, and half a dozen other articles of household furniture. Before any purchases were made, however, the janissary moved on, and Foster had to follow.

Passing through two or three tortuous and narrow lanes, which, however, were thickly studded with shops—that is, with holes in the wall, in which merchandise was displayed outside as well as in—they came to a door which was strictly guarded. Passing the guards, they found themselves in a court, beyond which they could see another court which looked like a hall of justice—or injustice, as the case might be. What strengthened Foster in the belief that such was its character, was the fact that, at the time they entered, an officer was sitting cross-legged on a bench, smoking comfortably, while in front of him a man lay on his face with his soles turned upwards, whilst an executioner was applying to them the punishment of the bastinado. The culprit could not have been a great offender, for, after a sharp yell or two, he was allowed to rise and limp away.

Our hero was led before the functionary who looked like a judge. He regarded the middy with no favour. We should have recorded that Foster, when blown out to sea, as already described, had leaped on the pirate's deck without coat or vest. As he was still in this dismantled condition, and had neither been washed nor combed

since that event occurred, his appearance at this time was not prepossessing.

"Who are you, and where do you come from?" was the first question put by an interpreter.

Of course Foster told the exact truth about himself. After he had done so, the judge and interpreter consulted together, glancing darkly at their prisoner the while. Then the judge smiled significantly and nodded his head. The interpreter turned to a couple of negroes who stood ready to execute any commands, apparently, and said a few words to them. They at once took hold of Foster and fastened a rope to his wrist. As they did so, the interpreter turned to the poor youth and said—

"What you tell is all lies."

"Indeed, indeed, it is not," exclaimed the midshipman fervently.

"Go!" said the interpreter.

A twitch from the rope at the same moment recalled our hero to his right mind; and the remembrance of the poor wretch who had just suffered the bastinado, and also of Peter the Great's oft-repeated reference to "whacking," had the effect of crushing the spirit of rebellion which had just begun to arise in his breast. Thus he was conducted ignominiously into the street and back to the market-square, where he was made to stand with a number of other men, who, like himself, appeared to be slaves. For what they were there waiting he could not tell, but he was soon enlightened, as after half an hour, a dignified-looking Moor in flowing apparel came forward, examined one of the captives, felt his muscles, made

him open his mouth, and otherwise show his paces, after which he paid a sum of money for him and a negro attendant led him away.

"I'm to be sold as a slave," Foster involuntarily groaned aloud.

"Like all the rest of us," growled a stout sailor-like man, who stood at his elbow.

Foster turned quickly to look at him, but a sudden movement in the group separated them after the first glance at each other.

By way of relieving his overcharged feelings he tried to interest himself in the passers-by. This, however, he found very difficult, until he observed a sturdy young Cabyle coming along with two enormous feathery bundles suspended over his right shoulder, one hanging before, the other behind. To his surprise these bundles turned out to be living fowls, tied by the legs and hanging with their heads down. There could not, he thought, have been fewer than thirty or forty birds in each bundle, and it occurred to him at once that they had probably been carried to market thus from some distance in the country. At all events, the young Cabyle seemed to be dusty and warm with walking. He even seemed fatigued, for, when about to pass the group of slaves, he stopped to rest and flung down his load. The shock of the fall must have snapped a number of legs, for a tremendous cackle burst from the bundles as they struck the ground.

This raised the thought in Foster's mind that he could hope for no mercy where such wanton cruelty was not even deemed worthy of notice by the bystanders; but the sound of a familiar voice put all other thoughts to flight.

“Dis way, massa, you’s sure to git fuss-rate fellers here. We brought ’im in on’y yesterday—all fresh like new-laid eggs.”

The speaker was Peter the Great. The man to whom he spoke was a Moor of tall stature and of somewhat advanced years.

Delighted more than he could express, in his degraded and forlorn condition, at this unlooked-for meeting with his black friend, Foster was about to claim acquaintance, when the negro advanced to the group among whom he stood, exclaiming loudly—

“Here dey am, massa, dis way.” Then turning suddenly on Foster with a fierce expression, he shouted, “What you lookin’ at, you babby-faced ijit? Hab you nebber seen a handsome nigger before dat you look all t’under-struck of a heap? Can’t you hold your tongue, you chatterin’ monkey?” and with that, although Foster had not uttered a syllable, the negro fetched him a sounding smack on the cheek, to the great amusement of the bystanders.

Well was it then for our middy that it flashed into his mind that Peter the Great, being the most astounding “hyperkrite” on earth, was at work in his deceptive way, else would he have certainly retaliated and brought on himself swift punishment—for slaves were not permitted to resent injuries or create riots. As it was, he cast down his eyes, flushed scarlet, and restrained himself.

“Now, massa,” continued the negro, turning to the fine, sailor-like man who had spoken to Foster a few minutes before, “here’s a nice-lookin’ man. Strong an’ healfy—fit for anyt’ing no doubt.”

"Ask him if he understands gardening," said the Moor.

We may remark, in passing, that Peter the Great and his owner had a peculiar mode of carrying on conversation. The latter addressed his slave in the Lingua Franca, while Peter replied in his own nigger English, which the Moor appeared to understand perfectly. Why they carried it on thus we cannot explain, but it is our duty to record the fact.

"Understand gardening!" exclaimed the sailor, in supreme contempt, "I should think not. Wot d'you take me for, you black baboon! Do I look like a gardener? Ploughin' an' diggin' I knows nothin' about wotsomever, though I *have* ploughed the waves many a day, an' I'm considered a fust-rate hand at diggin' into wittles."

"Oh! massa, das de man for your money! Buy him, quick!" cried the negro, with a look of earnest entreaty at his master. "He say he's ploughed many a day, an''s a fuss-rate hand at diggin'. *Do* buy 'im!"

But the Moor would not buy him. Either he understood the sailor's language to some extent, or that inveterate obstinacy of which Peter had made mention as being part of his character was beginning to assert itself.

"Ask this one what he knows about it," said the Moor, pointing to a thin young man, whose sprightly expression showed that he had not yet fully realised what fate was in store for him in the pirates' stronghold.

"Wich is it you mean, massa, dis one?" said Peter, purposely mistaking and turning to Foster. "Oh! you needn't ask about *him*. He not wuff his salt. I could tell

him at a mile off for a lazy, useless feller. Gib more trouble dan he's wuff. Dere now, dis looks a far better man," he added, laying hold of the thin sprightly youth and turning him round. "What d'ye t'ink ob dis one?"

"I *told* you to ask that one," replied the Moor sharply.

"Can you do gardenin', you feller?" asked Peter.

"Oui, oui—un peu," replied the youth, who happened to be French, but understood English.

"None ob your wee-wees an' poo-poos to me. Can't you speak English?"

"Oui, yes, I gardin ver' leetle."

"Jus' so. Das de man for us, massa, if you won't hab de oder. I likes de look ob 'im. I don't t'ink he'll be hard on de wittles, an' he's so t'in dat he won't puspire much when he works in de sun in summer. Do buy *him*, massa."

But "massa" would not buy him, and looked hard for some time at our hero.

"I see how it am," said the negro, growing sulky. "You set your heart on dat useless ijit. Do come away, massa, it 'ud break my heart to lib wid sich a feller."

This seemed to clinch the matter, for the Moor purchased the objectionable slave, ordered Peter the Great to bring him along, and left the market-place.

"Didn't I tell you I's de greatest hyperkrite as ever was born?" said Peter, in a low voice, when sufficiently far in

rear to prevent being overheard by his master.

"You certainly did," replied Foster, who felt something almost like satisfaction at this change in his fate; "you are the most perfect hypocrite that I ever came across, and I am not sorry for it. Only I hope you won't deceive your friends."

"Honour bright!" said the negro, with a roll of the eyes and a solemnity of expression that told far more than words could express.

"Can you tell me," asked the middy, as they walked along, "what has become of that fine-looking girl that was captured with her father and mother by your captain?"

"Don't say *my* captain, sar," replied Peter sternly. "He no captain ob mine. I was on'y loaned to him. But I knows nuffin ob de gall. Bery likely she's de Dey's forty-second wife by dis time. Hush! look sulky," he added quickly, observing that his master was looking back.

Poor Foster found himself under the necessity of following his black friend's lead, and acting the "hyperkrite," in order to prevent their friendship being discovered. He did it with a bad grace, it is true, but felt that, for his friend's sake if not his own, he was bound to comply. So he put on an expression which his cheery face had not known since that period of infancy when his frequent demands for sugar were not gratified. Wheels worked within wheels, however, for he felt so disgusted with the part he had to play that he got into the sulks naturally!

"Fuss-rate!" whispered Peter, "you's a'most as good as

myself."

By this time they had reached one of the eastern gates of the city. It was named Bab-Azoun. As they passed through it the negro told his brother-slave that the large iron hooks which ornamented the wall there were used for the purpose of having criminals cast on them; the wretched victims being left to hang there, by whatever parts of their bodies chanced to catch on the hooks, till they died.

Having reached the open country outside the walls, they walked along a beautiful road, from which were obtained here and there splendid views of the surrounding country. On one side lay the blue Mediterranean, with its picturesque boats and shipping, and the white city descending to the very edge of the sea; on the other side rose the wooded slopes of a suburb named Mustapha, with numerous white Moorish houses in the midst of luxuriant gardens, where palms, bananas, cypresses, aloes, lemon-trees, and orange groves perfumed the balmy air, and afforded grateful shade from the glare of the African sun.

Into one of those gardens the Moor at last turned and led the way to a house, which, if not in itself beautiful according to European notions of architecture, was at least rendered cheerful with whitewash, and stood in the midst of a beauty and luxuriance of vegetation that could not be surpassed.

Opening a door in this building, the Turk entered. His slaves followed, and Foster, to his surprise, found what may be styled a miniature garden in the courtyard within.

Chapter Four.

Our Middy is put to Work—Also put on his "word-of-Honour," and receives a Great Shock of Surprise.

George Foster soon found that his master and owner, Ben-Ahmed, was a stern and exacting, but by no means an ill-natured or cruel, man. He appeared to be considerably over sixty years of age, but showed no signs of abated vigour. In character he was amiable and just, according to his light, but dignified and reticent.

His first act, after seating himself cross-legged on a carpet in a marble and tessellated recess, was to call for a hookah. He smoked that for a few minutes and contemplated the courtyard on which the recess opened. It was a pleasant object of contemplation, being filled with young orange-trees and creeping plants of a tropical kind, which were watered by a stone fountain in the centre of the court. This fountain also served to replenish a marble bath, to cool the sultry air, and to make pleasant tinkling music. Of course the nose was not forgotten in this luxurious assemblage of things that were gratifying to ear and eye. Flowers of many kinds were scattered around, and sweet-scented plants perfumed the air.

Ben-Ahmed's next act, after having lighted his pipe, was to summon Peter the Great and his new slave—the former to act as interpreter, for it was a peculiarity of this Moor that though he appeared to understand English he would not condescend to speak it.

After asking several questions as to our hero's name, age, and calling in life, he told Peter to inform Foster that escape from that country was impossible, that any attempt to escape would be punished with flogging and other torture, that perseverance in such attempts would result in his being sent to work in chains with the Bagnio slaves and would probably end in death from excessive toil, torture, and partial starvation. Having said this, the Moor asked several questions—through the negro, and always in the Lingua Franca.

"Massa bids me ax," said Peter, "if you are a gentleman, an' if you know it am de custom in England for gentleman-pris'ners to give dere word-ob-honour dat dey not run away, an' den go about as if dey was free?"

"Tell him that every officer in the service of the King of England is considered a gentleman."

"Come now, sar," interrupted Peter sternly, "you know das not true. I bin in England myself—cook to a French rest'rung in London—an' I nebber hear dat a *pleece* officer was a gentleman!"

"Well, I mean every commissioned officer in the army and navy," returned Foster, "and when such are taken prisoner I am aware that they are always allowed a certain amount of freedom of action on giving their word of honour that they will not attempt to escape."

When this was explained to Ben-Ahmed, he again said a few words to the negro, who translated as before.

"Massa say dat as you are a gentleman if you will gib your word-ob-honour not to escape, he will make you free. Not kite free, ob course, but free to work in de

gardin widout chains; free to sleep in de out-house widout bein' locked up ob nights, an' free to enjoy you'self w'en you gits de chance."

Foster looked keenly at the negro, being uncertain whether or not he was jesting, but the solemn features of that arch "hyperkrite" were no index to the working of his eccentric mind—save when he permitted them to speak; then, indeed, they were almost more intelligible than the plainest language.

"And what if I refuse to pledge my word for the sake of such freedom?" asked our hero.

"W'y, den you'll git whacked, an' you'll 'sperience uncommon hard times, an' you'll change you mind bery soon, so I t'ink, on de whole, you better change 'im at once. Seems to me you's a remarkably obs'nit young feller!"

With a sad feeling that he was doing something equivalent to locking the door and throwing away the key, Foster gave the required promise, and was forthwith conducted into the garden and set to work.

His dark friend supplied him with a new striped cotton shirt—his own having been severely torn during his recent adventures—also with a pair of canvas trousers, a linen jacket, and a straw hat with a broad rim; all of which fitted him badly, and might have caused him some discomfort in other circumstances, but he was too much depressed just then to care much for anything. His duty that day consisted in digging up a piece of waste ground. To relieve his mind, he set to work with tremendous energy, insomuch that Peter the Great, who was looking on, exclaimed—

“Hi! what a digger you is! You’ll bust up altogidder if you goes on like dat. De moles is nuffin’ to you.”

But Foster heeded not. The thought that he was now doomed to hopeless slavery, perhaps for life, was pressed home to him more powerfully than ever, and he felt that if he was to save himself from going mad he must work with his muscles like a tiger, and, if possible, cease to think. Accordingly, he went on toiling till the perspiration ran down his face, and all his sinews were strained.

“Poor boy!” muttered the negro in a low tone, “he’s tryin’ to dig his own grave. But he not succeed. Many a man try dat before now and failed. Howsomeber, it’s blowin’ a hard gale wid him just now—an’ de harder it blow de sooner it’s ober. Arter de storm comes de calm.”

With these philosophic reflections, Peter the Great went off to his own work, leaving our hero turning over the soil like a steam-plough.

Strong though Foster was—both of muscle and will—he was but human after all. In course of time he stopped from sheer exhaustion, flung down the spade, and, raising himself with his hands stretched up and his face turned to the sky, he cried—

“God help me! what shall I do?”

Then, dropping his face on his hands, he stood for a considerable time quite motionless.

“What a fool I was to promise not to try to escape!” he thought, and a feeling of despair followed the thought,

but a certain touch of relief came when he reflected that at any time he could go boldly to his master, withdraw the promise, and take the consequences.

He was still standing like a statue, with his hands covering his face, when he felt a light touch on his shoulder. It was the negro who had returned to see how he was getting on.

"Look yar, now, Geo'ge," he said in quite a fatherly manner, "dis'll neber do. My massa buy you to work in de gardin, not to stand like a statoo washin' its face widout soap or water. We don't want no more statoos. Got more'n enuff ob marble ones all around. Besides, you don't make a good statoo—leastwise not wid dem slop clo'es on. Now, come yar, Geo'ge. I wants a little combersation wid you. I'll preach you a small sarmin if you'll allow me."

So saying, Peter led his assistant slave into a cool arbour, where Ben-Ahmed was wont at times to soothe his spirits with a pipe.

"Now, look yar, Geo'ge, dis won't do. I say it once and for all—dis *won't do*."

"I know it won't, Peter," replied the almost heart-broken middy, with a sad smile, "you're very kind. I know you take an interest in me, and I'll try to do better, but I'm not used to spade-work, you know, and—"

"Spade-work!" shouted Peter, laying his huge black hand on Foster's shoulder, and giving him a squeeze that made him wince, "das not what I mean. Work! w'y you's done more'n a day's work in one hour, judging by de work ob or'nary slabes. No, das not it. What's wrong is dat you

don't rightly understand your priv'leges. Das de word, your priv'leges. Now, look yar. I don't want you to break your heart before de time, an' fur dat purpus I would remind you dat while dar's life dar's hope. Moreober, you's got no notion what luck you're in. If a bad massa got hold ob you, he gib you no noo clo'es, he gib you hard, black bread 'stead o' de good grub what you gits yar. He make you work widout stoppin' all day, and whack you on de sole ob your foots if you dar say one word. Was you eber whacked on de sole ob your foots?"

"No, never," replied Foster, amused in spite of himself by the negro's earnest looks and manner.

"Ho! den you don't know yet what Paradise am."

"Paradise, Peter? You mean the other place, I suppose."

"No, sar, I mean not'ing ob de sort. I mean de Paradise what comes arter it's ober, an' you 'gins to git well again. Hah! but you'll find it out some day. But, to continoo, you's got eberyt'ing what's comfrable here. If you on'y sawd de Bagnio slabes at work—I'll take you to see 'em some day—den you'll be content an' pleased wid your lot till de time comes when you escape."

"Escape! How can I escape, Peter, now that I have given my word of honour not to try?"

"Not'ing easier," replied the negro calmly, "you's on'y got to break your word-ob-honour!"

"I'm sorry to hear you say that, my friend," returned Foster, "for it shakes my confidence in you. You must know that an English gentleman *never* breaks his word—that is, he never *should* break it—and you may rest

assured that I will not break mine. If your view of such matters is so loose, Peter, what security have I that you won't deceive *me* and betray *me* when it is your interest or your whim to do so?"

"Security, Massa? I lub you! I's fond o' your smood babby face. Isn't dat security enough?"

Foster could not help admitting that it was, as long as it lasted! "But what," he asked, "what security has Ben-Ahmed that you won't be as false to him as you recommend me to be?"

"I lub massa too!" answered the negro, with a bland smile.

"What! love a man whom you have described to me as the most obstinate fellow you ever knew?"

"Ob course I do," returned Peter. "W'y not? A obs'nit man may be as good as anoder man what can be shoved about any way you please. Ha! you not know yit what it is to hab a *bad* massa. Wait a bit; you find it out, p'r'aps, soon enough. Look yar."

He bared his bosom as he spoke, and displayed to his wondering and sympathetic friend a mass of old scars and gashes and healed-up sores.

"Dis what my last massa do to me, 'cause I not quite as smart as he wish. De back am wuss. Oh, if you know'd a bad massa, you'd be thankful to-day for gettin' a good un. Now, what I say is, nobody never knows what's a-goin' to turn up. You just keep quiet an' wait. Some slabes yar hab waited patiently for ten-fifteen year, an' more. What den? Sure to 'scape sooner or later. Many are

ransum in a year or two. Oders longer. Lots ob 'em die, an' 'scape dat way. Keep up your heart, Geo'ge, whateber you do, and, if you won't break your word-ob-honour, something else'll be sure to turn up."

Although the negro's mode of affording comfort and encouragement was not based entirely on sound principles, his cheery and hopeful manner went a long way to lighten the load of care that had been settling down like a dead weight on young Foster's heart, and he returned to his work with a happier spirit than he had possessed since the day he leaped upon the deck of the pirate vessel. That night he spent under the same roof with his black friend and a number of the other slaves, none of whom, however, were his countrymen, or could speak any language that he understood. His bed was the tiled floor of an out-house, but there was plenty of straw on it. He had only one blanket, but the nights as well as days were warm, and his food, although of the simplest kind and chiefly vegetable, was good in quality and sufficient in quantity.

The next day, at the first blush of morning light, he was aroused with the other slaves by Peter the Great, who, he found, was the Moor's overseer of domestics. He was put to the same work as before, but that day his friend the negro was sent off on a mission that was to detain him several days from home. Another man took Peter's place, but, as he spoke neither English nor French, no communication passed between the overseer and slave except by signs. As, however, the particular job on which he had been put was simple, this did not matter. During the period of Peter's absence the poor youth felt the oppression of his isolated condition keenly. He sank to a lower condition than before, and when his friend

returned, he was surprised to find how much of his happiness depended on the sight of his jovial black face!

"Now, Geo'ge," was the negro's first remark on seeing him, "you's down in de blues again!"

"Well, I confess I have not been very bright in your absence, Peter. Not a soul to speak a word to; nothing but my own thoughts to entertain me; and poor entertainment they have been. D'you know, Peter, I think I should die if it were not for you."

"Nebber a bit ob it, massa. You's too cheeky to die soon. I's noticed, in my 'sperience, dat de young slabes as has got most self-conceit an' imprence is allers hardest to kill."

"I scarce know whether to take that as encouragement or otherwise," returned Foster, with the first laugh he had given vent to for a long time.

"Take it how you please, Geo'ge, as de doctor said to de dyin' man—won't matter much in de long-run. But come 'long wid me an' let's hab a talk ober it all. Let's go to de bower."

In the bower the poor middy found some consolation by pouring his sorrows into the great black sympathetic breast of Peter the Great, though it must be confessed that Peter occasionally took a strange way to comfort him. One of the negro's perplexities lay in the difficulty he had to convince our midshipman of his great good-fortune in having fallen into the hands of a kind master, and having escaped the terrible fate of the many who had cruel tyrants as their owners, who were tortured and beaten when too ill to work, who had bad food to eat and

not too much of it, and who were whipped to death sometimes when they rebelled. Although Foster listened and considered attentively, he failed to appreciate what his friend sought to impress, and continued in a state of almost overwhelming depression because of the simple fact that he was a slave—a bought and sold slave!

"Now, look yar, Geo'ge," said the negro, remonstratively, "you *is* a slabe; das a fact, an' no application ob fut rule or compasses, or the mul'plication table, or any oder table, kin change dat. Dere you am—a slabe! But you ain't a 'bused slabe, a whacked slabe, a tortered slabe, a dead slabe. You're all alibe an' kickin', Geo'ge! So you cheer up, an' somet'ing sure to come ob it; an' if not'ing comes ob it, w'y, de cheerin' up hab come ob it anyhow."

Foster smiled faintly at this philosophical view of his case, and did make a brave effort to follow the advice of his friend.

"Das right, now, Geo'ge; you laugh an' grow fat. Moreober, you go to work now, for if massa come an' find us here, he's bound to know de reason why! Go to work, Geo'ge, an' forgit your troubles. Das *my* way—an' I's got a heap o' troubles, bress you!"

So saying, Peter the Great rose and left our forlorn midshipman sitting in the arbour, where he remained for some time ruminating on past, present, and future instead of going to work.

Apart from the fact of his being a slave, the youth's condition at the moment was by no means disagreeable, for he was seated in a garden which must have borne no little resemblance to the great original of Eden, in a climate that may well be described as heavenly, with a

view before him of similar gardens which swept in all their rich luxuriance over the slopes in front of him until they terminated on the edge of the blue and sparkling sea.

While seated there, lost in reverie, he was startled by the sound of approaching footsteps—very different indeed from the heavy tread of his friend Peter. A guilty conscience made him glance round for a way of escape, but there was only one entrance to the bower. While he was hesitating how to act, an opening in the foliage afforded him a passing glimpse of a female in the rich dress of a Moorish lady.

He was greatly surprised, being well aware of the jealousy with which Mohammedans guard their ladies from the eyes of men. The explanation might lie in this, that Ben-Ahmed, being eccentric in this as in most other matters, afforded the inmates of his harem unusual liberty. Before he had time to think much on the subject, however, the lady in question turned into the arbour and stood before him.

If the word "thunderstruck" did justice in any degree to the state of mind which we wish to describe we would gladly use it, but it does not. Every language, from Gaelic to Chinese, equally fails to furnish an adequate word. We therefore avoid the impossible and proceed, merely remarking that from the expression of both faces it was evident that each had met with a crushing surprise.

We can understand somewhat the midshipman's state of mind, for the being who stood before him was—was—well, we are again nonplussed! Suffice it to say that she was a girl of fifteen summers—the other forty-five

seasons being, of course, understood. Beauty of feature and complexion she had, but these were lost, as it were, and almost forgotten, in her beauty of expression—tenderness, gentleness, urbanity, simplicity, and benignity in a state of fusion! Now, do not run away, reader, with the idea of an Eastern princess, with gorgeous black eyes, raven hair, tall and graceful form, etcetera! This apparition was fair, blue-eyed, golden-haired, girlish, sylph-like. She was graceful, indeed, as the gazelle, but not tall, and with an air of suavity that was irresistibly attractive. She had a "good" face as well as a beautiful, and there was a slightly pitiful look about the eyebrows that seemed to want smoothing away.

How earnestly George Foster desired—with a gush of pity, or something of that sort—to smooth it away. But he had too much delicacy of feeling as well as common sense to offer his services just then.

"Oh, sir!" exclaimed the girl, in perfect English, as she hastily threw a thin gauze veil over her face, "forgive me! I did not know you were here—else—my veil—but why should *I* mind such customs? You are an Englishman, I think?"

Foster did not feel quite sure at that moment whether he was English, Irish, Scotch, or Dutch, so he looked foolish and said—

"Y–yes."

"I knew it. I was sure of it! Oh! I am *so* glad!" exclaimed the girl, clasping her delicate little hands together and bursting into tears.

This was such a very unexpected climax, and so closely

resembled the conduct of a child, that it suddenly restored our midshipman to self-possession. Stepping quickly forward, he took one of the girl's hands in his, laid his other hand on her shoulder, and said—

"Don't cry, my poor child! If I can help you in any way, I'll be only too glad; but pray don't, *don't* cry so."

"I—I—can't help it," sobbed the girl, pulling away her hand—not on account of propriety, by any means: that never entered her young head—but for the purpose of searching for a kerchief in a pocket that was *always* undiscoverable among bewildering folds. "If—if—you only knew how long, *long* it is since I heard an English—(where *is* that *thing*!)—an English voice, you would not wonder. And my father, my dear, dear, darling father—I have not heard of him for—for—"

Here the poor thing broke down again and sobbed aloud, while the midshipman looked on, imbecile and helpless. "Pray, *don't* cry," said Foster again earnestly. "Who are you? where did you come from? Who and where is your father? Do tell me, and how I can help you, for we may be interrupted?"

This last remark did more to quiet the girl than anything else he had said.

"You are right," she replied, drying her eyes quickly. "And, do you know the danger you run if found conversing with me?"

"No—not great danger, I hope?"

"The danger of being scourged to death, perhaps," she replied.

"Then pray *do* be quick, for I'd rather not get such a whipping—even for *your* sake!"

"But our owner is not cruel," continued the girl. "He is kind—"

"Owner! Is he not, then, your husband?"

"Oh, no. He says he is keeping me for his son, who is away on a long voyage. I have never seen him—and—I have such a dread of his coming back!"

"But you are English, are you not?"

"Yes."

"And your father?"

"He is also English, and a slave. We have not met, nor have I heard of him, since we were parted on board ship many months ago. Listen!"

Chapter Five.

The Maiden's Story—Peter the Great and the Middy go for a Holiday and see Awful Things.

During the conversation detailed in the last chapter the young English girl had spoken with her veil down. She now threw it carelessly back, and, sitting down on a bench opposite our midshipman, folded her hands in her lap and remained silent for a few seconds, during which

George Foster said—not aloud, but very privately to himself, "Although your eyes are swelled and your little nose is red with crying, I never—no I never—did see such a dear, sweet, pretty little innocent face in all my life!"

All unconscious of his thoughts, and still giving vent now and then to an irresistible sob, the poor child—for she was little more—looked up and began her sad tale.

"About eight months ago my dear father, who is a merchant, resolved to take me with him on a voyage to some of the Mediterranean ports. My father's name is Hugh Sommers—"

"And yours?" asked Foster.

"Is Hester. We had only just entered the Mediterranean when one of those dreadful Algerine pirates took our vessel and made slaves of us all. My darling father, being a very big, strong, and brave man, fought like a tiger. Oh! I never imagined that his dear kind face *could* have looked as it did that awful day. But although he knocked down and, I fear, killed many men, it was all of no use, they were so numerous and our men so few. The last I saw of my father was when they were lowering him into a boat in a state of insensibility, with an awful cut all down his brow and cheek, from which the blood was pouring in streams.

"I tried to get to him, but they held me back and took me down into the cabin. There I met our owner, who, when he saw me, threw a veil over my head and bade me sit still. I was too terrified and too despairing about my father to think of disobeying.

"I think Ben-Ahmed, our owner, must be a man of power,

for everybody seemed to obey him that day as if he was the chief man, though he was not the captain of the ship. After a time he took my hand, put me into a small sailing boat, and took me ashore. I looked eagerly for my father on landing, but he was nowhere to be seen, and—I have not seen him since."

"Nor heard of or from him?" asked Foster.

"No."

At this point, as there were symptoms of another breakdown, our middy became anxious, and entreated Hester to go on. With a strong effort she controlled her feelings.

"Well, then, Ben-Ahmed brought me here, and, introducing me to his wives—he has four of them, only think!—said he had brought home a little wife for his son Osman. Of course I thought they were joking, for you know girls of my age are never allowed to marry in England; but after a time I began to see that they meant it, and, d'you know— By the way, what is your name?"

"Foster—George Foster."

"Well, Mr Foster, I was going to say that I *cannot* help wishing and hoping that their son may *never* come home! Isn't that sinful?"

"I don't know much about the sin of it," said Foster, "but I fervently hope the same thing from the very bottom of my heart."

"And, oh!" continued Hester, whimpering a little, "you can't think what a relief it is to be able to talk with you

about it. It would have been a comfort to talk even to our big dog here about it, if it could only have understood English. But, now," continued the poor little creature, while the troubled look returned to her eyebrows, "what *is* to be done?"

"Escape—somehow!" said Foster promptly.

"But nothing would induce me to even try to escape without my father," said Hester.

This was a damper to our midshipman. To rescue a little girl seemed to him a mere nothing, in the glowing state of his heroic soul at that moment, but to rescue her "very big, strong, and brave" father at the same time did not appear so easy. Still, something *must* be attempted in that way.

"Tell me," he said, "what is your father like?"

"Tall, handsome, sweet, ex—"

"Yes, yes. I know. But I mean colour of hair, kind of nose, etcetera; be more particular, and do be quick! I don't like to hurry you, but remember the possible scourging to death that hangs over me!"

"Well, he is very broad and strong, a Roman nose, large sweet mouth always smiling, large grey eyes—such loving eyes, too—with iron-grey hair, moustache, and beard. You see, although it is not the fashion in England to wear beards, my dear father thinks it right to do so, for he is fond, he says, of doing only those things that he can give a good reason for, and as he can see no reason whatever for shaving off his moustachios and beard, any more than the hair of his head and eyebrows,

he lets them grow. I've heard people say that my father is wild in his notions, and some used to say, as if it was very awful, that," (she lowered her voice here), "he is a Radical! You know what a Radical is, I suppose?"

"Oh yes," said Foster, with the first laugh he had indulged in during the interview, "a Radical is a man who wants to have everything his own way; to have all the property in the world equally divided among everybody; who wants all the power to be equally shared, and, in short, who wants everything turned upside down!"

"Hush! don't laugh so loud!" said Hester, looking anxiously round, and holding up one of her pretty little fingers, "some one may hear you and find us! Strange," she added pensively, "surely you must be under some mistake, for I heard my dear father try to explain it once to a friend, who seemed to me unwilling to understand. I remember so well the quiet motion of his large, firm but sweet mouth as he spoke, and the look of his great, earnest eyes—'A Radical,' he said, 'is one who wishes and tries to go to the root of every matter, and put all wrong things right without delay.'"

What George Foster might have said to this definition of a Radical, coming, as it did, from such innocent lips, we cannot say, for the abrupt closing of a door at the other end of the garden caused Hester to jump up and run swiftly out of the bower. Foster followed her example, and, returning to the scene of his labours, threw off his coat and began to dig with an amount of zeal worthy of his friend the incorrigible "hyperkrite" himself.

A few minutes later and Ben-Ahmed approached, in close conversation with Peter the Great.

"Hallo!" exclaimed the latter, in stern tones, as they came up, "what you bin about, sar? what you bin doin'? Not'ing done since I was here more an hour past—eh, sar?"

The midshipman explained, with a somewhat guilty look and blush, that he had been resting in the bower, and that he had stayed much longer than he had intended.

"You just hab, you rascal! But I cure you ob dat," said the negro, catching up a piece of cane that was lying on the ground, with which he was about to administer condign chastisement to the idle slave, when his master stopped him.

"Hurt him not," he said, raising his hand; "is not this his first offence?"

"Yes, massa, de bery fust."

"Well, tell him that the rod shall be applied next time he is found idling. Enough, follow me!"

With a stately step the amiable Moor passed on. With a much more stately port Peter the Great followed him, but as he did so he bestowed on Foster a momentary look so ineffably sly, yet solemn, that the latter was obliged to seize the spade and dig like a very sexton in order to check his tendency to laugh aloud.

Half an hour later the negro returned to him.

"What you bin do all dis time?" he asked in surprise. "I was more'n half t'ink you desarve a lickin'!"

"Perhaps I do, Peter," answered the young slave, in a

tone so hearty and cheerful that the negro's great eyes increased considerably in size.

"Well, Geo'ge," he said, with a sudden change in his expression, "I wouldn't hab expeck it ob you; no, I wouldn't, if my own mudder was to tell me! To t'ink dat one so young, too, would go on de sly to de rum-bottle! But where you kin find 'im's more'n I kin tell."

"I have not been at the rum-bottle at all," returned the middy, resting on his spade, "but I have had something to raise my spirits and brace my energies, and take me out of myself. Come, let us go to the bower, and I will explain—that is, if we may safely go there."

"Go whar?"

"To the bower."

"Do you know, sar," replied Peter, drawing himself up and expanding his great chest—"do you know, sar, dat I's kimmander-in-chief ob de army in dis yar gardin, an' kin order 'em about whar I please, an' do what I like? Go up to de bower, you small Bri'sh officer, an' look sharp if you don't want a whackin'!"

The slave obeyed with alacrity, and when the two were seated he described his recent interview with Hester Sommers.

No words can do full justice to the varied expressions that flitted across the negro's face as the midshipman's narrative went on.

"So," he said slowly, when it was concluded, "you's bin an' had a long privit convissation wid one ob Ben-

Ahmed's ladies! My! you know what dat means if it found out?"

"Well, Miss Sommers herself was good enough to tell me that it would probably mean flogging to death."

"*Floggin'* to deaf!" echoed Peter. "P'r'aps so wid massa, for he's a kind man; but wid most any oder man it 'ud mean roastin' alibe ober a slow fire! Geo'ge, you's little better'n a dead man!"

"I hope it's not so bad as that, for no one knows about it except the lady and yourself."

"Das so; an' you're in luck, let me tell you. Now you go to work, an' I'll retire for some meditation—see what's to come ob all dis."

Truly the changes that take place in the feelings and mind of man are not less sudden and complete than the physical changes which sometimes occur in lands that are swept by the tornado and desolated by the earthquake. That morning George Foster had risen from his straw bed a miserable white slave, hopeless, heartless, and down at spiritual zero—or below it. That night he lay down on the same straw bed, a free man—in soul, if not in body—a hero of the most ardent character—up at fever-heat in the spiritual thermometer, or above it, and all because his heart throbbed with a noble purpose—because an object worthy of his efforts was placed before him, and because he had made up his mind to do or die in a good cause!

What that cause was he would have found it difficult to define clearly in detail. Sufficient for him that an unknown but stalwart father, with Radical tendencies,

and a well-known and lovely daughter, were at the foundation of it, and that "Escape!" was the talismanic word which formed a battery, as it were, with which to supply his heart with electric energy.

He lived on this diet for a week, with the hope of again seeing Hester; but he did not see her again for many weeks.

One morning Peter the Great came to him as he was going out to work in the garden and said—

"You git ready and come wid me into town dis day."

"Indeed," returned Foster, as much excited by the order as if it had been to go on some grand expedition. "For what purpose?"

"You 'bey orders, sar, an' make your mind easy about purpisses."

In a few minutes Foster was ready.

No part of his original costume now remained to him. A blue-striped cotton jacket, with pants too short and too wide for him; a broad-brimmed straw hat, deeply sunburnt face and hands, with a pair of old boots two sizes too large, made him as unlike a British naval officer as he could well be. But he had never been particularly vain of his personal appearance, and the high purpose by which he was now actuated set him above all such trifling considerations.

"Is your business a secret?" asked Foster, as he and his companion descended the picturesque road that led to the city.

"No, it am no secret, 'cause I's got no business."

"You seem to be in a mysterious mood this morning, Peter. What do you mean?"

"I mean dat you an' me's out for a holiday—two slabes out for a holiday! T'ink ob dat!"

The negro threw back his head, opened his capacious jaws, and gave vent to an almost silent chuckle.

"That does indeed mound strange," returned Foster; "how has such a wonderful event been brought about?"

"By lub, Geo'ge. Di'n't I tell you before dat hub am eberyt'ing?"

"Yes; and my dear old mother told me, long before you did, that 'love is the fulfilling of the law.'"

"Well, I dun know much about law, 'xcep' dat I b'lieve it's a passel o' nonsense, for what we's got here an't o' no use—leastwise not for slabes."

"But my mother did not refer to human laws," returned Foster. "She quoted what the Bible says about God's laws."

"Oh! das a *bery* diff'rent t'ing, massa, an' I s'pose your mudder was right. Anyway it was lub what obercame Ben-Ahmed. You see, I put it to 'im bery tender like. 'Massa,' says I, 'here I's bin wid you night an' day for six year, an' you's nebber say to me yet, "Peter de Great, go out for de day an' enjoy you'self." Now, massa, I wants to take dat small raskil Geo'ge Fuster to de town, an' show him a few t'ings as'll make him do his work better,

an' dat'll make you lub 'im more, an' so we'll all be more comfrable.' Das what I say; an' when I was sayin' it, I see de wrinkles a-comin' round massa's eyes, so I feel sure; for w'en dem wrinkles come to de eyes, it is all right. An' massa, he say, 'Go'—nuffin more; only 'Go;' but ob course das nuff for me, so I hoed; an' now—we're bof goin'."

At this point in the conversation they came to a place where the road forked. Here they met a number of Arabs, hasting towards the town in a somewhat excited frame of mind. Following these very slowly on a mule rode another Arab, whose dignified gravity seemed to be proof against all excitement. He might have been the Dey of Algiers himself, to judge from his bearing and the calm serenity with which he smoked a cigar. Yet neither his occupation nor position warranted his dignified air, for he was merely a seller of oranges, and sat on a huge market-saddle, somewhat in the lady-fashion—side-wise, with the baskets of golden fruit on either side of him.

Going humbly towards this Arab, the negro asked him in Lingua Franca if there was anything unusual going on in the town?

The Arab replied by a calm stare and a puff of smoke as he rode by.

"I 'ope his pride won't bust 'im," muttered Peter, as he fell behind and rejoined his companion.

"Do you think anything has happened, then?"

"Dere's no sayin'. Wonderful geese dey is in dis city. Dey seem to t'ink robbery on the sea is just, an' robbery ob de poor an' helpless is just; but robbery ob de rich in

Algiers—oh! dat awrful wicked! not to be tololerated on no account wa'somever. Konsikence is—de poor an' de helpless git some ob de strong an' de clebber to go on dere side, an' den dey bust up, strangle de Dey, rob de Jews, an' set up another guv'ment."

"Rob the Jews, Peter! Why do they do that?"

"Dun know, massa—"

"Please don't call me massa any more, Peter, for I'm *not* massa in any sense—being only your friend and fellow-slave."

"Well, I won't, Geo'ge. I's a-goin' to say I s'pose dey plunder de Jews 'cause dey's got lots o' money an' got no friends. Eberybody rob de Jews w'en dere's a big rumpus. But I don't t'ink dere's a row jus' now—only a scare."

The scare, if there was one, had passed away when they reached the town. On approaching the Bab-Azoun gate, Peter got ready their passports to show to the guard. As he did so, Foster observed, with a shudder, that shreds of a human carcass were still dangling from the large hooks on the wall.

Suddenly their steps were arrested by a shriek, and several men immediately appeared on the top of the wall, holding fast a struggling victim. But the poor wretch's struggles were vain. He was led to the edge of the wall by four strong men, and not hurled, but dropped over, so that he should not fail to be caught on one of the several hooks below.

Another shriek of terror burst from the man as he fell. It was followed by an appalling yell as one of the hooks

caught him under the armpit, passed upwards right through his shoulder and into his jaws, while the blood poured down his convulsed and naked limbs. That yell was the poor man's last. The action of the hook had been mercifully directed, and after a few struggles, the body hung limp and lifeless.

Oh! it is terrible to think of the cruelty that man is capable of practising on his fellows. The sight was enough, one would think, to rouse to indignation a heart of stone, yet the crowds that beheld this did not seem to be much affected by it. True, there were several faces that showed traces of pity, but few words of disapproval were uttered.

"Come, come!" cried our midshipman, seizing his companion by the arm and dragging him away, "let us go. Horrible! They are not men but devils. Come away."

They passed through the gate and along the main street of the city a considerable distance, before Foster could find words to express his feelings, and then he had difficulty in restraining his indignation on finding that the negro was not nearly as much affected as he himself was by the tragedy which they had just witnessed.

"We's used to it, you know," said Peter in self-defence. "I's seen 'em hangin' alibe on dem hooks for hours. But dat's nuffin to what some on 'em do. Look dar; you see dat ole man a-sittin' ober dere wid de small t'ings for sale—him what's a-doin' nuffin, an' sayin' nuffin, an' almost expectin' nuffin? Well, I once saw dat ole man whacked for nuffin—or next to nuffin—on de sole ob his foots, so's he couldn't walk for 'bout two or t'ree mont's."

They had reached the market-square by that time, and

Foster saw that the man referred to was the identical old fellow with the blue coat and hood, the white beard, and the miscellaneous old articles for sale, whom he had observed on his first visit to the square. The old Arab gave Peter the Great a bright look and a cheerful nod as they passed.

"He seems to know you," remarked Foster.

"Oh yes. He know me. I used to carry him on my back ebery mornin' to his place here dat time when he couldn't walk. Bress you! dar's lots o' peepil knows me here. Come, I'll 'troduce you to some more friends, an' we'll hab a cup o' coffee."

Saying this, he conducted our middy into a perfect labyrinth of narrow streets, through which he wended his way with a degree of certainty that told of intimate acquaintance. Foster observed that he nodded familiarly to many of those who crowded them—to Jews, Arabs, water-carriers, and negroes, as well as to the dignified men who kept little stalls and shops, many of which shops were mere niches in the sides of the houses. So close were the fronts of these houses to each other that in many places they almost met overhead and obscured much of the light.

At last the middy and his friend stopped in front of a stair which descended into what appeared to be a dark cellar. Entering it, they found themselves in a low Arab coffee-house.

Chapter Six.

Our Hero sees the Moors in Several Aspects, and makes a Great Discovery.

Whatever may be said of Mohammedanism as a religion, there can be no question, we should think, that it has done much among the Eastern nations to advance the cause of Temperance.

We make no defence of Mohammed—very much the reverse—but we hold that even a false prophet cannot avoid teaching a certain modicum of truth in his system, and when Mohammed sternly put his foot down upon strong drink, and enforced the principle of total abstinence therefrom, he did signal service to a large portion of the human family. Although, for want of better teaching, Mohammedans cling to many vices, one never sees them howling through the streets in a state of wild ferocity, or staggering homewards in a condition of mild imbecility, from the effects of intoxicating drink.

Instead of entering a low den where riot and revelry, with bad language and quarrelling, might be expected to prevail, George Foster found himself in a small white-washed apartment, where there sat several grave and sedate men, wrapped in the voluminous folds of Eastern drapery, sipping very small cups of coffee, and enjoying very large pipes of tobacco.

The room was merely a cellar, the walls being thickly stuccoed and white-washed, and the ceiling arched; but, although plain, the place was reasonably clean and eminently quiet. The drinkers did not dispute. Conversation flowed in an undertone, and an air of respectability pervaded the whole place.

At the further end of the apartment there was a curious-looking fireplace, which seemed to have been formed without the use of square or plummet, and around which were scattered and hung in comfortable confusion the implements and utensils of cookery. Nothing of the cook was visible except his bare legs and feet, the rest of him being shrouded in a recess. Beside the fireplace an Arab sat cross-legged on a bench, sipping his coffee. Beyond him in a recess another Arab was seated. He appeared to be sewing while he conversed with a negro who stood beside him. Elsewhere, in more or less remote and dim distances, other customers were seated indulging in the prevailing beverage.

"You sit down here, Geo'ge; drink an' say not'ing, but wait for me."

With this admonition Peter the Great whispered a few words to the man who owned the establishment, and hurriedly left the place.

The middy naturally felt a little disconcerted at being thus left alone among strangers, but, knowing that in the circumstances he was absolutely helpless, he wisely and literally obeyed orders. Sitting down on a bench opposite the fire, from which point of observation he could see the entrance-door and all that went on around him, he waited and said nothing until the chief of the establishment presented him with a white cup of coffee, so very small that he felt almost equal to the swallowing of cup and coffee at one gulp. With a gracious bow and "Thank you," he accepted the attention, and began to sip. The dignified Arab who gave it to him did not condescend upon any reply, but turned to attend upon his other customers.

Foster's first impulse was to spit out the sip he had taken, for to his surprise the coffee was thick with grounds. He swallowed it, however, and wondered. Then, on taking another sip and considering it, he perceived that the grounds were not as grounds to which he had been accustomed, but were reduced—no doubt by severe pounding—to a pasty condition, which made the beverage resemble chocolate. "Coffee-soup! with sugar—but no milk!" he muttered, as he tried another sip. This third one convinced him that the ideas of Arabs regarding coffee did not coincide with those of Englishmen, so he finished the cup at the fourth sip, much as he would have taken a dose of physic, and thereafter amused himself with contemplating the other coffee-sippers.

At the time when our hero first arrived at Ben-Ahmed's home, he had been despoiled of his own garments while he was in bed—the slave costume having been left in their place. On application to his friend Peter, however, his pocket-knife, pencil, letters, and a few other things had been returned to him. Thus, while waiting, he was able to turn his time to account by making a sketch of the interior of the coffee-house, to the great surprise and gratification of the negroes there—perhaps, also, of the Moors—but these latter were too reticent and dignified to express any interest by word or look, whatever they might have felt.

He was thus engaged when Peter returned.

"Hallo, Geo'ge!" exclaimed the negro, "what you bin up to—makin' picturs?"

"Only a little sketch," said Foster, holding it up.

"A skitch!" repeated Peter, grasping the letter, and holding it out at arm's length with the air of a connoisseur, while he compared it with the original. "You call dis a skitch? Well! I neber see de like ob dis—no, neber. It's lubly. Dere's de kittles an' de pots an' de jars, an'—ha, ha! dere's de man wid de—de—wart on 'is nose! Oh! das fust-rate. Massa's awrful fond ob skitchin'. He wouldn't sell you now for ten t'ousand dollars."

Fortunately the Arab with the wart on his nose was ignorant of English, otherwise he might have had some objection to being thus transferred to paper, and brought, as Arabs think, under "the power of the evil eye." Before the exact nature of what had been done, however, was quite understood, Peter had paid for the coffee, and, with the amateur artist, had left the place.

"Nothing surprises me more," said Foster, as they walked along, "than to see such beautiful wells and fountains in streets so narrow that one actually has not enough room to step back and look at them properly. Look at that one now, with the negress, the Moor, and the water-carrier waiting their turn while the little girl fills her water-pot. See what labour has been thrown away on that fountain. What elegance of design, what columns of sculptured marble, and fine tessellated work stuck up where few people can see it, even when they try to."

"True, Geo'ge. De water would run as well out ob a ugly fountain as a pritty one."

"But it's not that I wonder at, Peter; it's the putting of such splendid work in such dark narrow lanes that surprises me. Why do they go to so much expense in such a place as this?"

"Oh! as to expense, Geo'ge. Dey don't go to none. You see, we hab no end ob slabes here, ob all kinds, an' trades an' purfessions, what cost nuffin but a leetle black bread to keep 'em alibe, an' a whackin' now an' den to make 'em work. Bress you! dem marble fountains an' t'ings cost the pirits nuffin. Now we's goin' up to see the Kasba."

"What is that, Peter?"

"What! you not know what de Kasba am? My, how ignorant you is! De Kasba is de citad'l—de fort—where all de money an' t'ings—treasure you call it—am kep' safe. Strong place, de Kasba—awrful strong."

"I'll be glad to see that," said Foster.

"Ho yes. You be glad to see it *wid me*," returned the negro significantly, "but not so glad if you go dere wid chains on you legs an' pick or shovel on you shoulder. See—dere dey go!"

As he spoke a band of slaves was seen advancing up the narrow street. Standing aside in a doorway to let them pass, Foster saw that the band was composed of men of many nations. Among them he observed the fair hair and blue eyes of the Saxon, the dark complexion and hair of the Spaniard and Italian, and the black skin of the negro—but all resembled each other in their looks and lines of care, and in the weary anxiety and suffering with which every countenance was stamped,—also in the more or less dejected air of the slaves, and the soiled ragged garments with which they were covered.

But if some of the resemblances between these poor creatures were strong, some of their differences were

still more striking. Among them were men whose robust frames had not yet been broken down, whose vigorous spirits had not been quite tamed, and whose scowling eyes and compressed lips revealed the fact that they were "dangerous." These walked along with clanking chains on their limbs—chains which were more or less weighty, according to the strength and character of the wearer. Others there were so reduced in health, strength, and spirit, that the chain of their own feebleness was heavy enough for them to drag to their daily toil. Among these were some with hollow cheeks and sunken eyes, whose weary pilgrimage was evidently drawing to a close; but all, whether strong or weak, fierce or subdued, were made to tramp smartly up the steep street, being kept up to the mark by drivers, whose cruel whips cracked frequently on the shoulders of the lagging and the lazy.

With a heart that felt as if ready to burst with conflicting emotions, the poor midshipman looked on, clenching his teeth to prevent unwise exclamations, and unclenching his fists to prevent the tendency to commit assault and battery!

"This is dreadful," he said, in a low voice, when the gang had passed.

"Yes, Geo'ge, it *is* drefful—but we's used to it, you know. Come, we'll foller dis gang."

Keeping about twenty yards behind, they followed the slaves into the Kasba, where they met with no interruption from the guards, who seemed to be well acquainted with Peter the Great, though they did not condescend to notice him, except by a passing glance.

"How is it that every one lets you pass so easily?" asked Foster, when they had nearly reached the southern wall of the fortress.

"Eberybody knows me so well—das one reason," answered the negro, with a grin of self-satisfaction.

"I's quite a public krakter in dis yar city, you mus' know. Den, anoder t'ing is, dat our massa am a man ob power. He not got no partikler office in de state, 'cause he not require it, for he's a rich man, but he's got great power wid de Dey—we's bof got dat!"

"Indeed; how so?"

"Stand here, under dis doorway, and I tell you—dis way, where you can see de splendid view ob de whole city an' de harbour an' sea b'yond. We kin wait a bit here while de slabes are gittin' ready to work. You see de bit ob wall dat's damaged dere? Well, dey're goin' to repair dat. We'll go look at 'em by-an'-by."

As the incident which Peter narrated might prove tedious if given in his own language, we take the liberty of relating it for him.

One fine morning during the previous summer the Dey of Algiers mounted his horse—a fiery little Arab—and, attended by several of his courtiers, cantered away in the direction of the suburb which is now known by the name of Mustapha Supérieur. When drawing near to the residence of Ben-Ahmed the Dey's horse became unmanageable and ran away. Being the best horse of the party, the courtiers were soon left far behind. It chanced that Ben-Ahmed and his man, Peter the Great, were walking together towards the city that day. On turning a

sharp bend in the road where a high bank had shut out their view they saw a horseman approaching at a furious gallop.

"It is the Dey!" exclaimed Ben-Ahmed.

"So it am!" responded Peter.

"He can't make the turn of the road and live!" cried the Moor, all his dignified self-possession vanishing as he prepared for action.

"I will check the horse," he added, in a quick, low voice. "You break his fall, Peter. He'll come off on the left side."

"Das so, massa," said Peter, as he sprang to the other side of the narrow road.

He had barely done so, when the Dey came thundering towards them.

"Stand aside!" he shouted as he came on, for he was a fearless horseman and quite collected, though in such peril.

But Ben-Ahmed would not stand aside. Although an old man, he was still active and powerful. He seized the reins of the horse as it was passing, and, bringing his whole weight and strength to bear, checked it so far that it made a false step and stumbled. This had the effect of sending the Dey out of the saddle like a bomb from a mortar, and of hurling Ben-Ahmed to the ground. Ill would it have fared with the Dey at that moment if Peter the Great had not possessed a mechanical turn of mind, and a big, powerful body, as well as a keen, quick eye for possibilities. Correcting his distance in a moment by

jumping back a couple of paces, he opened his arms and received the chief of Algiers into his broad black bosom!

The shock was tremendous, for the Dey was by no means a light weight, and Peter the Great went down before it in the dust, while the great man arose, shaken indeed, and confused, but unhurt by the accident.

Ben-Ahmed also arose uninjured, but Peter lay still where he had fallen.

"W'en I come-to to myself," continued Peter, on reaching this point in his narrative, "de fus' t'ing I t'ink was dat I'd been bu'sted. Den I look up, an' I sees our black cook. She's a nigger, like myself, only a she one.

"'Hallo, Angelica!' says I; 'wass de matter?'

"'Matter!' says she; 'you's dead—a'most, an' dey lef' you here wid me, wid strik orders to take care ob you.'

"'Das good,' says I; 'an' you better look out an' obey your orders, else de bowstring bery soon go round your pritty little neck. But tell me, Angelica, who brought me here?'

"'De Dey ob Algiers an' all his court,' says she, wid a larf dat shut up her eyes an' showed what a *enormous* mout' she hab.

"'Is *he* all safe, Angelica,' says I—'massa, I mean?'

"'Oh, I t'ought you meant de Dey!' says she. 'Oh yes; massa's all right; nuffin'll kill massa, he's tough. And de Dey, he's all right too.'

"'Das good, Angelica,' says I, feelin' quite sweet, for I

was beginnin' to remember what had took place.

"'Yes, das *is* good,' says she; 'an', Peter, your fortin's made!'

"'Das awk'ard,' says I, 'for I ain't got no chest or strong box ready to put it in. But now tell me, Angelica, if my fortin's made, will you marry me, an' help to spend it?'

"'Yes, I will,' says she.

"I was so took by surprise, Geo'ge, when she say dat, I sprung up on one elber, an' felled down agin wid a howl, for two o' my ribs had been broke.

"'Neber mind de yells, Angelica,' says I, 'it's only my leetle ways. But tell me why you allers refuse me before an' accep' me *now*. Is it—de—de fortin?' Oh, you should have seen her pout w'en I ax dat. Her mout' came out about two inch from her face. I could hab kissed it—but for de broken ribs.

"'No, Peter, for shame!' says she, wid rijeous indignation. 'De fortin hab nuffin to do wid it, but your own noble self-scarifyin' bravery in presentin' your buzzum to de Dey ob Algiers.'

"'T'ank you, Angelica,' says I. 'Das all comfrably settled. You's a good gall, kiss me now, an' go away.'

"So she gib me a kiss an' I turn round an' went sweetly to sleep on de back ob dat—for I was awrful tired, an' de ribs was creakin' badly."

"Did you marry Angelica?" asked our middy, with sympathetic interest.

“Marry her! ob course I did. Two year ago. Don’ you know it’s her as cooks all our wittles?”

“How could I know, Peter, for you never call her anything but ‘cook?’ But I’m glad you have told me, for I’ll regard her now with increased respect from this day forth.”

“Das right, Geo’ge. You can’t pay ’er too much respec’. Now we’ll go an’ look at de works.”

The part of the wall which the slaves were repairing was built of great blocks of artificial stone or concrete, which were previously cast in wooden moulds, left to harden, and then put into their assigned places by slave-labour. As Foster was watching the conveyance of these blocks, it suddenly occurred to him that Hester Sommers’s father might be amongst them, and he scanned every face keenly as the slaves passed to and fro, but saw no one who answered to the description given him by the daughter.

From this scrutiny he was suddenly turned by a sharp cry drawn from one of a group who were slowly carrying a heavy stone to its place. The cry was drawn forth by the infliction of a cruel lash on the shoulders of a slave. He was a thin delicate youth with evidences of fatal consumption upon him. He had become faint from over-exertion, and one of the drivers had applied the whip by way of stimulus. The effect on the poor youth was to cause him to stumble, and instead of making him lift better, made him rest his weight on the stone, thus overbalancing it, and bringing it down. In falling the block caught the ankle of the youth, who fell with a piercing shriek to the ground, where he lay in a state of insensibility.

At this a tall bearded man, with heavy fetters on his strong limbs, sprang to the young man's side, went down on his knees, and seized his hand.

"Oh! Henri, my son," he cried, in French; but before he could say more a whip touched his back with a report like a pistol-shot, and the torn cotton shirt that he wore was instantly crimsoned with his blood!

The man rose, and, making no more account of his fetters than if they had been straws, sprang like a tiger at the throat of his driver. He caught it, and the eyes and tongue of the cruel monster were protruding from his head before the enraged Frenchman could be torn away by four powerful janissaries. As it was, they had to bind him hand and foot ere they were able to carry him off—to torture, and probably to death. At the same time the poor, helpless form of Henri was borne from the place by two of his fellow-slaves.

Of course a scene like this could not be witnessed unmoved by our midshipman. Indeed he would infallibly have rushed to the rescue of the bearded Frenchman if Peter's powerful grip on his shoulder had not restrained him.

"Don't be a fool, Geo'ge," he whispered. "Remember, we *must* submit!"

Fortunately for George, the guards around were too much interested in watching the struggle to observe his state of mind, and it is doubtful whether he would have been held back even by the negro if his attention had not at the moment been attracted by a tall man who came on the scene just then with another gang of slaves.

One glance sufficed to tell who the tall man was. Hester Sommers's portrait had been a true one—tall, handsome, strong; and even in the haggard, worn, and profoundly sad face, there shone a little of the "sweetness" which his daughter had emphasised. There were also the large grey eyes, the Roman nose, the iron-grey hair, moustache, and beard, and the large mouth, although the "smile" had fled from the face and the "lovingness" from the eyes. Foster was so sure of the man that, as he drew near to the place where he stood, he stepped forward and whispered "Sommers."

The man started and turned pale as he looked keenly at our hero's face.

"No time to explain," said the middy quickly. "Hester is well and *safe*! See you again! Hope on!"

"What are you saying there?" thundered one of the drivers in Arabic.

"What you say to dat feller? you raskil! you white slabe! Come 'long home!" cried Peter the Great, seizing Foster by the collar and dragging him forcibly away, at the same time administering several kicks so violent that his entire frame seemed to be dislocated, while the janissaries burst into a laugh at the big negro's seeming fury.

"Oh! Geo'ge, Geo'ge," continued Peter, as he dragged the middy along, shaking him from time to time, "you'll be de deaf ob me, an' ob yourself too, if you don't larn to *submit*. An' see, too, what a hyperkrite you make me! I's 'bliged to kick hard, or dey wouldn't b'lieve me in arnist."

"Well, well, Peter," returned our hero, who at once understood his friend's ruse to disarm suspicion, and get

him away safely, "you need not call yourself a hypocrite this time, at all events, for your kicks and shakings have been uncommonly real—much too real for comfort."

"Didn't I say I was *'bleeged* to do it?" retorted Peter, with a pout that might have emulated that of his wife on the occasion of their engagement. "D'you s'pose dem raskils don' know a real kick from a sham one? I was marciful too, for if I'd kicked as I *could*, dere wouldn't be a whole bone in your carcass at dis momint! You's got to larn to be grateful, Geo'ge. Come along."

Conversing thus pleasantly, the white slave and the black left the Kasba together and descended into the town.

Chapter Seven.

The Middy obtains a Decided Advance, and Makes Peter the Great his Confidant.

Many months passed, after the events narrated in the last chapter, before George Foster had the good-fortune to meet again with Hugh Sommers, and several weeks elapsed before he had the chance of another interview with the daughter.

Indeed, he was beginning to despair of ever again seeing either the one or the other, and it required the utmost energy and the most original suggestions of a hopeful nature on the part of his faithful friend to prevent his giving way altogether, and having, as Peter expressed it,

“anoder fit ob de blues.”

At last fortune favoured him. He was busy in the garden one day planting flowers, when Peter came to him and said—

“I’s got news for you to-day, Geo’ge.”

“Indeed,” said the middy, with a weary sigh; “what may your news be?”

“You ’member dat pictur’ ob de coffee-house in de town what you doo’d?”

“Yes, now you mention it, I do, though I had almost forgotten it.”

“Ah! but I not forgit ’im! Well, yesterday I tuk it to massa, an’ he bery much pleased. He say, bring you up to de house, an’ he gib you some work to do.”

“I wish,” returned Foster, “that he’d ask me to make a portrait of little Hester Sommers.”

“You forgit, Geo’ge, de Moors neber git deir portraits doo’d. Dey ’fraid ob de evil eye.”

“Well, when are we to go up?”

“Now—I jist come for you.”

Throwing down his garden tools, Foster followed the negro to the house, and was ushered into a small chamber, the light of which was rendered soft and mellow by the stained glass windows through which it passed. These windows were exceedingly small—not

more than a foot high by eight inches broad—and they were placed in the walls at a height of nine feet or more from the ground. The walls of the room were decorated with richly-coloured tiles, and the floor was of white marble, but the part that attracted our hero most was the ceiling, which was arched, according to Moorish form, and enriched with elaborate designs in stucco—if not in white marble, the difference being difficult to distinguish. On the marble floor lay several shawls, richly embroidered in coloured silk and gold, a pair of small scarlet slippers, covered with gold thread, a thin veil, and several cushions of different sizes. On one of these last reposed a little tame gazelle, whose bright eyes greeted the two slaves with an inquiring look as they entered.

From all these things Foster judged that this was one of the women's apartments, and wondered much that he had been admitted into such a jealously-guarded sanctuary, but relieved his mind by setting it down to that eccentricity for which Ben-Ahmed was noted.

He had just arrived at this conclusion when a door opened, and Ben-Ahmed himself entered with the sketch of the coffee-house in his hand.

"Tell him," said the Moor to Peter, "that I am much pleased with this drawing, and wish him to make one, a little larger in size, of this room. Let him put into it everything that he sees. He will find paper in that portfolio, and all else that he requires on this ottoman. Let him take time, and do it well. He need not work in the garden while thus employed."

Pointing to the various things to which he referred, the Moor turned and left the apartment.

"Now, Geo'ge, what you t'ink ob all dat?" asked Peter, with a broad grin, when he had translated the Moor's orders.

"Really I don't know what to think of it. Undoubtedly it is a step upwards, as compared with working in the garden; but then, don't you see, Peter, it will give me much less of your company, which will be a tremendous drawback?"

"Das well said. You's kite right. I hab notice from de fus' dat you hab a well-constitooted mind, an' appruciates de value ob friendship. I lub your smood face, Geo'ge!"

"I hope you love more of me than my smooth face, Peter," returned the middy, "otherwise your love won't continue, for there are certain indications on my upper lip which assure me that the smoothness won't last long."

"Hol' your tongue, sar! What you go on jabberin' so to me when you's got work to do, sar!" said Peter fiercely, with a threatening motion of his fist. "Go to work at once, you white slabe!"

Our hero was taken aback for a moment by this sudden explosion, but the presence of a negro girl, who had entered softly by a door at his back, at once revealed to him the truth that Peter the Great had donned the garb of the hypocrite. Although unused and very much averse to such costume, he felt compelled in some degree to adopt it, and, bowing his head, not only humbly, but in humiliation, he went silently towards his drawing materials, while the girl placed a tumbler of water on a small table and retired.

Turning round, he found that Peter had also disappeared from the scene.

At first he imagined that the water was meant for his refreshment, but on examining the materials on the ottoman he found a box of water-colour paints, which accounted for its being sent.

Although George Foster had never been instructed in painting, he possessed considerable natural talent, and was intensely fond of the art. It was, therefore, with feelings of delight which he had not experienced for many a day that he began to arrange his materials and set about this new and congenial work.

Among other things he found a small easel, which had a very Anglican aspect about it. Wondering how it had got there, he set it up, with a sheet of paper on it, tried various parts of the room, in order to find out the best position for a picture, and went through that interesting series of steppings back and puttings of the head on one side which seem to be inseparably connected with true art.

While thus engaged in the profound silence of that luxurious apartment, with its "dim religious light," now glancing at the rich ceiling, anon at the fair sheet of paper, he chanced to look below the margin of the latter and observed, through the legs of the easel, that the gorgeous eyes of the gazelle were fixed on him in apparent wonder.

He advanced to it at once, holding out a hand coaxingly. The pretty creature allowed him to approach within a few inches, and then bounded from its cushion like a thing of india-rubber to the other end of the room, where it faced about and gazed again.

"You gaze well, pretty creature," thought the embryo artist. "Perhaps that's the origin of your name! Humph! you won't come to me?"

The latter part of his thoughts he expressed aloud, but the animal made no response. It evidently threw the responsibility of taking the initiative on the man.

Our middy was naturally persevering in character. Laying aside his pencil, he sat down on the marble floor, put on his most seductive expression, held out his hand gently, and muttered soft encouragements—such as, "Now then, Spunkie, come here, an' don't be silly—" and the like. But "Spunkie" still stood immovable and gazed.

Then the middy took to advancing in a sitting posture—after a manner known to infants—at the same time intensifying the urbanity of his look and the wheedlement of his tone. The gazelle suffered him to approach until his fingers were within an inch of its nose. There the middy stopped. He had studied animal nature. He was aware that it takes two to love as well as to quarrel. He resolved to wait. Seeing this, the gazelle timidly advanced its little nose and touched his finger. He scratched gently! Spunkie seemed to like it. He scratched progressively up its forehead. Spunkie evidently enjoyed it. He scratched behind its ear, and—the victory was gained! The gazelle, dismissing all fear, advanced and rubbed its graceful head on his shoulder.

"Well, you *are* a nice little beast," said Foster, as he fondled it; "whoever owns you must be very kind to you, but I can't afford to waste more time with you. Must get to work."

He rose and returned to his easel while the gazelle

trotted to its cushion and lay down—to sleep? perchance to dream?—no, to gaze, as before, but in mitigated wonder.

The amateur painter-slave now applied himself diligently to his work with ever-increasing interest; yet not altogether without an uncomfortable and humiliating conviction that if he did not do it with reasonable rapidity, and give moderate satisfaction, he ran the chance of being "whacked" if not worse!

Let not the reader imagine that we are drawing the longbow here, and making these Moors to be more cruel than they really were. Though Ben-Ahmed was an amiable specimen, he was not a typical Algerine, for cruelty of the most dreadful kind was often perpetrated by these monsters in the punishment of trivial offences in those days. At the present hour there stands in the great square of Algiers an imposing mosque, which was designed by a Christian slave—an architect—whose head was cut off because he had built it—whether intentionally or accidentally we know not—in the form of a cross!

For some hours Foster worked uninterruptedly with his pencil, for he believed, like our great Turner in his earlier days, (though Turner's sun had not yet arisen!) that the preliminary drawing for a picture cannot be too carefully or elaborately done.

After having bumped himself against the wall twice, and tripped over an ottoman once—to the gazelle's intense surprise—in his efforts to take an artistic view of his work, Foster at last laid down his pencil, stretched himself to his full height, with his hands in the air by way of relaxation, and was beginning to remember that midday meals were not unknown to man, when the

negress before mentioned entered with a small round brass tray on which were two covered dishes. The middy lowered his hands in prompt confusion, for he had not attained to the Moors' sublime indifference to the opinion or thought of slaves.

He was about to speak, but checked the impulse. It was wiser to hold his tongue! A kindliness of disposition, however, induced him to smile and nod—attentions which impelled the negress, as she retired, to display her teeth and gums to an extent that no one would believe if we were to describe it.

On examination it was found that one of the dishes contained a savoury compound of rice and chicken, with plenty of butter and other substances—some of which were sweet.

The other dish contained little rolls of bread. Both dishes appeared to Foster to be made of embossed gold—or brass, but he knew and cared not which. Coffee in a cup about the size and shape of an egg was his beverage. While engaged with the savoury and altogether unexpected meal, our hero felt his elbow touched. Looking round he saw the gazelle looking at him with an expression in its beautiful eyes that said plainly, "Give me my share."

"You shall have it, my dear," said the artist, handing the creature a roll, with which it retired contentedly to its cushion.

"Perhaps," thought the youth, as he pensively sipped his coffee, "this room may be sometimes used by Hester! It obviously forms part of the seraglio."

Strange old fellow, Ben-Ahmed, to allow men like me to invade such a place.

The thought of the ladies of the harem somehow suggested his mother and sister, and when poor George got upon this pair of rails he was apt to be run away with, and to forget time and place. The reverie into which he wandered was interrupted, however, by the gazelle asking for more. As there was no more, it was fain to content itself with a pat on the head as the painter rose to resume his work.

The drawing was by this time all pencilled in most elaborately, and the middy opened the water-colour box to examine the paints. As he did so, he again remarked on the familiar English look of the materials, and was about to begin rubbing down a little of one of the cakes—moist colours had not been invented—when he observed some writing in red paint on the back of the palette. He started and flushed, while his heart beat faster, for the writing was, "*Expect me. Rub this out. H.S.*"

What could this mean? H.S? Hester Sommers of course. It was simple—too simple. He wished for more—like the gazelle. Like it, too, he got no more. After gazing at the writing, until every letter was burnt into his memory, he obeyed the order and rubbed it out. Then, in a disturbed and anxious frame of mind, he tried to paint, casting many a glance, not only at his subject, but at the two doors which opened into the room.

At last one of the doors opened—not the one he happened to be looking at, however. He started up, overturned his stool, and all but knocked down the easel, as the negress re-entered to remove the refreshment-

tray. She called to the gazelle as she went out. It bounded lightly after her, and the young painter was left alone to recover his composure.

"Ass that I am!" he said, knitting his brows, clenching his teeth, and putting a heavy dab of crimson-lake on the ceiling!

At that moment the other door opened, yet so gently and slightly that he would not have observed it but for the sharp line of light which it let through. Determined not to be again taken by surprise, he became absorbed in putting little unmeaning lines round the dab of lake—not so busily, however, as to prevent his casting rapid furtive glances at the opening door.

Gradually something white appeared in the aperture—it was a veil. Something blue—it was an eye. Something quite beyond description lovely—it was Hester herself, looking—if such be conceivable—like a scared angel!

"Oh, Mr Foster!" she exclaimed, in a half-whisper, running lightly in, and holding up a finger by way of caution, "I have so longed to see you—"

"So have I," interrupted the delighted middy. "Dear H—— ah—Miss Sommers, I mean, I felt sure that—that—this *must* be your room—no, what's its name? boudoir; and the gazelle—"

"Yes, yes—oh! never mind that," interrupted the girl impatiently. "My father—darling father!—any news of *him*."

Blushing with shame that he should have thought of his own feelings before her anxieties, Foster dropped the

little hand which he had already grasped, and hastened to tell of the meeting with her father in the Kasba—the ease with which he had recognised him from her description, and the few hurried words of comfort he had been able to convey before the slave-driver interfered.

Tears were coursing each other rapidly down Hester's cheeks while he was speaking; yet they were not tears of unmingled grief.

"Oh, Mr Foster!" she said, seizing the middy's hand, and kissing it, "how shall I *ever* thank you?"

Before she could add another word, an unlucky touch of Foster's heel laid the easel, with an amazing clatter, flat on the marble floor! Hester bounded through the doorway more swiftly than her own gazelle, slammed the door behind her, and vanished like a vision.

Poor Foster! Although young and enthusiastic, he was not a coxcomb. The thrill in the hand that had been kissed told him plainly that he was hopelessly in love! But a dull weight on his heart told him, he thought as plainly, that Hester was *not* in the same condition.

"Dear child!" he said, as he slowly gathered up the drawing materials, "if that innocent, transparent, almost infantine creature had been old enough to fall in love she would sooner have hit me on the nose with her lovely fist than have kissed my great ugly paw—even though she *was* overwhelmed with joy at hearing about her father."

Having replaced the easel and drawing, he seated himself on an ottoman, put his elbows on his knees, laid his forehead in his hands, and began to meditate aloud.

"Yes," he said, with a profound sigh, "I love her—that's as clear as daylight; and she does not love me—that's clearer than daylight. Unrequited love! That's what I've come to! Nevertheless, I'm not in wild despair. How's that? I don't want to shoot or drown myself. How's that? On the contrary, I want to live and rescue her. I could serve or die for that child with pleasure—without even the reward of a smile! There must be something peculiar here. Is it—can it be Platonic love? Of course that must be it. Yes, I've often heard and read of that sort of love before. I *know* it now, and—and—I rather like it!"

"You don't look as if you did, Geo'ge," said a deep voice beside him.

George started up with a face of scarlet.

"Peter!" he exclaimed fiercely, "did you hear me speak? *What* did you hear?"

"Halo! Geo'ge, don't squeeze my arm so! You's hurtin' me. I hear you say somet'ing 'bout plotummik lub, but what sort o' lub that may be is more'n I kin tell."

"Are you *sure* that is all you— But come, Peter, I should have no secrets from *you*. The truth is," (he whispered low here), "I have seen Hester Sommers—here, in this room, not half an hour ago—and—and I feel that I am hopelessly in love with her—Platonically, that is—but I fear you won't understand what that means—"

The midshipman stopped abruptly. For the first time since they became acquainted he saw a grave expression of decided disapproval on the face of his sable friend.

"Geo'ge," said Peter solemnly, "you tell me you hab took

'vantage ob bein' invited to your master's house to make lub—plo—plotummikilly or oderwise—to your master's slabe?"

"No, Peter, I told you nothing of the sort. The meeting with Hester was purely accidental—at least it was none of my seeking—and I did *not* make love to her—"

"Did *she* make lub to you, Geo'ge—plo—plotummikilly."

"Certainly not. She came to ask about her poor father, and I saw that she is far too young to *think* of falling in love at all. What I said was that *I* have fallen hopelessly in love, and that as I cannot hope that she will ever be—be *mine*, I have made up my mind to love her hopelessly, but loyally, to the end of life, and serve or die for her if need be."

"Oh! das all right, Geo'ge. If dat's what you calls plo—plotummik lub—lub away, my boy, as hard's you kin. Same time, I's not kite so sure dat she's too young to hub. An' t'ings ain't allers as hopeless as dey seems. But now, what's dis you bin do here? My! How pritty. Oh! das *real* bootiful. But what's you got in de ceiling—de sun, eh?"

He pointed to the dab of crimson-lake.

Foster explained that it was merely a "bit of colour."

"Ob course! A cow wid half an eye could see dat!"

"Well—but I mean—it's a sort of—a kind of—tone to paint up to."

"H'm! das strange now. I don't hear no sound nowhar!"

“Well, then, it’s a shadow, Peter.”

“Geo’ge,” said the negro, with a look of surprise, “I do t’ink your plo-plotummik lub hab disagreed wid you. Come ’long to de kitchen an’ hab your supper—it’s all ready.”

So saying, he went off with his friend and confidant to the culinary region, which was also the *salle à manger* of the slaves.

Chapter Eight.

A Severe Trial—Secret Communication under Difficulties, and Sudden Flight.

The devotion of our middy to the fine arts was so satisfactory in its results that Ben-Ahmed set him to work at various other apartments in his dwelling when the first drawing was nearly finished.

We say nearly finished, because, owing to some unaccountable whim, the Moor would not allow the first drawing to be completed. When Foster had finished a painting of the central court his master was so pleased with the way in which he had drawn and coloured the various shrubs and flowers which grew there, that he ordered him forthwith to commence a series of drawings of the garden from various points of view. In one of these Foster introduced such a life-like portrait of Peter the Great that Ben-Ahmed was charmed, and immediately gave orders to have most of his slaves portrayed while engaged in their various occupations.

In work of this kind many months were spent, for Foster was a painstaking worker. He finished all his paintings with minute care, having no capacity for off-hand or rapid sketching. During this period the engrossing nature of his work—of which he was extremely fond—tended to prevent his mind from dwelling too much on his condition of slavery, but it was chiefly the knowledge that Hester Sommers was under the same roof, and the expectation that at any moment he might encounter her, which

reconciled him to his fate, and even made him cheerful under it.

But as week after week passed away, and month after month, without even a flutter of her dress being seen by him, his heart failed him again, and he began to fear that Ben-Ahmed's son Osman might have returned and carried her off as his bride, or that she might have been sold to some rich Moor—even to the Dey himself! Of course his black friend comforted him with the assurance that Osman had not returned, and that Ben-Ahmed was not the man to sell a slave he was fond of; but such assurances did not afford him much comfort. His mind was also burdened with anxiety about his mother and sister.

He was sitting one day while in this state at an angle of the garden trying to devote his entire mind to the portrayal of a tree-fern, and vainly endeavouring to prevent Hester Sommers from coming between him and the paper, when he was summoned to attend upon Ben-Ahmed. As this was an event of by no means uncommon occurrence, he listlessly gathered up his materials and went into the house.

He found the Moor seated cross-legged on a carpet, smoking his hookah, with only a negress in attendance. His easel, he found, was already placed, and, to his surprise, he observed that the original drawing with which his career as a painter had commenced was placed upon it.

"I wish you to finish that picture by introducing a figure," said Ben-Ahmed, with solemn gravity.

He spoke in Lingua Franca, which Foster understood

pretty well by that time.

It now became evident to him why the drawing of the room had been left unfinished, and he thought it probable that modesty—or, perhaps, a difficulty in overcoming the Moslem's dislike to being transferred to canvas at all—had caused the delay.

"In what attitude do you wish to be painted?" asked the middy, as he moved the easel a little, and took a professional, head-on-one-side look at his subject.

"In no attitude," returned the Moor gravely.

"Pardon me," said Foster in surprise. "Did you not say that—that—"

"I said that I wish you to finish the drawing by introducing a figure," returned Ben-Ahmed, taking a long draw at the hookah.

"Just so—and may I ask—"

"The figure," resumed the Moor, taking no notice of the interruption, "is to be one of my women slaves."

Here he turned his head slightly and gave a brief order to the negress in waiting, who retired by the door behind her.

The middy stood silent for a minute or so, lost in wonder and expectation, when another door opened and a female entered. She was gorgeously dressed, and closely veiled, so that her face was entirely concealed; nevertheless, George Foster's heart seemed to bound into his throat and half choke him, for he knew the size, air, and general

effect of that female as well as if she had been his own mother.

The Moor rose, led her to a cushion, and bade her sit down. She did so with the grace of Venus, and then the Moor removed her veil—looking fixedly at the painter as he did so.

But the middy had recovered self-possession by that time. He was surprised as well as deeply concerned to observe that Hester's beautiful face was very pale, and her eyes were red and swollen, as if from much crying, but not a muscle in his stolid countenance betrayed the slightest emotion. He put his head a little to one side, in the orthodox manner, and looked steadily at her. Then he looked at his painting and frowned as if considering the best spot in which to place this "figure." Then he began to work.

Meanwhile the Moor sat down to smoke in such a position that he could see both painter and sitter.

It was a severe test of our middy's capacity to act the "hyperkrite!" His heart was thumping at his ribs like a sledge-hammer anxious to get out. His hand trembled so that he could scarcely draw a line, and he was driven nearly mad with the necessity of presenting a calm, thoughtful exterior when the effervescence within, as he afterwards admitted, almost blew his head off like a champagne cork.

By degrees he calmed down, ceased breaking the point of his pencil, and used his india-rubber less frequently. Then he took to colour and the brush, and here the tide began to turn in his favour. *Such* a subject surely never before sat to painter since the world began! He became

engrossed in his work. The eyes became intent, the hand steady, the heart regular, the whole man intense, while a tremendous frown and compressed lips told that he "meant business!"

Not less intense was the attention of the Moor. Of course we cannot tell what his thoughts were, but it seemed not improbable that his eccentric recklessness in violating all his Mohammedan habits and traditions as to the seclusion of women, by thus exposing Hester to the gaze of a young infidel, had aroused feelings of jealousy and suspicion, which were not natural to his kindly and un-Moorish cast of soul.

But while young Foster was employed in the application of his powers to energetic labour, the old Moor was engaged in the devotion of *his* powers to the consumption of smoke. The natural results followed. While the painter became more and more absorbed, so as to forget all around save his sitter and his work, the Moor became more and more devoted to his hookah, till he forgot all around save the soporific influences of smoke. An almost oppressive silence ensued, broken only by the soft puffing of Ben-Ahmed's lips, and an occasional change in the attitude of the painter. And oh! how earnestly did that painter wish that Ben-Ahmed would retire—even for a minute—to give him a chance of exchanging a word or two with his subject.

But the Moor was steady as a rock. Indeed he was too steady, for the curtains of his eyes suddenly fell, and shut in the owlish glare with which he had been regarding the middy. At the same moment a sharp click and clatter sent an electric thrill to the hearts of all. The Moor's mouthpiece had fallen on the marble floor! Ben-

Ahmed picked it up and replaced it with severe gravity, yet a faint flicker of red in his cheek, and a very slight air of confusion, showed that even a magnificent Moor objects to be caught napping by his slaves.

This incident turned Foster's thoughts into a new channel. If the Moor should again succumb to the demands of nature—or the influence of tobacco—how could he best make use of the opportunity? It was a puzzling question. To speak—in a whisper or otherwise—was not to be thought of. Detection would follow almost certainly. The dumb alphabet would have been splendid, though dangerous, but neither he nor Hester understood it. Signs might do. He would try signs, though he had never tried them before. What then? Did not "Never venture, never win," "Faint heart never won," etcetera, and a host of similar proverbs assure him that a midshipman, of all men, should "never say die."

A few minutes more gave him the chance. Again the mouthpiece fell, but this time it dropped on the folds of the Moor's dress, and in another minute steady breathing told that Ben-Ahmed was in the land of Nod—if not of dreams.

A sort of lightning change took place in the expressions of the young people. Hester's face beamed with intelligence. Foster's blazed with mute interrogation. The little maid clasped her little hands, gazed upwards anxiously, looked at the painter entreatingly, and glanced at the Moor dubiously.

Foster tried hard to talk to her "only with his eyes." He even added some amazing motions of the lips which were meant to convey— "What's the matter with you?" but they conveyed nothing, for Hester only shook her

head and looked miserable.

A mild choke at that moment caused the maid to fall into statuesque composure, and the painter to put his frowning head tremendously to one side as he stepped back in order to make quite sure that the last touch was really equal, if not superior, to Michael Angelo himself!

The Moor resumed his mouthpiece with a suspicious glance at both slaves, and Foster, with the air of a man who feels that Michael was fairly overthrown, stepped forward to continue his work. Truly, if Peter the Great had been there at the time he might have felt that he also was fairly eclipsed in his own particular line!

Foster now became desperate, and his active mind began to rush wildly about in quest of useful ideas, while his steady hand pursued its labour until the Moor smoked himself into another slumber.

Availing himself of the renewed opportunity, the middy wrapped a small piece of pencil in a little bit of paper, and, with the reckless daring of a man who had boarded a pirate single-handed, flung it at his lady-love.

His aim was true—as that of a midshipman should be. The little bomb struck Hester on the nose and fell into her lap. She unrolled it quickly, and an expression of blank disappointment was the result, for the paper was blank and she had expected a communication. She looked up inquiringly, and beaming intelligence displaced the blank when she saw that Foster made as though he were writing large text on his drawing. She at once flattened the bit of paper on her knee—eyeing the Moor anxiously the while—and scribbled a few words on the paper.

A loud cough from Foster, followed by a violent sneeze, caused her to crush the paper in her hand and again become intensely statuesque. Prompt though she was, this would not have saved her from detection if the violence of Foster's sneeze had not drawn the Moor's first glance away from her and towards himself.

"Pardon me," said the middy, with a deprecatory air, "a sneeze is sometimes difficult to repress."

"Does painting give Englishmen colds?" asked the Moor sternly.

"Sometimes it does—especially if practised out of doors in bad weather," returned Foster softly.

"H'm! That will do for to-day. You may return to your painting in the garden. It will, perhaps, cure your cold. Go!" he added, turning to Hester, who immediately rose, pushed the paper under the cushion on which she had been sitting, and left the room with her eyes fixed on the ground.

As the cat watches the mouse, Foster had watched the girl's every movement while he bent over his paint-box. He saw where she put the paper. In conveying his materials from the room, strange to say, he slipped on the marble floor, close to the cushion, secured the paper as he rose, and, picking up his scattered things with an air of self-condemnation, retired humbly—yet elated—from the presence-chamber.

Need we say that in the first convenient spot he could find he eagerly unrolled the paper, and read—

"I am lost! Oh, save me! Osman has come! I have *seen*

him! *Hateful*! He comes to-morrow to—”

The writing ended abruptly.

“My hideous sneeze did that!” growled Foster savagely. “But if I had been a moment later Ben-Ahmed might have —well, well; no matter. She *must* be saved. She *shall* be saved!”

Having said this, clenched his teeth and hands, and glared, he began to wonder *how* she was to be saved. Not being able to arrive at any conclusion on this point, he went off in search of his friend Peter the Great.

He found that worthy man busy mending a rake in a tool-house, and in a few eager words explained how matters stood. At first the negro listened with his wonted, cheerful smile and helpful look, which hitherto had been a sort of beacon-light to the poor midshipman in his troubles, but when he came to the piece of paper and read its contents the smile vanished.

“Osman home!” he said. “If Osman come back it’s a black look-out for poor Hester! And the paper says to-morrow,” cried Foster; “to take her away and marry her, no doubt. Peter, I tell you, she must be saved *to-night*! You and I must save her. If you won’t aid me I will do it alone—or die in the attempt.”

“Geo’ge, if you was to die a t’ousan’ times dat wouldn’t sabe her. You know de Kasba?”

“Yes, yes—go on!”

“Well, if you was to take dat on your shoulders an’ pitch ’im into de sea, *dat* wouldn’t sabe her.”

"Yes it would, you faint-hearted nigger!" cried the middy, losing all patience, "for if I could do that I'd be able to wring the neck of every pirate in Algiers—and I'd do it too!"

"Now, Geo'ge, keep cool. I's on'y p'intin' out what you can't do; but p'r'aps somet'ing may be done. Yes," (he struck his forehead with his fist, as if to clinch a new idea),—"yes, I knows! I's hit it!"

"What!" cried Foster eagerly.

"Dat you's got nuffin to do wid," returned the negro decisively. "You must know not'ing, understand not'ing, hear an' see not'ing, for if you do you'll be whacked to deaf. Bery likely you'll be whacked anyhow, but dat not so bad. You must just shut your eyes an' mout' an' trust all to *me*. You understand, Geo'ge?"

"I think I do," said the relieved middy, seizing the negro's right hand and wringing it gratefully. "Bless your black face! I trust you from the bottom of my soul."

It was, indeed, a source of immense relief to poor Foster that his friend not only took up the matter with energy, but spoke in such a cheery, hopeful tone, for the more he thought of the subject the more hopeless did the case of poor Hester Sommers appear. He could of course die for her—and would, if need were—but this thought was always followed by the depressing question, "What good would that do to *her*?"

Two hours after the foregoing conversation occurred Peter the Great was seated in a dark little back court in a low coffee-house in one of the darkest, narrowest, and most

intricate streets of Algiers. He sat on an empty packing-box. In front of him was seated a stout negress, in whom an Ethiopian might have traced some family likeness to Peter himself.

"Now, Dinah," said he, continuing an earnest conversation which had already lasted for some time, "you understand de case properly—eh?"

"Ob course I does," said Dinah.

"Well, den, you must go about it at once. Not a minute to lose. You'll find me at de gardin door. I'll let you in. You know who you's got to sabe, an' you must find out your own way to sabe her, an'—now, hol' your tongue! You's just a-goin' to speak—I must know nuffin'. Don' tell me one word about it. You's a cleber woman, Dinah."

"Yes, my brudder. I wasn't born yesterday—no, nor yet the day before."

"An', Samson, will you trust *him*?"

"My husband is as good as gold. I trust him wid eberyt'ing!" replied this pattern wife.

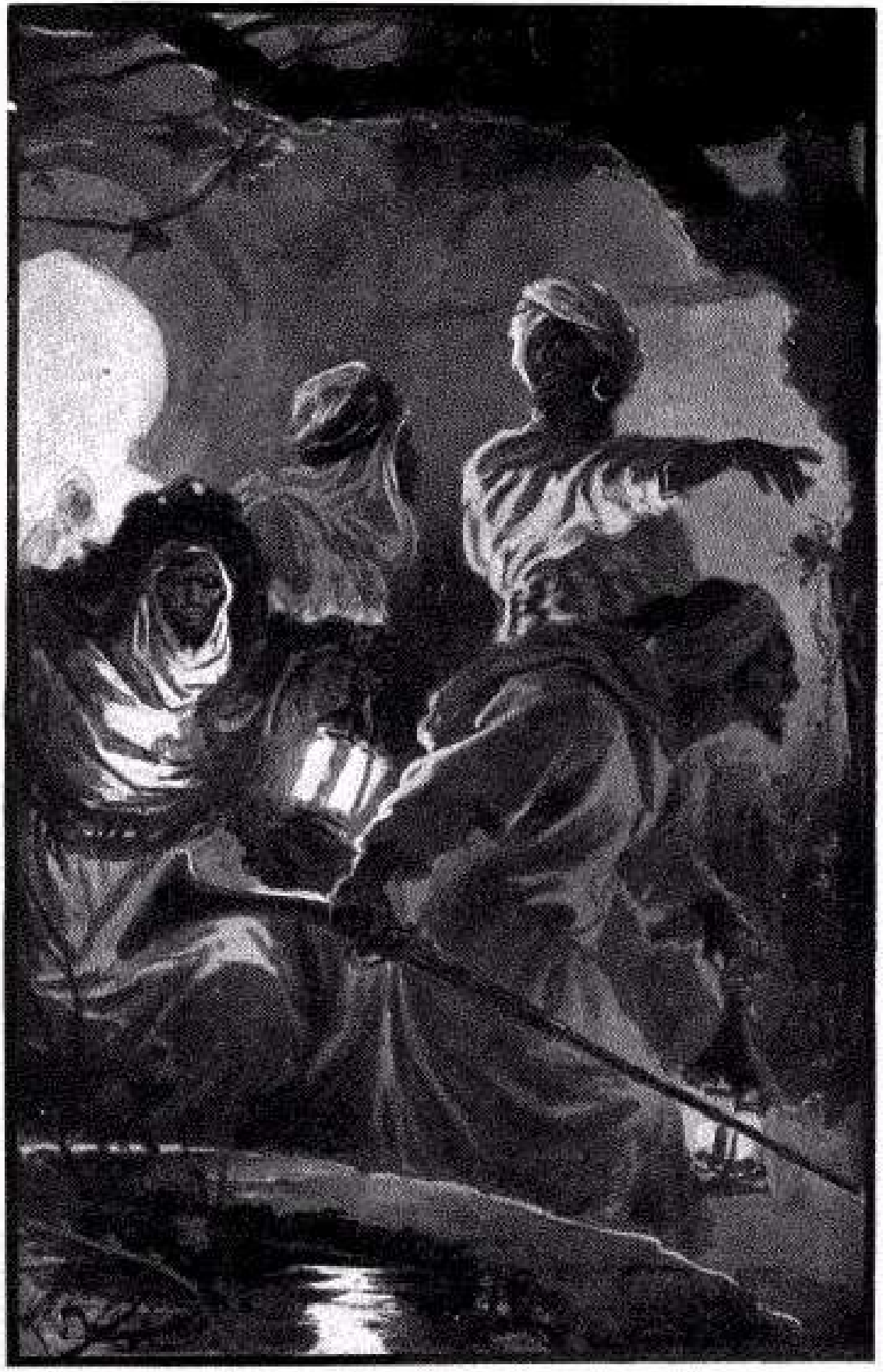
"An' Youssef—what ob him?"

"He's more'n t'ree quarters blind. Kin see not'ing, an' understan's less."

"Dinah, you's a good woman," remarked her appreciative brother, as he rose to depart. "Now, remember, dis am de most important job you an' I hab had to do since we was took by de pirits out ob de same ship. An' I do t'ink de Lord hab bin bery good to us, for He's gi'n us good

massas at last, though we had some roughish ones at fust. Foller me as quick as you can."

Dinah, being a warm-hearted woman, and very sympathetic, did not waste time. She reached Ben-Ahmed's villa only half an hour later than her



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brother, with a basket of groceries and other provisions that Peter had purchased in town. Peter took care that the young

negress, whom we have already introduced as an attendant in the house, should be sent to receive the basket, and Dinah took care that she should not return to the house until she had received a bouquet of flowers to present to the young English girl in the harem. Inside of this bouquet was a little note written by Peter. It ran thus—

"Tri an git owt to de gardin soons yoo kan."

When Hester Sommers discovered this note, the first ray of hope entered into her fluttering heart, and she resolved to profit by it.

Meanwhile, Dinah, instead of quitting the place after delivering her basket, hid herself in the shrubbery. It was growing dark by that time, and Peter made a noisy demonstration of sending one of the slaves to see that the garden gate was locked for the night. Thereafter he remained all the rest of the evening in his own apartments in pretty loud conversation with the slaves.

Suddenly there was a cry raised, and several slaves belonging to the inner household rushed into the outer house with glaring eyes, shouting that the English girl could not be found.

"Not in de house?" cried Peter, starting up in wild excitement.

"No—nowhar in de house!"

"To de gardin, quick!" shouted Peter, leading the way, while Ben-Ahmed himself, with undignified haste, joined in the pursuit.

Lanterns were lighted, and were soon flitting like fireflies all over the garden, but no trace of the fugitive was found. Peter entered into the search with profound interest, being as yet utterly ignorant of the method of escape devised by his sister. Suddenly one of the slaves discovered it. A pile of empty casks, laid against the wall in the form of a giant staircase, showed how Hester had climbed, and a crushed bush on the other side testified to her mode of descent.

Ben-Ahmed and Peter ran up to the spot together. "Dey can't hab gone far, massa. You want de horses, eh?" asked the latter.

"Yes. Two horses, quick!"

Peter went off to the stables in hot haste, remarking as he ran—

"*What* a hyperkrite I is, to be sure!"

Chapter Nine.

Hester introduced to a New Home and New Friends under Peculiar Circumstances, and a New Name.

Long before their flight was discovered Hester Sommers and Dinah had penetrated into a dense thicket, where the negress proceeded to produce a wonderful metamorphosis.

"Now, my dear," she said, hastily undoing a large bundle which she carried, while Hester, panting and terrified, sat

down on the grass beside her, "don't you be frighted. I's your fri'nd. I's Dinah, de sister ob Peter de Great, an' de fri'nd also ob Geo'ge. So you make your mind easy."

"My mind is quite easy," said Hester; "and even if you were not Peter's sister, I'd trust you, because of the tone of your kind voice. But who is Geo'ge?"

Dinah opened her eyes very wide at this question, for Peter had already enlightened her mind a little as to the middy's feelings towards Hester.

"You not know Geo'ge?" she asked.

"Never heard of him before, Dinah."

"Geo'ge Foster?"

"Oh, I understand! It was your way of pronouncing his name that puzzled me," returned the girl, with a faint smile. "I'm glad you are his friend, too, poor fellow!"

"Well, you *is* a babby!" exclaimed Dinah, who had been mixing up what appeared to be black paint in a wooden bowl. "Now, look yar, don't you be frighted. It's a matter ob life an' deaf, you know, but *I's* your fri'nd! Jest you do zackly what I tells you."

"Yes, Dinah," said Hester, alarmed, notwithstanding, by the earnestness and solemnity of her new friend, "what am I to do?"

"You come yar, an' don't moob whateber I does to you. Dere, I's goin' to make you a nigger!"

She applied a large brush to Hester's forehead, and drew

it thence down her left cheek, under her chin, up the right cheek, and back to the starting point, thus producing a black band or circle two inches broad.

"Now shut your bootiful eyes," she said, and proceeded to fill up the circle.

In a quarter of an hour Hester was as black as the ace of spades—neck, hands, and arms, as well as face—her fair hair was effectually covered and concealed by a cotton kerchief, and then her dress was changed for the characteristic costume of negro women.

"Now your own mudder wouldn't know you," said Dinah, stepping back to survey her work, and, strange to say, putting her black head quite artistically a little on one side. "You's a'most as good-lookin' as myself—if you was on'y a little fatter. Now, mind, you's a dumb gal! Can't speak a word. Don't forgit dat. An' your name's Geo'giana. Come along."

Leaving her fine clothes concealed in a deep hole, Hester followed her companion as fast as she could. On returning to the road Dinah took her friend by the hand and helped her to run for a considerable distance. Then they walked, and then ran again, until poor Hester was almost exhausted.

Resuming their walk after a short rest, they gained the main road and met with several people, who paid no attention to them whatever, much to Hester's relief, for she had made sure of being detected. At last they reached the city gate, which was still open, as the sun had not yet set. Passing through unchallenged, Dinah at once dived into a maze of narrow streets, and, for the first time since starting, felt comparatively safe.

Fortunately for the success of their enterprise, the negress costume fitted loosely, so that the elegance of Hester's form was not revealed, and her exhaustion helped to damage the grace of her carriage!

"Now, dearie, you come in yar an' rest a bit," said Dinah, turning into a dark cellar-like hole, from which issued both sounds and smells that were not agreeable. It was the abode of one of Dinah's friends—also a negress—who received her with effusive goodwill.

Retiring to the coal-hole—or some such dark receptacle—Dinah held her friend in conversation for about a quarter of an hour, during which time several hearty Ethiopian chuckles were heard to burst forth. Then, returning to the cellar, Dinah introduced her friend to Hester as Missis Lilly, and Hester to Missis Lilly as Miss Geo'giana.

Wondering why her friend had selected for her the name—if she remembered rightly—of one of Blue Beard's wives, Hester bowed, and was about to speak when Dinah put her flat nose close to hers and sternly said, "Dumb."

"Moreober," she continued, "you mustn't bow like a lady, or you'll be diskivered 'mediately. You must bob. Sally!"

This last word was shouted. The instant effect was the abrupt stoppage of one of the disagreeable sounds before referred to—a sound as of pounding—and the appearance of a black girl who seemed to rise out of a pit in the floor at the darkest end of the cellar.

"Sally, show dis yar stoopid gal how to bob."

The girl instantly broke off, so to speak, at the knees for a moment, and then came straight again.

“Now, Geo’giana, you bob.”

Hester entered into the spirit of the thing and broke off admirably, whereat Dinah and Lilly threw back their heads and shook their sides with laughter. Sally so far joined them as to show all her teeth and gums. Otherwise she was expressionless.

“Now you come yar wid me into dis room,” said Dinah, taking Hester’s hand and heading her along a passage which was so profoundly dark that the very walls and floor were invisible. Turning suddenly to the left, Dinah advanced a few paces and stood still.

“You stop where you is, Geo’giana, till I gits a light. Don’t stir,” she said, and left her.

A feeling of intense horror began to creep over the poor girl when she was thus left alone in such a horrible place, and she began almost to regret that she had forsaken the comfortable home of the Moor, and to blame herself for ingratitude. In her agony she was about to call aloud to her negro friend not to forsake her, when the words, “Call upon Me in the time of trouble,” occurred to her, and, falling on her knees, she cast herself upon God.

She was not kept waiting long. Only a minute or two had elapsed when Dinah returned with a candle and revealed the fact that they stood in a small low-roofed room, the brick floor of which was partially covered with casks, packing-cases, and general lumber.

“Dis am to be your room, Geo’giana,” said her friend,

holding the candle over her head and surveying the place with much satisfaction.

Poor Hester shuddered.

"It is an awful place," she said faintly.

"Yes, it am a awrful good place," said Dinah, with satisfaction. "Not easy to find you yar; an' if dey did git dis lengt' widout breakin' dere legs, dere's a nice leetil hole yar what you could git in an' larf to youself."

She led the poor girl to the other end of the room, where, in a recess, there was a boarded part of the wall. Removing one of the boards, she disclosed an opening.

"Das a small hole, Geo'giana, but it's big enough to hold *you*, an' when you's inside you've on'y got to pull de board into its place, and fix it—so."

Setting down the candle, the woman stepped into the hole, and went through the performance that would devolve upon Hester in case of emergency.

"But why leave me here at all?" pleaded Hester, when Dinah had exhausted her eulogy of the hiding-place. "Why not take me to your own home?"

"Cause it's not so safe as dis," answered Dinah. "P'r'aps in time you may come dere—not now. Moreober, Missis Lilly is a fuss-rate creetur, most as good as myself, if her temper was a leetil more 'eavenly. But she's a winged serubim wid dem as don't rile 'er, an' she'll be awrful good to you for my sake an' Peter's. You see, we was all on us took by the pints at de same time, and we're all Christ'ns but ob course we don't say much about dat yar!"

"And am I to be always dumb—never to speak at all?" asked Hester, in a rather melancholy tone.

"Oh! no—bress you! It's on'y when you're in de front or outside dat you's dumb. When you's back yar you may speak to Lilly an' Sally much as you like, on'y not too loud; an' keep your eyes open, an' your ears sharp always. If you don't it's lost you will be. Don't forgit Osman!"

Hester shuddered again; said that she would *never* forget Osman, and would be as careful and attentive to orders as possible.

"An' dey'll gib you a little work to do—not much—on'y a little. When peepil speak to you, just point to your ears and mout', an' shake your head. Das enuff. Dey won't boder you arter dat. Now, dearie, I must go. I'll come an' see you sometimes—neber fear. What's to become ob you in de long-run's more'n I kin tell, for it's Peter de Great as'll hab to settle dat kestion. You's in his hands. I knows not'ing, so you'll hab to be patient."

Patient, indeed! Little did that poor painted slave think what demands would yet be made upon her patience. Full two months elapsed before she again saw Peter, or heard anything about Ben-Ahmed and her former friends at Mustapha!

Meanwhile, Dinah having departed, she wisely set herself to make the most of her new friends.

Mrs Lilly she soon found to be quite as amiable as Dinah had described her. She and Sally were slaves to the Moor who dwelt in the house which formed the superstructure

of their cellars; but, unlike white slaves, they were allowed a good deal of personal liberty; first, because there was no danger of their running away, as they had no place to run to; second, because their master wanted them to buy and sell vegetables and other things, in order that he might reap the profit; and, last, because, being an easy-going man, the said master had no objection to see slaves happy as long as their happiness did not interfere in any way with his pleasure.

"Now, Geo'giana," said Mrs Lilly, in the course of their first conversation, "my massa he neber come down yar, nor trouble his head about us, as long's I take him a leetle money ebery day, an' nobody else hab got a right to come, so you's pretty safe if dey don't send de janissaries to make a sarch—an' if dey do, you know whar to go. I'll tell massa we make more money if I gits anoder slabe-gal, an' he'll agree, for he agrees to eberyt'ing ob dat sort! Den he'll forgit all about it, an' den you an' Sally kin go about town what you like."

"But I fear, Mrs Lilly, that I won't be able to help you to make more money," objected Hester timidly.

"Oh yes, you will. You'll larn to 'broider de red an' blue slippers. Das pay well when neatly done, an' I kin see by de shape ob your fingers you do it neatly. You's hungry now, I darsay, so go to work at your grub, an' den I'll show you what to do."

Somewhat comforted by the kindly tone and motherly bearing of Mrs Lilly, Hester went into one of the dark cellar-like rooms of the interior of her new home, and found it to be a sort of kitchen, which borrowed its light from the outer room by means of a convenient wall that was white-washed for the purpose of transmitting it. This

reflector was not an eminent success, but it rendered darkness visible. At the time we write of, however, the sun having set, the kitchen was lighted by a smoky oil-lamp of classic form and dimness. Here she found Sally busy with her evening meal.

Sally was apparently about as little of a human being as was consistent with the possession of a human form and the power of speech. Most of her qualities seemed to be negative—if we may say so. She was obviously not unamiable; she was not unkind; and she was not sulky, though very silent. In fact, she seemed to be the nearest possible approach to a human nonentity. She may be described as a black maid-of-all-work, but her chief occupation was the pounding of roasted coffee-beans. This operation she performed in the pit in the floor before mentioned, which may be described as a hole, into which you descended by four steps from the front room. As the front room itself was below the level of the street, it follows that the "pit" penetrated considerably deeper into the bowels of the earth. In this pit Sally laboured hard, almost day and night, pounding the coffee-beans in an iron mortar, with an iron pestle so heavy that she had to stand up and use it with both hands. She had got into the habit of relieving herself by an audible gasp each time she drove the pestle down. It was not a necessary gasp, only a remonstrative one, as it were, and conveyed more to the intelligent listener than most of the girl's average conversation did. This gasp was also one of the disagreeable sounds which had saluted the ears of Hester on her first entrance into the new home.

"Mrs Lilly is very kind," said Hester, as she sat down at a small table beside her fellow-slave.

Sally stopped eating for a moment and stared. Supposing that she had not understood the remark, Hester repeated it.

"Yes," assented Sally, and then stopped the vocal orifice with a huge wooden spoonful of rice.

Judging that her companion wished to eat in undisturbed silence, Hester helped herself to some rice, and quietly began supper. Sally eyed her all the time, but was too busy feeding herself to indulge in speech. At last she put down her spoon with a sigh of satisfaction, and said, "Das good!" with such an air of honest sincerity that Hester gave way to an irresistible laugh.

"Yes, it is very good indeed. Did you cook it?" asked Hester, anxious to atone for her impoliteness.

"Yes. I cook 'im. I do all de cookin' in dis yar ouse—an' most ob de eatin' too."

"By the way, Sally, what is it that you keep pounding so constantly in that—that hole off the front room?"

"Coffee," answered Sally, with a nod.

"Indeed! Surely not the household coffee. You cannot drink such a quantity!"

Sally stared for a minute; then opened her mouth, shut her eyes, threw back her head, and chuckled.

"No," she said, with sudden gravity; "if we drink'd it all we'd all bu'st right off. I pounds it, Missis Lilly sells it, an' massa pockets de money."

“Do you pound much?” asked Hester, in a tone of sympathy.

“Oh! housefuls,” said Sally, opening her eyes wide. “’Gin at daylight—work till dark, ’cept when doin’ oder t’ings. De Moors drink it. Awrful drinkers am de Moors. Mornin’, noon, an’ night dey swill leetle cups ob coffee. Das de reason dey’s all so brown.”

“Indeed? I never heard before that the brown-ness of their complexion was owing to that. Are you sure?”

“Oh yes; kite sure. Coffee comes troo de skin—das it,” returned Sally, with perfect confidence of tone and manner.

Suddenly she was smitten with a new idea, and stared for some time at her fellow-slave. At last she got it out.

“Missis Lilly say dat you’s dumb. How kin you speak so well if you’s dumb?”

Poor Hester was greatly perplexed. She did not know how far her companion had been let into the secret reason of her being there, and was afraid to answer. At last she made up her mind.

“I am not really dumb, you know; I have only to be dumb when in the street, or when any visitor is in the house here; but when alone with Mrs Lilly or you I am allowed to speak low.”

A gleam of intelligence beamed on the black girl’s face as she said, “No, you’s not dumb. Moreober, you’s not black!”

"Oh, Sally!" exclaimed Hester, in quite a frightened tone; "how did you find that out?"

"Hasn't I got eyes an' ears?" demanded Sally. "Your voice ain't nigger, your 'plexion ain't nigger, an' your mout' an' nose ain't nigger. Does you t'ink Sally's an ass?"

"No, indeed, I am sure you are not; but—but, you—you won't betray me, Sally?"

"Whas dat?"

"You won't tell upon me? Oh, you can't think what dreadful punishment I shall get if I am found out! You won't tell on me, *dear* Sally—won't you not?" entreated Hester, with tears in her eyes.

"Dere, stop dat! Don't cry! Das wuss dan speakin', for de tearz'll wash all de black off your face! Tell on you? Dee see dat?"

Hester certainly did see "dat," for Sally had suddenly protruded we fear to say how many inches of red flesh from her mouth.

"I cut dat off wid de carvin'-knife sooner dan tell on you, for you's my fri'nd, because Peter de Great am your fri'nd. But you muss be dumb—dumb as you kin, anyhow—an' you mus' neber—neber cry!"

The earnestness of this remark caused Hester to laugh even when on the verge of weeping, so she grasped Sally's hand and shook it warmly, thus cementing the friendship which had so auspiciously begun.

After the meal Mrs Lilly took her lodger into the front

room and gave her embroidery work to do. She found it by no means difficult, having learned something like it during her residence with Ben-Ahmed's household. At night she retired to the dark lumber-room, but as Sally owned one of the corners of it Hester did not feel as lonely as she had feared, and although her bed was only made of straw, it was by no means uncomfortable, being spread thickly and covered with two blankets.

She dreamed, of course, and it may easily be understood that her dreams were not pleasant, and that they partook largely of terrible flights from horrible dangers, and hairbreadth escapes from an ogre who, whatever shape he might assume, always displayed the head and features of the hated Osman.

Next morning, however, she arose pretty well refreshed, and inexpressibly thankful to find that she was still safe.

For a long time she remained thus in hiding. Then, as it was considered probable that search for her had been given up as useless, Mrs Lilly resolved to send her out with Sally to one of the obscurer market-places, to purchase some household necessaries.

"You see, chile," said the motherly woman, "you git sick on my hands if you not go out, an' dere's no danger. Just keep your shawl well ober your face, an' hold your tongue. Don't forgit dat. Let 'em kill you if dey likes, but don't speak!"

With this earnest caution ringing in her ears, Hester went forth with Sally to thread the mazes of the town. At first she was terribly frightened, and fancied that every one who looked at her saw through her disguise, but as time passed and no one took the least notice of her, her

natural courage returned, and gradually she began to observe and take an interest in the strange persons and things she saw everywhere around her.

Chapter Ten.

Torture is Applied in Vain, and True Love is not to be Deceived.

We must return now to the residence of Ben-Ahmed at Mustapha.

When his son Osman—who had seen Hester only once and that for but a few minutes—discovered that the fair slave had fled, his rage knew no bounds. He immediately sent for Peter the Great and sternly asked him if he knew how the English girl had escaped. Their intercourse, we may remark, was carried on in the same curious manner as that referred to in connection with Ben-Ahmed. Osman spoke in Lingua Franca and Peter replied in his ordinary language.

"Oh yes, massa, I know," said the latter, with intense earnestness; "she escaped ober de wall."

"Blockhead!" exclaimed the irate Osman, who was a sturdy but ill-favoured specimen of Moslem humanity. "Of course I know that, but *how* did she escape over the wall?"

"Don' know dat, massa. You see I's not dere at de time, so can't 'zactly say. Moreober, it was bery dark, an' eben

if I's dar, I couldn't see peepil in de dark."

"You lie! you black scoundrel! and you know that you do. You could tell me much more about this if you chose."

"No, indeed, I don't lie—if a slabe may dar to counterdick his massa," returned Peter humbly. "But you's right when you say I could tell you much more. Oh! I could tell you *heaps* more! In de fuss place I was sotin' wid de oder slabes in de kitchen, enjoyin' ourselves arter supper, w'en we hear a cry! Oh my! how my heart jump! Den all our legs jump, and out we hoed wid lanterns an—"

"Fool! don't I know all that? Now, tell me the truth, has the English slave, George Fos—Fos—I forget his name—"

"Geo'ge Foster," suggested the negro, with an amiable look.

"Yes; has Foster had no hand in the matter?"

"Unpossible, I t'ink," said Peter. "You see he was wid me and all de oder slabes when de girl hoed off, an' I don't t'ink eben a Englishman kin be in two places at one time. But you kin ax him; he's in de gardin."

"Go, fetch him," growled the young Moor, "and tell four of my men to come here. They are waiting outside."

The negro retired, and, soon after, four stout Moorish seamen entered. They seemed worthy of their gruff commander, who ordered them to stand at the inner end of the room. As he spoke he took up an iron instrument, somewhat like a poker, and thrust it into a brazier which contained a glowing charcoal fire.

Presently Peter the Great returned with young Foster. Osman did not condescend to speak directly to him, but held communication through the negro.

Of course our hero could throw no light on the subject, being utterly ignorant of everything—as Peter had wisely taken the precaution to ensure—except of the bare fact that Hester was gone.

"Now, it is my opinion," said Osman, with a savage frown, "that you are both deceiving me, and if you don't tell the truth I will take means to force it out of you."

Saying this he turned to the brazier and pulled out the iron poker to see that it was becoming red-hot. The countenance of the negro became very grave as he observed this, and the midshipman's heart sank within him.

"So you deliberately tell me," said the Moor abruptly, as he wheeled round and confronted Peter the Great, "that you have no knowledge as to where, or with whom, this girl is?"

"No, massa," answered the negro, with solemn sincerity. "If you was to skin me alive I not able to tell you whar she is or who she is wid."

Peter said no more than this aloud, but he added, internally, that he would sooner die than give any further information, even if he had it to give.

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Osman made a motion with his hand as a signal to the

four seamen, who, advancing quickly, seized the negro, and held him fast. One of the men then stripped off the poor man's shirt. At the same moment Osman drew the red-hot iron from the fire, and deliberately laid it on Peter's back, the skin of which hissed and almost caught fire, while a cloud of smoke arose from it.

The hapless victim did not struggle. He was well aware that resistance would be useless. He merely clenched his teeth and hands. But when Osman removed the iron and applied it to another part of his broad back a deep groan of agony burst from the poor fellow, and beads of perspiration rolled from his brow.

At first George Foster could scarcely believe his eyes. He was almost paralysed by an intense feeling of horror. Then there came a tremendous rebound. Rage, astonishment, indignation, fury, and a host of cognate passions, met and exploded in his bosom. Uttering a yell that harmonised therewith, he sprang forward, hit Osman a straight English left-hander between the eyes, and followed it up with a right-hander in the gullet, which sent the cruel monster flat on the floor, and his head saluted the bricks with an effective bump. In his fall the Moor overturned the brazier, and brought the glowing fire upon his bosom, which it set alight—his garments being made of cotton.

To leap up with a roar of pain and shake off the glowing cinders was the work of a moment. In the same moment two of the stout seamen threw themselves on the roused midshipman, and overcame him—not, however, before one of them had received a black eye and the other a bloody nose, for Moors do not understand the art of self-defence with the fists.

“Down with him!” shouted Osman, when he had extinguished the flames.

He seized a supple cane, or wand, as the seamen threw Foster down, and held his feet in the air, after tearing off his shoes.

Wild with fury, Osman brought the cane down on the poor youth’s soles. It was his first taste of the bastinado. The agony took him by surprise, and extorted a sharp yell. Next moment his teeth were in the calf of one of the men’s legs, and his right hand grasped the baggy trousers of the other. A compound kick and plunge overturned them both, and as they all fell into a heap, the cheek of one seaman received a stinging blow that was meant for the middy’s soles.

Things had reached this crisis, and Peter the Great, having hurled aside his two assailants, was on the point of rushing to the rescue of his friend, when the door burst open, and Ben-Ahmed stood before them quivering with indignation.

“Is this your return for my forbearance? Be-gone!” he shouted to his son in a voice of thunder.

Osman knew his father too well to require a second bidding. He left the room angrily, and a look from Ben-Ahmed sent the four sailors after him.

The Moor was too well accustomed to his wild son’s ways to require any explanation of the cause of the fracas. Just giving one glance at his slaves, to make sure that neither was killed, he left the room as hastily as he had entered it.

"My poor friend," exclaimed the middy, grasping the negro's hand with a gush of mingled enthusiasm and pity, "I trust you have not been much injured by that inhuman brute?"

"Oh, bress you! no. It do smart a bit," returned Peter, as he put on his shirt uneasily, "an' I's used to it, Geo'ge, you know. But how's your poo' feet?"

"Well, I'm not vary sure," replied Foster, making a wry face as he sat down to examine them. "How it did sting, Peter! I owe a heavy debt of gratitude to old Ben-Ahmed for cutting it short. No, the skin's not damaged, I see, but there are two or three most awful weals. D'you know, I never before this day felt sorry that I wasn't born a dog!"

"Why's dat, Geo'ge?"

Because then I should have been able to make my teeth meet in yon fellow's leg, and would have held on! Yes, I don't know what I would not have given just at that time to have been born a mastiff, or a huge Saint Bernard, or a thoroughbred British bull-dog, with double the usual allowance of canines and grinders!

The negro threw back his head and began one of his silent laughs, but suddenly stopped, opened his eyes wide, pursed his lips, and moved his broad shoulders uneasily.

"I mus' laugh *easy* for some time to come," he remarked.

"Poor fellow!" said Foster, "I fear you must. I say—how my soles do sting!"

"Oh yes, *I* knows," returned Peter, with a remarkably intelligent nod. "But come. We mus' go an' see what massa's a-goin' to do, for you bery sure he won't rest quiet till he's turned ebery stone to find Missy Hester."

Peter the Great left the room with a brave effort to suppress a groan; while our middy followed with an equally valorous determination not to limp. In both efforts they were but partially successful.

As Peter had prophesied, Ben-Ahmed did indeed leave no stone unturned to recover Hester Sommers, but there was one consideration which checked him a good deal, and prevented his undertaking the search as openly as he wished, and that was the fear that the Dey himself might get wind of what he was about, and so become inquisitive as to the cause of the stir which so noted a man was making about a runaway slave. For Ben-Ahmed feared—and so did Osman—that if the Dey saw Hester he might want to introduce her into his own household.

The caution which they had therefore to observe in prosecuting the search was all in favour of the runaway.

As time passed by, Hester, *alias* Geo'giana, began to feel more at ease in her poor abode and among her new friends, who, although unrefined in manners, were full to overflowing with the milk of human kindness, so that at last the unfortunate English girl began to entertain positive affection for Mrs Lilly and her black handmaiden.

She also began to feel more at ease in traversing the intricate streets of the city, for the crowds that passed her daily had evidently too much to do attending to their own business to bestow more than an indifferent glance at two negro girls. And if the features of one of the two

was not according to the familiar negro type, it is probable that all the inhabitants of Algiers were aware of the fact that some of the tribes of black people in the interior of Africa possess the well-formed features and comparatively thin lips of Europeans.

As Hester's anxieties about herself began to abate, however, her desire to find out where and how her father was became more and more intense. But the poor child was doomed to many months of hope deferred before that desire was gratified.

Peter the Great did indeed make a few efforts to meet with him again—sometimes in company with George Foster, more frequently alone, and occasionally he visited Hester—having been informed by his sister Dinah where to find her—in order to tell of his want of success, and to comfort her with earnest assurances that he would "neber forsake her," but would keep up a constant look-out for her fadder an' an eye on herself.

Consideration for the girl's safety rendered it necessary that these visits should be few and far between, and, of course, owing to the same necessity, our middy was not permitted to visit her at all. Indeed, Peter refused to tell him even where she was hiding, all the information he condescended to give being that she was safe.

"You see, my dear," said Peter to Hester, in a paternal tone, on the occasion of the first of these visits, "if I was to come yar oftin, massa—spec'ally Osman—would 'gin to wonder, an' de moment a man 'gins to wonder he 'gins to suspec', an' den he 'gins to watch; an' if it comes to dat it's all up wid you an' me. So you mus' jest keep close an' say nuffin till de tide 'gins to turn an' de wind blow fair. De good Lord kin turn wind an' tide when He likes,

so keep your heart up, Geo'giana!"

As he uttered the last word the negro put his great hand on the girl's shoulder and patted it.

"*What* a good name Geo'giana am," he continued, bringing his eyes to bear on the slender little black creature before him; "an' *what* a good nigger you would make if on'y you had an elegant flat nose an' bootiful thick hips. Neber mind, you's better lookin' dan Sally, anyhow, an' no mortal could guess who you was, eben if he was told to look hard at you!"

"But oh, Peter, this is such an anxious, weary life," began Hester, with a trembling lip.

"Now, hold on dar!" interrupted the negro, almost sternly; "you *mus' not* cry, whateber you do, for it washes off de black. You mus' larn to cumtroul your feelin's."

"I will try," returned Hester, attempting to smile. "But it is not that I am discontented with my lot, for they are as kind to me here as if they were my mother and sister, and I like doing the embroidery work very much—it's not that. It is the weary waiting, and hoping for, and expecting news of my darling father—news which *never* comes."

"Now, don't you t'ink like dat, Geo'giana, but larn to submit—submit—das de word. De news'll come all in good time. An' news allers comes in a heap—suddently, so to speak. It *neber* comes slow. Now, look yar. I wants you to make me a solum promise."

"What is that?" asked Hester, smiling in spite of herself

at the intensity of her dark friend's look and manner.

"It am dis. Dat you will neber look surprised, nor speak surprised, no matter howeber much you may *feel* surprised."

"You impose a difficult task on me, Peter."

"Ob course I do, Geo'giana, but as your life—an' p'r'aps mine, but dat ain't much—depends on it, you'll see de needcessity."

"I will certainly try—for your sake as well as my own," returned Hester fervently.

"Well, I t'ink you will, but it ain't easy, an' I'll test you some day."

It was more than a month after that before Peter the Great paid her another visit, and, to the poor girl's grief, he still came without news of her father. He had been all over the Kasba, he said, and many other places where the slaves worked, but he meant to persevere. The city was big, and it would take time, but "Geo'giana" was to cheer up, for he would *neber* gib in.

One morning Peter announced to Foster that he was going into town to make purchases, and he wanted his assistance to carry the basket.

"Are we going to make another search for poor Mr Sommers?" asked the middy, as he walked along the road holding one handle of the empty basket.

"No, we's got no time for dat to-day. I mus' be back early. Got time on'y for one call on a friend ob mine. Das

all."

As the negro did not seem inclined for conversation, Foster forebore to trouble him, but observed, without remarking on the circumstance, that, instead of taking their accustomed way to the market-place, they passed along many narrow, steep, and intricate streets until they reached what the midshipman conceived to be the very heart of the city.

"Dis am de house ob my friend," said Peter, stopping in front of an opening which descended into a cellar. "Foller me, Geo'ge, an' bring down de baskit wid you. Hallo, Missis Lilly! Is you widin?"

"Hi! Das you, Peter de Great?" came in shrill tones from below as they descended.

"Dumb!" exclaimed Peter, with peculiar emphasis on reaching the cellar. "How you do, Missis Lilly? Oberjoyed to see you lookin' so fresh. Just looked in to ax how you's gettin' along."

Need we say that Peter's warning word was not thrown away on Hester Sommers, who was seated in her corner embroidering with gold thread a pair of red morocco slippers. But, forewarned though she was, her presence of mind was put to a tremendous test when, all unexpectedly, George Foster descended the steps and stood before her. Fortunately, while the youth was bestowing a hearty nautical greeting on Mrs Lilly—for his greeting was always hearty, as well to new acquaintances as to old friends—Hester had time to bend over her work and thus conceal the sudden pallor followed by an equally sudden flush which changed her complexion from a bluish grey to a burnt sienna. When

George turned to glance carelessly at her she was totally absorbed in the slipper.

The negro watched the midshipman's glance with keen interest. When he saw that only a passing look was bestowed on Hester, and that he then turned his eyes with some interest to the hole where Sally was pounding coffee and gasping away with her wonted energy, he said to himself mentally, "Ho, Dinah, but you *am* a cleber woman! Geo'ge don't rignise her more'n if she was a rigler coloured gal! I do b'lieve her own fadder wouldn't know her!"

He then proceeded to have a talk with Mrs Lilly, and while he was thus engaged the middy, who had an inquiring disposition, began to look round the cellar and take mental-artistic notes of its appearance. Then he went up to Hester, and, taking up one of the finished slippers, examined it.

"Most beautiful! Exquisite!" he said. "Does it take you long to do this sort of thing?"

The girl did not reply.

"She's dumb!" said Peter quickly.

"Ah, poor thing!" returned Foster, in a voice of pity. "Deaf, too, I suppose?"

"Well, I don't know as to dat, Geo'ge."

"Is this one dumb too?" asked the middy, pointing to the coffee-hole.

"Oh dear no!" interposed Lilly. "Sally a'n't dumb; she's

awrful sharp with 'er tongue!"

"She ought to be deaf anyhow, considering the row she kicks up down there!"

"Come now, Geo'ge, it's time we was goin'. So pick up de baskit an' go ahead."

Bidding Mrs Lilly an affectionate adieu, the two shaves left the cellar, to the intense relief of poor Hester, who scarce knew whether to laugh or cry over the visit. She had been so eagerly anxious to speak to Foster, yet had managed to keep her promise in spite of the peculiarly trying circumstances.

"Peter," said the middy, when they had got well out of the town on their way home, "what made you say 'dumb' so emphatically when you descended into that cellar?"

"*Did* I say 'dumb?'" returned the negro, with an inquiring look at the clouds.

"You certainly did."

"'Phatically, too?"

"Yes, most emphatically."

"Well, now, das most remarkably strange!"

"Not so strange as my finding Hester Sommers in a coal-hole making golden slippers!"

At this Peter set down the basket, threw back his head, and took a prolonged silent laugh.

"Now dat *is* de strangest t'ing ob all. Didn't I t'ink you not rignise her one bit!"

"Peter," returned the midshipman gravely, "you ought to know from experience that true love pierces every disguise."

"Das troo, Geo'ge," said Peter, as he lifted his end of the basket and resumed the journey. "Lub is a wonderful t'ing, an' I ain't sure what might come ob it if I was took unawares to see my Angelica arter she'd bin painted white. But dere's one t'ing as comforts me a leetle, an' dat is, dat Peter de Great ain't de biggest hyperkrite in de world arter all, for de way you purtended not to know dat gal, an' de way she purtended not to know *you*, hab took de wind out ob my sails altogidder!"

Chapter Eleven.

Dangers, Vicissitudes, Escapes, New Surroundings, Hopes, And Fears.

It was probably an advantage to Hester Sommers that she had been subjected to so severe a test at that time, for, not many weeks afterwards, she experienced a shock which put her powers of self-restraint to a much severer trial.

It happened thus. Sally and she were on their way home from market one day; the former with a large basket of vegetables on her head, and the latter with a lighter basket of oranges on her arm, for the use of the master

at home. They had come to one of the wider of the narrow streets of the town, where the small shops were numerous, and the throng of passers-by was considerable —as also was the noise, for Jews, Moors, Cabyles, and negroes were conversing and jostling each other in all directions.

Presently a band of slaves approached, and, as it passed, Hester nearly fainted, for among them she beheld her father, with irons on his legs, and a shovel and pick on his shoulder.

"Father!" she exclaimed, in a faint voice, and, stretching out her arms, made an effort to run towards him.

Quick as lightning Sally grasped the situation, and, rising to the occasion with that prompt energy which betokens true genius, she seized Hester by the nape of the neck, hurled her to the ground, and sent her oranges flying in all directions! At the same time she began to storm at her with a volubility of invective that astonished herself as well as the amused bystanders. As for poor Hugh Sommers, the noise had prevented him from hearing the word "father!" and all that met his eyes was one black girl roughly using another. Alas! the poor man had been by that time so much accustomed to witness acts of cruelty that the incident gave him little concern. He passed doggedly onward to his thankless, unremitting toil, which had been rendered all the more severe of late in consequence of his despairing violence having compelled his drivers to put the heavy irons on his limbs.

Meanwhile Sally, having made Hester pick up some of the oranges, seized her by an arm and hurried her away. Nor did she desist scolding until she had her fairly down in the back regions of their cellar-home.

"I will never forgive you!" exclaimed Hester, with flashing eyes, doubling up her small fists, and apparently wishing that at least for one quarter of an hour she might be transformed into a female Samson.

"Oh yes, you will," returned the negress coolly; "you'll forgib me when I tells you dat I hab sab' your fadder's life, an' p'r'aps your own too!"

"How? What do you mean?" demanded Hester, relaxing her little fists slightly, though still coruscating in the region of the eyes.

"I means dat if you got hold ob yer fadder dat time, he bery likely grip you tight an' refuse to part wid you at no price ebermore; so den, ob course, dey tear him away, an' he kick up a shindy an' try to kill somebody—p'r'aps *do* it! Oh, its's allers de way. I's oftin seen it wid the big strong men—an' your fadder am big. Dat was him, wasn't it, wid de broad shoulders an' de nice face—a leetle wild-like, p'r'aps, but no wonder—an' de grey beard?"

"Yes; that was him—my darling father!"

"Well, ob course dey take him away an' bastinado him till he die, or strangle him, or frow him on de hooks; an' dey take you right away back to Osman, or wuss. I doo'd it for de best, Geo'giana."

"Oh! Sally, dear, *dear* Sally, forgive me! But it was such an awful disappointment to be hurried away so, *just* as I saw him. I—I—am *very* wicked, Sally, will you forgive me?" said poor little Hester, bursting suddenly into tears, throwing her arms round her friend's neck and kissing her.

"Forgib you, Geo'giana! Das not difficult to do, but I'll *neber* forgib you if you go slobberin' like dat, an' dirtyin' my face wid your black cheeks. Dar now, I's got to polish you up again!"

This "polishing up," it may be remarked, was a duty which Sally was called on to perform rather frequently, in consequence of Hester's inveterate tendency to think of her father and shed tears! But her sable friend, whose stolid exterior concealed a wealth of affection, rather enjoyed the process of "polishing up," and while engaged in it broke out into quite eloquent dissertations as to the impropriety of washing one's face with tears when there was plenty of soap and water: coupled with earnest exhortations to "keep up heart," and recommendations not to "gib in," "neber to say die," and the like.

On this particular occasion the sympathetic Sally gave her friend inexpressible comfort by assuring her that, having at last seen her father and the gang to which he belonged, she could now easily follow them up and find out where they were set to work. "And so, Geo'giana," said she, in conclusion, "somet'ing may come ob dis meetin', p'r'aps more'n you t'ink."

Something certainly did come of it, as we shall see presently; but just now we must turn to another danger which threatened our English slave, and in regard to which the previous testing of her powers of self-restraint was but a trifle.

One morning Hester was seated in the usual corner, busily engaged with her embroidery, and with her mind still more busily employed in devising all sorts of impossible schemes for the deliverance of her father—for

Sally had discovered the exact spot on the fortifications where Hugh Sommers was at work, and only prevented Hester from rushing out at once to see him by resolutely refusing for a time to tell where that spot was.

Mrs Lilly and Hester were alone at the time we refer to, Sally having gone out to the market.

"Dearie, I 'spec's Peter de Great dis arternoon," said Mrs Lilly, raising herself from a culinary pot to which she had been devoting her attention. "Dis am about de time he or'nar'ly comes to see you and tell you how de land lies. Now dat he knows you's seed your fadder, he'll likely hab somet'ing 'tickler to say to you."

"God grant that he may have something hopeful to suggest," said Hester, without looking up from her work.

"You may be sure dat prayer is answered, dearie, for you trust de Lord, an' no one does dat in vain."

As the woman spoke, the familiar voice was heard outside, "Hi, Missis Lilly! how's you all git along down dar?" At the same moment the opening to the street was darkened by Peter's bulky form as he descended the narrow stair.

Shaking hands with Hester, who rose eagerly to greet him, the negro was about to begin an earnest talk with her as to how she should act in regard to her father if she should again meet him, when a voice was heard that sent a deadly chill alike to the hearts of Hester and the negro.

"Is the cellar far from this?" asked the voice, which was that of Osman.

“No; here it is! Guard your feet; the second step is broken, and the place is rather dark,” replied the owner of the house.

“Osman!” whispered Peter, glaring and clenching his fists in an agony of uncertainty how to act.

Mrs Lilly, however, black-woman-like, rose to the occasion.

“Go down dar, you black wretch!” she cried, thrusting Hester quickly down into the coffee-hole; “how you s’pose massa git his dollars if you not work? Go to work, or I’ll skin you!”

Truly those negroes, male and female, seemed to possess most effective capacity for, and original methods of, coming to the rescue of their friends in moments of danger!

As Mrs Lilly uttered the last words the two visitors stood in the cellar. At the same instant the thud of the great pestle began, and so intelligently did Hester perform her part that the familiar gasp of Sally—admirably imitated—came up with every blow.

“What, Peter the Great! You here!” cried Osman, in extreme surprise.

“Yes, massa, I’s here on a little bit ob business wid Missis Lilly. She’s a fri’nd ob my sister Dinah,” answered Peter humbly.

“Oh, indeed! With my father’s permission, I suppose?”

"Yes, Massa Osman. I neber dar to come in de town widout your fadder's purmission."

Osman turned and addressed a few words in an undertone to the master of the house, who thereupon turned to Mrs Lilly.

"You are a wise woman, Lilly," he said, "so I have come to consult you. It seems that one of the slaves belonging to Ben-Ahmed of Mustapha has made her escape, and it is rumoured that she has taken refuge with some one in this very street, or in one not far from it. Now, as you are well acquainted with almost every one in the neighbourhood, I thought it best to come in the first place to you to ask your advice about the matter."

The gasp that came from the coffee-hole when this speech was made had something very real in it, and immediately afterwards the pounding was redoubled.

"Was the slabe white or black?" asked Mrs Lilly, with childlike simplicity, and more for the purpose of gaining time to think than anything else.

"She was white," interposed Osman, "and very beautiful,—in fact, one of the ladies of the harem."

On hearing this Mrs Lilly looked inquiringly upwards, as if she expected inspiration to flow from the bricks that formed the vaulted ceiling. Then she looked suddenly at Peter the Great, and said—

"Das mus' be de lady you was tole me about, Peter,—Ister—Hister—w'at you call 'er?"

"Yes—Hester! Das so. De same as I tole you all about

her 'scape," answered Peter, quaking with anxiety and astonishment at the woman's calm boldness, yet ready to fall in with any plan that her words might suggest. At the same time the gasping in the hole became more and more genuine, and the pounding more and more emphatic.

"No, massa, I don' know of no white slabe as hab took refuge wid any ob our neighbours. Indeed I's kite sure dat none ob de neighbours knows not'ing at all about dis Is—Es—w'at you call her? Ester! Das so, Peter?"

"Yes, das so, Missis Lilly."

"Stop that horrible noise in the hole there! What is it?" said Osman impatiently.

"It is only one of my negro slaves," said the master of the house. "Call her up, Lilly, and set her to something quieter until we go."

Rendered desperate now, Peter the Great started forward with glaring eyes. "Massa," he said, "an idea hab just struck me. Will you come out a momint? I wants to tell you somet'ing *bery hard*."

The appearance, not less than the earnestness, of the negro, inclined Osman to comply with his request; but, hesitating, he said—

"Why not tell me here, Peter? We are all friends, you know."

"Oh yes, I know dat, Massa Osman; but womans can never be trusted wid t'ings ob importance, 'specially black womans! But ob course if you not 'fraid ob Missis

Lilly, *I* a'n't 'fraid ob her lettin' de secret out. I darsay she's as good a creetur as de best ob 'um."

This readiness to give in was a politic stroke. Osman agreed to go outside with the negro, and while the latter was ascending the short stair to the street, he was making superhuman efforts to invent something, for, as yet, he had not the faintest idea what his intended communication should be. But Peter the Great was a genius, and it is one of the characteristics of genius to be bold even to recklessness.

Trusting to some sort of inspiration, he began, with looks and tones of the deepest solemnity, "I s'pose you guess, Massa Osman, dat I've been inwestigatin' that coorious business ob de English gal what runned away?"

"No, I did not guess that," answered the Moor shortly.

"Oh! but it's true!" said Peter. "Eber since she flooed away I's bin goin' about dem suspekid places, lookin' arter her, and, do you know, Massa Osman, dat at last," (here he dropped his voice and looked unutterable things),—"at *last* I's found—"

"Well—found what?" asked the Moor eagerly.

"Found her *fadder*!"

"Bah! What do I care for her father, you fool?"

"Das troo, massa; but don't you t'ink dat p'r'aps she'd be likely to try for find her fadder; an' if she find 'im she'd be likely to remain *wid* her fadder? An' so all dat we'd hab to do would be to find her fadder too. Ob course I don't say she's doo'd all dat; but suppose, for de sake ob

argiment, dat she *hab* doo'd it all, won't we—won't we—we— No, I's lost de t'read ob my discoorse. I'll begin again fro' de beginning. Das de on'y way I kin—"

"Is that all you had to tell me?" interrupted the Moor, in rising wrath.

"No—not kite all," returned Peter humbly. "Dey do say dat de fadder is at work on de for'fications on de sout' side ob de Kasba."

"Well, you are a greater fool than I took you for," said Osman, in whom contempt was quickly taking the place of anger.

"I s'pose I is, massa. An' I s'pose it am part ob my foolishness to be lookin' arter dis yar gal—but den, you see, I lubs Ben-Ahmed, so—"

"Well, well, Peter, I believe you mean well—"

"I's *sure* I does, Massa Osman!"

"Don't interrupt me, you black villain! Can't you see that if Hester's father is a Bagnio slave there is no chance of her having found refuge with him?"

"Das true, massa. I do s'pose you's right. I's a born ijit altogidder. But, you know, when a man gits off de scent ob a t'ing, anyt'ing dat looks de least bit like a clue should be follered up. An' dere's no sayin' what might come ob seein' de fadder—for we's off de scent entirely jist now."

"There's little doubt of that, Peter," said Osman, pausing, and looking meditatively at the ground.

"Moreober," suggested the negro, "when a man wid a cleber head an' a purswavis tongue like you tackles a t'ing, it's bery strange indeed if not'ing comes ob it."

"Well, you may be right after all," returned the Moor slowly. "I will go and see this father. At all events it can do no harm."

"None whateber, massa. An' I better run back and send Ali arter you."

"Why? What has he to do with it?"

"Oh! I only t'ought dat you was huntin' togidder. It's ob no consikence. But I t'ink he knows de janissary officer what has charge ob de gang, an' if *you* don't know him Ali might be useful."

"There is wisdom in what you say."

"Eben zough I *is* a 'fool?'" asked the negro simply.

Osman laughed.

"At all events you are an honest fool, Peter, and I'm sorry I burned your back the other day. You didn't deserve it."

"Oh, nebber mind dat," returned Peter, feeling really uneasy. "De back's all right now. Moreober I *did* deserb it, for I's an awrful sinner! Wuss dan you t'ink! Now, if you keep right up as you go, an' when you comes to de Kasba turn to de right an' keep so till you comes to de right angle ob de sout' wall. De fadder he work dar. I'll send Ali arter you, quick's I can."

They parted, and while the Moor stalked sedately up the street, the negro hurried back to the cellar with a message to Ali to follow Osman without a moment's delay.

Meanwhile Ali had been cleverly engaged by the ready-witted Mrs Lilly, who, after fiercely ordering the coffee-pounder to "stop her noise," come out of the hole, and retire to the kitchen, drew forth a large leathern purse, which she wisely chinked, and, going towards the stairs, invited her master to "come to de light an' receibe de money which she hab made by de last sale ob slippers."

Of course the bait took—none other could have been half so successful. But Hester apparently had not courage to take advantage of the opportunity, for she did not quit the hole. Fortunately Peter arrived before the cash transaction was completed. On receiving Osman's message Ali balanced accounts promptly by thrusting the purse and its contents into his pocket and hastening away.

Then Peter the Great and Lilly sat down, took a long grave look at each other, threw back their heads, opened their cavernous mouths, and indulged in a quiet but hearty laugh.

"Now you kin come out, dearie," said Lilly, turning to the coffee-hole on recovering composure.

But no response came from the "vasty deep."

"De coast's cl'ar, my dear," said Peter, rising.

Still no response, so Peter descended the few steps, and found Hester lying insensible on a heap of coffee-beans,

and still firmly grasping the big pestle. The trial had been too much for the poor child, who had fainted, and Peter emerged with her in his arms, and an expression of solemn anxiety on his countenance.

In a few minutes, however, she revived, and then Peter, hurrying her away from a locality which he felt was no longer safe, placed her under the charge of his sister Dinah—to the inexpressible regret of Mrs Lilly and her black maid-of-all-work.

In her new home the fugitive's circumstances were much improved. Dinah and her husband had great influence over their owner, Youssef, the proprietor of the small coffee-house already described. They not only managed most of its details for him, but were permitted a good deal of personal liberty. Among other things they had been allowed to select the top of the house as their abode.

To European ears this may sound rather strange, but those who have seen the flat roofs of Eastern lands will understand it. Youssef's house, like nearly all the other houses of the city, had a flat roof, with a surrounding parapet nearly breast-high. Here had been placed a few wooden boxes filled with earth and planted with flowering shrubs. These formed quite a little garden, to which Youssef had been wont to retreat of an evening for meditative and, we may add, smokative purposes. But as Youssef had grown old, his eyes had nearly, and his legs had quite, failed him. Hence, being unable to climb to his roof, he had latterly given it up entirely to the use of his black slaves, Samson and Dinah White.

There was a small excrescence or hut on the roof—about ten feet by six in dimensions—which formed—their

residence. Behind this, hiding itself as it were and almost invisible, nestled a smaller excrescence or offshoot. It was a mere bandbox of a thing, measuring five feet by four; it had a window about twelve inches square, and was entered by a door inside the larger hut. This was the apartment now assigned to Hester, who was quietly introduced into the household without the knowledge or consent of its blind proprietor.

There was a little bed in the small room. True, it was only a trestle frame, and a straw-stuffed mattress with a couple of blankets, but it was clean, and the whole room was neat, and the sun shone brightly in at the small window at the moment that the new occupant was introduced. Poor Hester fell on her knees, laid her head on the bed, and thanked God fervently for the blessed change. Almost in the same moment she forgot herself, and prayed still more fervently for the deliverance of her father.

The view over the housetops from the little window was absolutely magnificent, including as it did domes, minarets, mosques, palm-trees, shipping, and sea! Here, for a considerable time, Hester worked at her former occupation, for Dinah had a private plan to make a little money for her own pocket by means of embroidery.

In this pleasant retreat our fugitive was visited one day by Peter the Great, the expression of whose visage betokened business. After some conversation, he said that he had come for the express purpose of taking Hester to see her father.

"But not to talk to him," he added quickly—"not eben to make you'self known to him, for if you did, not'ing would

keep 'im quiet, an' you an' he would be parted *for eber*. Mind dat—for *eber*!"

"Yes, yes, I will remember," said the poor girl, who was profoundly agitated at the mere thought of such a meeting.

"But you mus' *promise*," said Peter solemnly.

"Promise on you' word ob honour dat you not say one word; not make a sound; not gib an unor'nary look; not try in any way to attrack his attention. Come—speak, else I go home ag'in."

"I promise," said Hester, in a low voice.

"An' you won't cry?"

"I'll try not to."

"Come 'long, den, wid me, an' see you' poor fadder."

Chapter Twelve.

The Middy, becoming Defiant and Violent, comes to Grief, and Hester's Black Friends devise Strange Things.

On the afternoon of the day in which Peter the Great paid his visit to Hester Sommers in the little boudoir, Ben-Ahmed sent for George Foster and bade him make a portrait of a favourite dog.

It so happened that our artist had run short of some of his drawing materials, and said that he could not get on well without them.

"Go to the town, then, got a supply, and return quickly," said Ben-Ahmed, who was smoking his hookah in the court at the time and playing gently with the lost Hester's pet gazelle.

The graceful little creature had drooped since the departure of his mistress, as if he felt her loss keenly. Perhaps it was sympathy that drew it and Ben-Ahmed more together than in times past. Certainly there seemed to be a bond of some sort between them at that time which had not existed before, and the Moor was decidedly more silent and sad since Hester's flight. In his efforts to recover the runaway he had at first taken much trouble, but as time passed he left it in the hands of Osman, who seemed even more anxious than his father to recover the lost slave.

As the midshipman was leaving the court the Moor called him back, addressing him as usual in Lingua Franca, while the youth, taking his cue from Peter the Great, answered in English.

"You know something about this English girl?" he suddenly said, with a steady look at his slave.

"I—I—yes, I *do* know something about her," replied Foster, in some confusion.

"Do you know where she hides?"

"N–no; I do not."

“I have been led to understand that British officers never tell lies,” returned the Moor sternly.

The blood rushed to the middy’s face as he replied boldly, “You have been correctly informed—at least, in regard to those officers who are true gentlemen.”

“Why, then, do you hesitate?” retorted the Moor. “Do Englishmen blush and stammer when they tell the truth? Tell me the truth *now*. Do you know where the English girl hides?”

The Moor spoke very sternly, but his slave, instead of becoming more confused, suddenly drew himself up, and replied in a voice and with a look as stern as his own—

“Ben-Ahmed, I told you the truth at first. I do *not* know where she is hiding. I *did*, indeed, know some time ago, but the place of her abode has been changed, and I do not know now. I may as well however say at once that, if I did know, nothing that you can do would induce me to tell you where she hides. You may imprison, torture, or slay me if you choose, but in regard to Hester Sommers I am from this moment dumb!”

There was a curious smile on the Moor’s lips while the midshipman delivered this speech with flashing eyes and energetic action, but there was no anger in his tone as he replied—

“Englishman,” he said quietly, “you *love* this girl.” If a bombshell had exploded under his feet our middy could hardly have been taken more by surprise. But he had been put on his mettle now, and scorned to show again a wavering front.

"Yes, Moor," he replied, "I *do* love her, though I have never told her so, nor have I the slightest reason to believe that she cares a fig for *me*. But I now tell you plainly that I will take advantage of every opportunity that comes in my way to serve her and help her to escape. I now also recall the promise—the word of honour—I gave you, not to try to escape. There was a time," continued the middy, in a softened tone, "when I thought of recalling this promise with defiance to you to do your worst; but, Ben-Ahmed, I have lived to learn that, after a fashion, you have been kind to me; that I might have fallen into worse hands; therefore I am not ungrateful, and I now recall the promise only with regret. All the same, my resolve is fixed."

The curious smile still lingered on the Moor's lips as he said, almost in a jesting tone—

"But you will not try to escape to-day if I let you go into the town for colours?"

"I make no promise, Ben-Ahmed. Yet this I may safely say, that I will not try to clear off on my own account. Unless to save Hester I will not at present try to escape; so far you may be sure of my return; but if I get the chance I will either rescue her or die for her—God helping me."

The smile vanished from the Moor's lips as he turned, and said gravely—

"It is well, young man, that you confess to the true and only source of all help. You Christians, as you call yourselves, have ever seemed to me unwilling to mention the name of God save when cursing your fellows, and then you misuse it glibly enough. Yet there are some

among you who are more consistent in their professions. Go, fulfil your commission. I will trust you."

"Thank you, Ben-Ahmed," returned the middy; "but remember, if I never return, you will understand that I have not broken my word of honour."

The Moor bowed his head in acquiescence, and took a long pull at his pipe as the midshipman went away.

George Foster was half-way to the town before he recovered from his astonishment at the strange and unexpected way in which Ben-Ahmed had received his very plain speaking. He had expected that chains and the bastinado, if not worse, would certainly follow, but he had made up his mind to go through with it—if need be to die—for Hester's sake. To find himself, therefore, free to go where he pleased, and to help Hester to escape if the opportunity to do so should come in his way, was an amazing state of things which he could scarcely bring himself to believe.

Of course, our hero had not the slightest expectation of encountering Hester that day, when he thus freed himself from his parole, and we need scarcely add that, even if he had met her, he could not have devised any sudden scheme for her deliverance. Nevertheless, the mere fact that he was at liberty to act as he pleased in her behalf had such an effect on him that he entered the town with a lighter heart than he had possessed for many a day. Humming a nautical air as he walked along, and almost if not quite, for the moment, oblivious of the fact of his condition of slavery, he became keenly interested in all that he saw as he passed through the crowded streets, now stopping to admire a picturesque group of figures with jars and pitchers, awaiting their turn to draw water

from a public fountain, or pausing in front of a turner's shop to observe with curiosity and interest the deft way in which the workman used his toes as well as his fingers in the operations of his trade.

He was thus engaged, in calm contemplation with his back to the street, when he was very slightly jostled by a passer-by. He scarcely noticed the incident, but if he had known who it was that touched him he would not have remained so placid, for it was Hester herself, in company with Peter the Great, on their way to the city walls.

As Hester's eyes were fixed on the ground and her thoughts on her father, while Foster's attention was concentrated on the turner's toes, neither observed the other, but Peter's sharp eyes had noted the middy, and he hurried past to prevent a recognition, which might be awkward, if not dangerous, at the moment.

Presently Foster's attention was attracted by a Moor who was riding along the street, sitting side-wise as was the wont of Algerines of the trading-class. What struck Foster particularly about this man and his donkey was that the latter was trotting very fast, although it was a very small animal, and the man on its back a very large one. He also observed that the donkey tossed its head and put back its ears as if it were suffering pain. As the Moor's hand rested on the donkey's haunch, the reason at once occurred to Foster, for he had noticed the same thing before. It was the practice, among cruel men, to create, and keep open, a small sore on the haunch of each animal, by irritating which with a little bit of stick they managed to make their donkeys go in a way that a spur or a thick stick could not accomplish!

Now, our middy possessed a tender heart, which shrank sensitively from the idea of giving pain to any living creature, and which almost exploded with indignation at the sight of wanton cruelty to dumb animals.

When, therefore, the Moor came alongside of him, Foster gave him a look of tremendous indignation, at the same time exclaiming, "Shame on you!"

The Moor turned on him a look of mingled surprise and scorn. At the same time muttering, "Christian dog!" he brought a stick smartly down on the middy's shoulders.

This was too much to bear meekly. The boiling blood in the youth's heart boiled over into his face. He leaped forward, seized the donkey's rein with one hand, caught the man's left leg with the other, and hurled the rider backward to the ground.

The bump with which the Moor's head came down had the effect of keeping it low, but the spectators of the incident, who were numerous, rushed upon the poor middy, seized him, and carried him straight to a court of justice.

They had a summary method of transacting business in those courts, especially in simple cases like that of which we treat. The investigation was rapid; the evidence of the witnesses emphatic. Almost before he had recovered breath our hero was thrown down, his feet were raised by two strong attendants, his shoes plucked off, and the soles of his feet made to tingle as if they had been set on fire.

After a few strokes, which he bore in silence, he was led to the common prison, thrust into it, and left to his

meditations.

HESTER SEES HER FATHER Page 168

Meanwhile, Peter the Great conducted Hester to that part of the city wall where her father was at work among the other slaves. It chanced to be the hour when the wretched creatures were allowed to cease work for a brief space in order to rest and eat.

Poor Hugh Sommers chanced to have seated himself a little apart from the others, so as to get the benefit of a large stone for a seat. His figure was, therefore, prominent, as he sat there worn, weary, and dejected, consuming his allowance of black bread. Peter the Great knew him at once, having already, as the reader knows, seen him in his slave garb; but Hester's anxious eyes failed for a few moments to pick out the emaciated frame and strangely clad, ragged figure which represented her once jovial, stalwart, and well-clothed father.

"Das him," whispered Peter, as he loosely grasped the girl's arm by way of precaution.

"Where—oh, where?" asked the poor creature, glancing round among the slaves.

"Now, 'member your promise. Spoil eberyt'ing if you screech or run to him. Look, dis way! De man what's settin' on de stone!"

"Yes, yes, I see! Oh—"

She stopped abruptly and trembled, for at the moment her father turned his woe-begone face unconsciously towards her. Even the much-increased grey tinge in the hair and beard, the lines of despair on the brow, and the hollow cheeks could not disguise the face that she loved so well. A sharp cry burst from her, and she made an

attempt to rush towards him, but the iron grip of Peter restrained her.

"It's a dead man he'll be if you do!" he said, in a stern but low tone. "Don't you see de janissary? Your *promise*—"

"Yes, yes! I'll restrain myself *now*, Peter. Do let me stay a minute—just to look—"

"No, *no*! Come 'long wid you—idle t'ing!" he exclaimed, with sudden severity, and apparent though not real violence, for at the moment his watchful eye had observed one of the slave guards approaching them.

As the two went hurriedly past the place where Hugh Sommers was sitting, he looked up with an expression of pity.

"Poor thing!" he said. "The black scoundrel is cruel to you, and I am powerless to kick him!"

He clinked the fetters on his legs significantly as he spoke.

The mingled pathos and indignation of the loved voice was too much for poor Hester. She was on the point of exclaiming "Father!" when Peter's great black paw extinguished her mouth, and was not removed till they were out of danger.

"You's like all de rest ob de womans," said the negro, as they hurried through the streets; "awrful dif'cult to manidge. Come 'long, we'll go home and hab a talk ober it."

Hester was too miserable to reply. She did not again speak till they were both safe in the boudoir.

There she sat down on the bed, laid her face in her hands, and burst into a passion of tears, while Peter stood looking on, his head nearly touching the low ceiling, his bulky frame filling half the remainder of the little room, and two mighty unbidden tears in his great eyes.

"Das right, Geo'giana," he said, in a soft voice; "cry away, it'll do you good. Nuffin like cryin' w'en you's fit to bust! An' w'en you's got it ober we'll talk all about it."

"Oh, Peter!" cried Hester, drying her eyes somewhat impatiently; "how *could* you be so cruel? Why—why could you not have waited just one minute to let me look at him?"

"Because, my dear, de man wid de whip was comin', an' he'd bery soon hab laid it across my back," replied the negro gently.

"And what if he had done so?" demanded Hester, with a slight touch of indignation; "could you not have suffered a little whipping for my sake?"

"Yes, Geo'giana," returned Peter, with much humility, "I could suffer great deal more'n dat for your sake; but dere's no sich t'ings as *little* whippin's know'd ob in dis yar town. W'en de lash am goin' he usu'lly makes de hair fly. Moreober, dey whip womans as well as mans, an' if he was to took de bit out ob your pretty shoulder, I couldn't suffer dat, you know. Likewise," continued Peter, becoming more argumentative in his manner, "you was just a-goin' to took de bit in your teef; an' if you'd bin

allowed to frow your arms round your fadder's neck an' rub all de black ober his face what would hab bin de consikence?"

Peter felt his position so strong at this point that he put the question almost triumphantly, and Hester was constrained to acknowledge that he had acted wisely after all.

"But," continued she, with still a little of reproach in her tone, "what was the use of taking me to see my darling father at all, if this is all that is to come of it?"

"You's a leetle obstropolous in you' fancies, Geo'giana. Dis am *not* all what's to come ob it. You see, I has pity on your poo' heart, so I t'ink you might go ebery oder day an' hab a good look at your fadder; but how kin you go if you not know whar he works? So I tooked you to show you de way. But I's a'most sorry I did now, for you's got no self-'straint, an' if you goes by you'self you'll git took up for sartin', an' dey'll whip your fadder till he's dead, or frow him on de hooks, or skin him alive, or—"

"Oh, horrible! Don't say such dreadful things, Peter!" exclaimed Hester, covering her face with her hands.

Feeling that he had said quite enough to impress the poor girl with the absolute necessity of being careful, he promised earnestly never again to allude to such dreadful things.

"But, Geo'giana," he added impressively, "you mus' promise me on your word ob honour, w'ich Geo'ge Foster says English gen'lemans *neber* break—an' I s'pose he's right."

"Yes, quite right, Peter; true gentlemen *never* break their word."

"An' I s'pose female gen'lemans am de same."

"Of course! Go on," replied the girl, with a faint smile.

"Well, as I was 'bout to say, you mus' promise me on your word ob honour, dat you'll neber go *alone* to see your fadder, but allers in company wid Sally; dat you neber, neber speak to him, an' dat you neber make you'self know'd to him till de right time comes."

"These are hard conditions, Peter, but I see the reasonableness of them all, and promise—at least I promise to do my best."

"Das 'nuff, Geo'giana. Neezer man nor womans kin do more'n deir best. Now I mus' bid you good-day, so keep up your heart an' you'll see eberyt'ing come right in de end."

With these cheering words the sympathetic negro took his leave; and Hester, resuming her embroidery, sat down at her little window, not to work, but to gaze dreamily at the beautiful sea, and cast about in her mind how she should act in order to alleviate if possible her father's sad condition.

That very afternoon she received a visit from her stolid but affectionate friend Sally, who at once said that she knew of a splendid plan for doing him a great deal of good.

"And what is your plan?" asked Hester eagerly.

“Gib him two or t’ree biscuits,” said Sally.

Her friend received the suggestion with a look of disappointment.

“What a stupid thing you are, Sally! How could that do him any good?”

Sally looked at her friend with an air of pity.

“Didn’t you say he was awrful t’in?” she asked.

“Thin? Oh yes—dreadfully thin.”

“Well, den, isn’t dat ’cause he not hab ’nuff to eat? *I* knows it, bress you! I’s bin wid a missis as starved me. Sometimes I t’ink I could eat my shoes. Ob course I got awrful t’in—so t’in dat w’en I stood side-wise you could hardly see me. Well, what de way to get fat an’ strong? Why, eat, ob course. Eat—eat—eat. Das de way. Now, your fadder git not’ing but black bread, an’ not ’nuff ob dat; an’ he git plenty hard work too, so he git t’in. So, what I prupposes is to gib him two good biskits ebery day. We couldn’t gib him more’n two, ’cause he’d hab to hide what he couldn’t eat at once, an’ de drivers would be sure to diskiver ’em. But two biskits could be gobbled quick on de sly, an’ would help to make him fat, an’ to make you easy.”

“So they would,” said Hester, eagerly entertaining the idea after this explanation; “you’re a clever girl, Sally—”

“You say I’s stoopid jest now!”

“So I did, Sally. Forgive me! I was stupid besides unkind for saying so. But how shall we manage it? Won’t the

guards see us doing it?”

“No fear, Geo’giana! De guards am fools—t’ink dere’s nobody like ’em. Dey forgit. All de asses in Algiers am like ’em. Dis de way ob it. You an’ me we’ll go to markit ebery day wid baskits on our arms, an we’ll ob course go round by de walls, where your fadder works. No doubt it’s a roundabout way, but what ob dat? We’ll go at de hour your fadder feeds wid de oder slabes, an’ as we pass we’ll drop de two biskits in his lap.”

“But won’t he be taken by surprise, Sally?”

“De fust time—yes; but dat won’t prevent him gobblin’ up de biskits quick. Neber fear, you an’ me’ll manidge it ’tween us.”

“Thank you, dear Sally, I’ll never, *never* forget your kindness, and we will try your plan to-morrow.”

Chapter Thirteen.

Hester and her Father severely Tested.

The very next day, accordingly, Hester Sommers and her friend sallied forth to present Hugh Sommers with a couple of biscuits!

It was arranged that the two girls should carry baskets of fruit on their heads, and that Hester should have the biscuits conveniently in her right hand, so as to be able to drop them into her father’s lap without stopping or even checking her pace as they passed.

Of course, Hester was by this time thoroughly alive to the danger of her intended proceedings, both to herself and her father, and was firmly resolved to restrain her feelings. Nevertheless, she could not help trembling when she came in sight of the gang with which her father worked.

Sally observed this and grasped her by the arm.

"Geo'giana," she said, "if you gibs way, or speaks, or trembles, or busts up in any way, I grips you by de neck, as I once did before, an' shobes you along wid scolds and whacks—so you look out!"

"Anxiety for my darling father will be a much more powerful restraint, Sally, than your threats," replied the poor girl.

Nevertheless, the threat was not without its effect, for it showed Hester that she must have been on the point of giving way, and impressed on her more than ever the necessity of self-restraint.

"W'ich am him? I don't see him," said the negress as they advanced.

"There he is, don't you see, just before us," replied Hester, in a low, hurried voice.

"No, I's growin' blind, I t'ink."

"There—look! by himself, on the stone. He seems always to sit on the same spot at dinner-time."

"Oh yes, I sees. Now you go on—stiddy. Mind what you's

about!”

With a brief prayer for help to control herself, Hester went straight to where her father sat. He was languidly chewing a piece of the regulation black bread at the time, and looked up at her with the vacant indifference born of despair.

The desire to fall on his neck and kiss him was, need we say, almost irresistible, but the poor girl had received strength for the duty in hand. She went close to him—even brushed past him—and dropped the biscuits into his lap.

At first the poor man was so astonished that he gazed after the retiring figure and made no effort to conceal this unexpected addition to his meal. Fortunately, his wits revived before any of the guards observed him. He slid the biscuits into his shirt bosom with conjurer-like facility, and at the same moment broke off a large bit of one, which he devoured with unwonted satisfaction. The addition did not indeed furnish the unfortunate slave with a full meal, but it at least tended towards that desirable end, and sent him to work with a full heart, because of the assurance that there was in the city, at all events, one human being—and that being, strange to say, a negress!—who pitied him in his forlorn condition.

During the remainder of that day Hugh Sommers almost forgot his toils in consequence of his mind being so thoroughly taken up with meditation on the wonderful incident. At night, although wearied, almost worn out, and anxious to sleep, he found it impossible to rest in the dismal Bagnio. It chanced that he occupied the cell which had formerly been apportioned to George Foster on the occasion of his first visit to that cheerless prison,

and his next neighbour was the despairing Frenchman who had given such poor comfort to the middy in his distress. Finding that this Frenchman spoke English so well, and that they worked together in the same gang during the day, Hugh Sommers had struck up an acquaintance with him, which, after they had spent some weeks together in toiling by day and groaning side by side at night, ripened into a curious sort of growling friendship.

This friendship began with a quarrel. The night in which they were first placed in neighbouring cells, or niches, followed a day in which Sommers had received an application of the bastinado, and been put into irons for fierce rebellion. Being a man of strong emotions, he had groaned a little as he lay trying to sleep in spite of his suffering feet. Failing of his purpose, he took to thinking about Hester, and the groans which had been but feeble for himself became more intense on her account.

"Can you not stop that noise?" growled the irate Frenchman, who was kept awake by it.

"I'm sorry to disturb you, friend," said Sommers gently, for he was really an unselfish man; "but if you knew all I've had to suffer you would excuse me."

"Oh, *I* know what you have had to suffer!" said his comrade testily. "I saw you get the bastinado; I've had it often myself, but—it is bearable!"

"It's not that, man!" returned the Englishman, with a touch of indignation. "If I had nothing to worry me but the pain of my feet I'd have been asleep by now. I have worse things to groan about than you can guess, maybe."

"Well, well, monsieur," said the Frenchman, in a resigned tone, as he raised himself on one elbow and leaned his back against the stone wall, "since you have driven sleep from my eyes, perhaps you will give employment to my ears by telling me for what it is that you groan?"

There was something so peculiar in the tone and manner in which this was said—so cool and off-hand, yet withal so kind—that Sommers at once agreed.

"I'll do it," he said, "if you will treat me to the same thing in return. Fair exchange! You see, I am by profession a merchant, and must have value for what I give."

And thus on that night the two unfortunates had exchanged confidences, and formed the friendship to which we have referred.

To this man, then—whose name was Edouard Laronde—Sommers related the incident that had occurred that day during the noontide period of rest.

"It is strange. I know not what to think," said Laronde, when his friend concluded. "If it had been a white girl I could have understood that it might be your daughter in disguise, though even in this case there would have been several reasons against the theory, for, in the first place, you tell me that your daughter—your Hester—is very pretty, and no pretty English girl could go about this city in any disguise without being discovered at once. Now you tell me that this girl was black—a negress?"

"Ay, as black as a coal," responded the merchant.

"Well, if, as you say, your Hester is pretty—"

"Pretty, man! She's not pretty," interrupted the Englishman impatiently; "I tell you she is beautiful!"

"Of course, I understand," returned the other, with a smile that the darkness of the place concealed, "I should have said beautiful! Well, thick lips and flat nose and high cheek-bones and woolly hair are, you know, incompatible with beauty as understood by Englishmen —"

"Or Frenchmen either," added Sommers. "That's quite true, Laronde, though I must confess that I paid no attention to her face when she was approaching me, and after she dropped the biscuits in my lap she was so far past that I only saw a bit of her black cheek and her back, which latter, you know, was enveloped from head to foot in that loose blue cotton thing which does not tell much about the wearer."

"True, true," returned the Frenchman; "and, after all, even if the girl's features had not been negro-like, you could not have been sure that it was her, for some of the blacks who come from the interior of Africa have features quite as classical as our own."

"Laronde," said the merchant impressively, "I wonder to hear you, who have a daughter of your own, suggest that I could fail to recognise my Hester in any disguise. Why, if she were to paint her face scarlet and her nose pea-green I'd see through it by the beautiful shape of the features and the sweet expression of her face."

"Forgive me, Monsieur Sommers, I doubt not that you would. As to your reference to *my* daughter, you forget that she was a little child when I last saw her, so I have

no experience of a father's powers of penetrating disguises."

Laronde sighed deeply at this point, and then hurriedly continued, as if to prevent further reference to his own sorrows.

"It is possible, however," he said, "that she may pass you again to-morrow, and so give you another opportunity of seeing her features. But let me ask, my friend, what will you do if you discover that she *is* your Hester?"

"Do?" exclaimed the merchant, with an energetic action that caused his fetters to rattle. "I—I—I'll—well—I don't know what I'll do!"

"Of course you don't!" returned Laronde, with something of the old cynicism in his tone. "You Englishmen are always so cock-sure—as you express it—of success that you make no provision for defeat or failure. It may seem very heroic, but it is mere pride and folly. Now, if you will take a real friend's advice, you will go out to-morrow with the determination to curb yourself and refrain from taking any notice whatever of this girl, whether she turns out to be your daughter or not, and leave her to work out her plan, for you may be quite sure she has some end in view. Just consider what would be the consequence of your giving way to your feelings and embracing her. You would by so doing expose her disguise, cause her to be taken up and sent to the harem of some one of the notables, and get heavier irons put on yourself, besides another touch, perhaps, of the bastinado. Be wise, and consider well what you intend to do."

"Thank you, friend, for your warning. It is well timed. If

you had not spoken I would certainly have gone forth to-morrow unprepared."

"But what is your preparation? What will you do?" persisted the Frenchman.

"What *can* I do?" replied Sommers. "Have you not just shown me that I am utterly helpless? In such a case there is only one course left—namely, to go to Him who can succour the helpless. I will ask counsel of God. The pride you have referred to I admit, though it is by no means confined to my own countrymen! Too long have I given way to it, and acted independently of my Maker. Perhaps God sent me here to convince me of my sin and helplessness."

"There is no God. I do not believe in a God," said Laronde calmly.

"Why not?" asked Sommers, in surprise.

"Because," replied Laronde bitterly, "if there was a God He could not stand by and see me suffering such prolonged and awful misery."

"If, instead of misery, you had been placed during the last twelve years in supreme felicity, would you have believed in a God?" asked Sommers.

Laronde was silent. He saw that the reason which he had given for disbelief was untenable, and he was too straightforward to quibble about it.

"I don't know," he said at last angrily. "No doubt there are hundreds of men in happy and favourable circumstances who say, as I do, that they don't believe

in a God. I don't know. All I do know is that I am supremely miserable!"

"Now you are reasonable," returned the merchant, "for you talk of what you do know, and you admit that in regard to God you 'don't know,' but you began by stating that 'there is no God.' Ah, my friend, I sympathise with you in your terrible sorrow, even as you have sympathised with me in mine, but don't let us give way to despair and cast the only Refuge that remains to us behind our backs. I will not ask you to join me in praying to One in whom you say you do not believe, but I will pray *for* you."

Hugh Sommers got upon his knees and then and there—in the dark and dank prison-house—prayed most earnestly for guidance and spiritual light in the name of Jesus. At first the Frenchman listened with what we may style kindly contempt, and then with surprise, for the Englishman drew to the conclusion of his very brief prayer without any mention of his own name. Just at the close, however, Sommers said, "O God! show to my friend here that he is wrong, and that Thou art Love."

It was with eager and trembling heart next day that Hugh Sommers watched, during the noontide meal, for the coming of his mysterious black friend, and it was with no less anxiety and trembling of heart that Hester approached her father at the same hour.

"Now mind how you doos," said the doubtful Sally, as she glanced keenly at Hester's face. "Mind, I'll hab no marcy on you if you gibs way!"

Hester made no reply, for she was drawing near to her father, and saw that he was gazing at her with fixed

intensity. She raised her heart to God and received strength to pass without a word or look, dropping the biscuits as on the previous day. The man, however, proved less capable of self-restraint than the girl, for he could not resist whispering, "Hester!"

The poor girl turned towards him as if by an irresistible impulse, but her black guardian angel was equal to the emergency. Seizing Hester by the shoulder, she pushed her violently forward, storming at her loudly as on the former occasion.

"What, you black t'ing! Hab you neber seen slabes before? You no better'n de white folk, wastin' ob your purcious time. My! won't you get a whackin' fro' missis w'en you gits home!"

Recovering herself, Hester at once submitted.

At first the poor father was about to start up and run to embrace his child, as well as to rescue her from her rude companion, but, being what is termed a "sharp man of business," he received into his mind, as it were, a flash of light, and sat still. If this flash had been analysed it would probably have produced the following thoughts —"biscuits! kindness! companion a friend! ignorance impossible! violence unaccountable! a ruse, perhaps! sit still!"

Thought, they say, is swifter than light. At all events, it was swift enough on the present occasion to prevent the shadow of a suspicion arising in the minds either of slaves or guards, who seemed to be rather amused at what they fancied was the bad temper of Sally.

Next day the biscuit-dropping was repeated without the

scene that had followed, and so wisely was this affair managed by all the parties concerned, that it was carried on for several weeks without a hitch. Under the influence of hope and improved fare, Hugh Sommers became so much brighter in spirits and better in health, and so much more tractable, that his guards at length removed his heavy fetters and allowed him to toil with free limbs, like the majority of the slaves. Hester also became almost cheerful under the wonderful influence of hope. But Hester and her father were each overwhelmed, more or less, by a wet blanket at that time, and, strange to say, their wet blankets happened to be their best friends.

In the case of Hester, it was Sally. The more hopeful and cheery Hester became, the more did her black friend shake her woolly head and look dismal.

"Why, Sally, dear, what's the matter with you?" asked the former one day, as they sat together in the bower on the roof, after returning from their visit to the slave-gang.

A shake of the girl's head and an unutterable expression in her magnificent black eyes made Hester quite uneasy.

"Do tell me, Sally. Is there anything the matter with you?"

"De matter wid me? Oh no! Not'ing's neber de matter wid me—'cept when I eats too much—but it's you an' your fadder I's t'inkin' ob."

"But we are both getting on very well, Sally, are we not? I am quite safe here, and darling father is growing stronger and fatter every day, thank God! and then our hope is very strong. Why should you be anxious?"

Sally prefaced her reply with one of the professional gasps wherewith she was wont to bring down the iron pestle.

"Well, now, you white folks am de greatest ijits eber was born. Do you t'ink you'll deliber your fadder from de Moors by feedin' him on biscuits an' *hope*? What's de end ob all dis to come to? das what I want to know. Ob course you can't go on for eber. You sure to be cotched at last, and de whole affair'll bust up. You'll be tooked away, an' your fadder'll be t'rowed on de hooks or whacked to deaf. Oh! I's most mis'rable!"

The poor creature seemed inclined to howl at this point, but she constrained herself and didn't.

In the gloom of the cheerless Bagnio, Hugh Sommers found his wet blanket in Edouard Laronde.

"But it is unwise to look only at the bright side of things," said the Frenchman, after sympathising with his friend's joy in having discovered his daughter so unexpectedly and in such a curious manner. "No doubt, from her disguise, she must, as you say, be in hiding, and in comparative safety with friends, else she could not be moving so freely about this accursed city, but what is to be the end of it all?"

Laronde unconsciously echoed Sally's question to Hester, but Hugh Sommers had not as much to say in reply as his daughter, for he was too well acquainted with the possibilities of life to suppose that biscuits and hope would do much towards the "end," although valuable auxiliaries in the meantime.

"I see not the end, Laronde," he said, after a pause; "but the end is in the hands of God, and I will trust Him."

"So is the middle, and so is the beginning, as well as the end," returned Laronde cynically; "why, then, are you so perplexed and anxious about these if the end is, as you seem to think, so sure? Why don't you trust God all through?"

"I do trust God all through, my friend, but there is this difference—that with the end I have nothing to do save to wait patiently and trustfully, whereas with the beginning and middle it is my duty to act and energise hopefully."

"But why your anxiety if the whole matter is under safe guidance?" persisted the Frenchman.

"Because, while I am absolutely certain that God will do His part wisely and well, I am by no means sure that I shall do my part either well or wisely. You forget, Laronde, that we are free agents as well as sinful and foolish, more or less, so that there is legitimate room for anxiety, which only becomes evil when we give way to it, or when it goes the length of questioning the love, wisdom, and power of the Creator!"

"All mystery, all mystery, Sommers; you are only theorising about what you do not, cannot, know anything. You have no ground for what you hold."

"As you confess never to have studied, or even seriously contemplated, the ground on which I hold it, there is—don't you think?—a slight touch of presumption on your part in criticising so severely what you do not, cannot, understand? I profess to have *good* reasons for what I

hold; you profess merely to disbelieve it. Is there not a vast difference here?”

“Perhaps there is, but I’m too sleepy to see it. Would you oblige me by putting your foot on that centipede? He has made three ineffectual attempts to pass the night under my wing. Make sure work of him. Thanks. Now I will try to sleep. Oh! the weary, heart-sickness of hope deferred! Good-night, Sommers.”

“Good-night.”

Chapter Fourteen.

A Brave Dash for Life and Freedom.

“Geo’ge, come wid me,” said Peter the Great one afternoon, with face so solemn that the heart of the young midshipman beat faster as he followed his friend.

They were in Ben-Ahmed’s garden at the time—for the middy had been returned to his owner after a night in the common prison, and a threat of much severer treatment if he should ever again venture to lay his infidel hands on one of the faithful.

Having led the middy to the familiar summer house, where most of their earnest or important confabulations were held, Peter sat down and groaned.

“What’s wrong now?” asked the middy, with anxious looks.

"Oh! Geo'ge, eberyt'ing's wrong," he replied, flinging himself down on a rustic seat with a reckless air and rolling his eyes horribly. "Eberyt'ing's wrong. De world's all wrong togidder—upside down and inside out."

The middy might have laughed at Peter's expression if he had not been terribly alarmed.

"Come, Peter, tell me. Is Hester safe?"

"I don' know, Geo'ge."

"Don't know! Why d'you keep me in such anxiety? Speak, man, speak! What has happened?"

"How kin I speak, Geo'ge, w'en I's a'most busted wid runnin' out here to tell you?"

The perspiration that stood on Peter's sable brow, and the heaving of his mighty chest, told eloquently of the pace at which he had been running.

"Dis is de way ob it, Geo'ge. I had it all fro' de lips ob Sally herself, what saw de whole t'ing." As the narrative which Peter the Great had to tell is rather too long to be related in his own "lingo," we will set it down in ordinary language.

One day while Hester was, as usual, passing her father, and in the very act of dropping the customary supply of food, she observed that one of the slaves had drawn near and was watching her with keen interest. From the slave's garb and bearing any one at all acquainted with England could have seen at a glance that he was a British seaman, though hard service and severe treatment, with partial starvation, had changed him

much. He was in truth the stout sailor-like man who had spoken a few words to Foster the day he landed in Algiers, and who had contemptuously asserted his utter ignorance of gardening.

The slaves, we need hardly say, were not permitted to hold intercourse with each other for fear of their combining to form plans of rebellion and escape, but it was beyond the power of their drivers to be perpetually on the alert, so that sometimes they did manage to exchange a word or two without being observed.

That afternoon it chanced that Sommers had to carry a stone to a certain part of the wall. It was too heavy for one man to lift, the sailor was therefore ordered to help him. While bearing the burden towards the wall, the following whispered conversation took place.

"I say, old man," observed the sailor, "the little girl that gives you biscuits every day is no more a nigger than I am."

"Right!" whispered the merchant anxiously, for he had supposed that no one had observed the daily gift; "she is my daughter."

"I guessed as much by the cut o' your jibs. But she's in danger, for I noticed that one o' the drivers looked at her suspiciously to-day, and once suspicion is roused the villains never rest. Is there no means of preventing her coming this way to-morrow?"

"None. I don't even know where she comes from or goes to. God help her! If suspected, she is lost, for she will be sure to come to-morrow."

“Don’t break down, old man; they’ll observe you. If she is taken are you willing to fight?”

“Yes,” answered the merchant sternly.

“I am with you, then. Your name?”

“Sommers. Yours?”

“Brown.”

A driver had been coming towards them, so that the last few words had been spoken in low whispers. A sharp cut of the whip on the shoulders of each showed that the driver had observed them talking. They received it in absolute silence and without any outward display of feeling. To that extent, at all events, they had both been “tamed.”

But the stout seaman had been for many weeks acting a part. At first, like Sommers, he had been put in heavy irons on account of his violence and ferocity; but after many weeks of childlike submission on his part, the irons were removed. Despite the vigilance of the guards, a plot had been hatched by the gang to which Brown belonged, and it was almost, though not quite, ripe for execution when the events we are describing occurred. Poor Hester’s action next day precipitated matters and caused the failure of the plot—at least to some extent.

She had gone as usual with Sally to visit the slave-gang, and had dropped her biscuits, when her anxious father said, in a low but hurried voice, “Pass quickly, and don’t come again for some time!”

Hester involuntarily stopped.

“Darling father!” she said, restraining herself with difficulty from leaping into his arms, “why—oh! why am I not—”

She had only got thus far when the janissary, whose suspicions had been aroused, pounced upon her, and, seizing her by the wrist, looked keenly into her face.

“Ho! ho!” he exclaimed, glancing from the girl to her sire, “what mystery have we here? Come, we must investigate this.”

Poor Hester winced from the pain of the rude soldier’s grip as he proceeded to drag her away. Her father, seeing that further concealment was impossible, and that final separation was inevitable, became desperate. With the bound of an enraged tiger he sprang on the soldier and throttled him. Both being powerful men they fell on the ground in a deadly struggle, at which sight Hester could only look on with clasped hands in helpless terror.

But the British seaman was at hand. He had feared that some such mischief would arise. Seeing that two other soldiers were running to the aid of their fallen comrade, he suddenly gave the signal for the revolt of the slaves. It was premature. Taken by surprise, the half-hearted among the conspirators paid no attention to it, while the timid stood more or less bewildered. Only a few of the resolute and reckless obeyed the call, but these furnished full employment for their guards, for, knowing that failure meant death, if not worse, they fought like fiends.

Meanwhile the first of the two soldiers who came running, sword in hand, towards Sommers, was met by

Brown. With a piece of wood in his left hand, that worthy parried the blow that was delivered at his head. At the same time he sent his right fist into the countenance of his adversary with such force that he became limp and dropped like an empty topcoat. This was fortunate, for the companion janissary was close to him when he wheeled round. The blazing look of the seaman, however, induced so much caution in the Turk that, instead of using his sword, he drew a long pistol from his girdle and levelled it. Brown leaped upon him, caught the pistol as it exploded just in time to turn the muzzle aside, wrenched the weapon from his foe's grasp, and brought the butt of it down with such a whack on his head that it laid him beside his comrade.

Turning quickly to the still struggling pair, he saw that the janissary was black in the face, and that Sommers was compressing his throat with both hands and had his knee on his stomach, while Hester and Sally were looking on horrified, but hopeful. At the same time he saw fresh soldiers running up the street to reinforce the guard.

"Hester," he said sharply, and seizing the girl's hand, "come, bolt with me. I've knowed your father a good while. Quick!"

"Impossible!" she cried, drawing back. "I will not leave my father now!"

"You'll have to leave him anyhow," cried the sailor. "You can do him no good. If free you might—"

A shout at the moment caused him to glance round. It proceeded both from slaves and guards, for both at the same moment caught sight of the approach of the reinforcements. The former scattered in all directions,

and the latter gave chase, while pistol-shots and yells rent the air.

Instead of wasting more breath in useless entreaty, Brown seized the light form of Hester in his arms and ran with her to the ramparts. In the confusion of the general skirmish he was not observed—or, if observed, unheeded—by any one but Sally, who followed him in anxious haste, thinking that the man was mad, for there could be no possible way of escape, she thought, in that direction. She was wrong. There was method in Brown's madness. He had for a long time previously studied all the possibilities with reference to the meditated uprising, and had laid down for himself several courses which he might pursue according to the success, failure, or partial failure of their plans.

There was one part of the rampart they were engaged in repairing at that time which had given way and partly fallen into the ditch outside. The portion of the wall still remaining had been further demolished in order that a more secure foundation might be laid. The broken wall here had been but partially rebuilt, and was not nearly as high as the completed wall. A jump from this might be possible to a strong active man if the ground below were soft, or even level—though the risk of broken limbs was considerable.

Brown had observed, however, that at this place a small tree grew out from a mass of rock which had been incorporated as part of the wall, and that just below it there stood a huge bush of the cactus kind. To these two he had made up his mind to intrust himself in the event of things coming to the worst.

Accordingly it was to this part of the rampart he ran with

Hester in his strong arms. We have said that Sally ran after the sailor with anxiety, but that feeling was deepened into dismay when she saw him approach the portion of the wall just described, and she gave out one of her loudest coffee-pestle gasps when she saw him jump straight off the wall without a moment's hesitation.

Craning her neck and gazing downward, she saw the sailor go crashing through the little tree and alight with a squash in the heart of the watery cactus, out of which he leaped with such agility that Sally was led to exclaim under her breath—

"Hoh! don't de spikes make 'im jump!"

Whether it was the spikes or other influences we cannot tell, but certain it is that Brown did jump with wonderful activity, considering the burden he carried, dashed up the opposite bank, cut across country like a hunted hare, and found shelter in a neighbouring wood before the revolt in the city was completely quelled.

Here he pulled up and set the terrified Hester down.

"You'll excuse me, miss," he said pantingly, as he wiped his brows with the sleeve of his shirt—which garment, with a pair of canvas trousers, a grass hat, and thin carpet shoes, constituted his costume. "I'm wery sorry to carry you off agin' your will, but you'll thank me for it yet, maybe, for if I had left you behind, you couldn't have helped your poor father, and they'd have took you off for sartin to be a slave. Now, d'ye see, if you an' I manage to escape, there's no sayin' what we may do in the way o' raisin' ransom to buy back your father. Anyway, he has been so anxious about you, an' afraid o' your bein' catched, an' the terrible fate in store for you if you are,

that I made up my mind for *his* sake to carry you off."

To this explanation Hester listened with varying feelings.

"I believe, from the honesty of your look and tone," she said, at last, "that you have acted for the best, whether wisely or not remains to be seen; but I thank you heartily for your intentions, and especially for your kind feelings towards my dear father; but now I must claim the right to use my own judgment. I will return to the city and succour my father, or perish with him. Yet, rest assured, I will never forget the brave seaman who has so nobly risked his life to save me. Your name is—"

"Brown, miss—at your service."

"Well, good-bye, Brown, and God's blessing attend you," she said, extending her black little hand.

The seaman gently took it and gave it a timid pressure, as if he feared to crush it in his brawny hand.

"I'll shake hands with you," he said, "but I won't say good-bye, for I'll steer back to the city with you."

"Brown, this is sheer madness. There is no reason in what you propose to do. You cannot help me by sacrificing yourself."

"That's exactly what yer father would say to you, miss, if he was alongside of us—'You can't help me by sacrificin' of yerself.' Then, p'r'aps he would foller up that obsarvation by sayin', 'but you may an' can help me if you go wi' that sailor-friend o' mine, who may be rough and ready, but is sartinly true-blue, who knows the coast hereaway an' all its hidin'-places, an' who'll wentur his

life to do me a good turn, cause why? I once wentured my life to do him a good turn o' the same kind.'"

"Is this true, Brown? Did you know my father before meeting him here; and did he really render you some service?"

"Yes, indeed, miss; I have sailed in one o' your father's wessels, an' once I was washed overboard by a heavy sea, and he flung over a lifebuoy arter me, and jumped into the water himself to keep me afloat till a boat picked us up, for I couldn't swim. Now, look 'ere, miss, if you'll consent to sail under my orders for a short spell, you'll have a better chance o' doin' your father a sarvice than by returnin' to that nest o' pirates. Moreover, you'll have to make up your mind pretty quick, for we've lost too much time already."

"Go on, Brown, I will trust you," said Hester, placing her hand in that of the seaman, who, without another word, led her swiftly into the bush.

Now, all this, and a great deal more was afterwards related by Hester herself to her friends; but at the time all that was known to Sally—the only witness of the exploit—was that Hester Sommers had been carried off in the manner related by an apparently friendly British sailor. This she told soon after to Peter the Great, and this was the substance of the communication which Peter the Great, with glaring eyes and bated breath, made to George Foster, who received it with feelings and expressions that varied amazingly as the narrative proceeded.

"Is that all?" he asked, when the negro at length came to a decided stop.

"Das all—an' it's enuff too! 'Pears to me you's not so much cut up about dis leetle business as I 'spected you would be."

"I am anxious, of course, about Hester," returned the middy; "but at the same time greatly relieved, first, to know that she is in the hands of a respectable British sailor; and, second, that she is *not* in the hands of these bloodthirsty piratical Moors. But what about her father? Nothing more, I suppose, is known about his fate?"

"Not'ing, on'y it's as sure as if we did know it. If his carcass isn't on de hooks by dis time it'll soon be."

As the negro spoke the midshipman started up with flashing eyes, exclaimed angrily, "It shall *never* be," and ran out of the bower.

Entering the house, he went straight to Ben-Ahmed's private chamber, which he entered boldly, without even knocking at the door.

The Moor was seated cross-legs on a mat, solacing himself, as usual, with a pipe. He was not a little surprised, and at first was inclined to be angry, at the abrupt entrance of his slave.

"Ben-Ahmed," said the middy, with vehemence, "the father of the English girl you are so fond of—and whom I *love*—is in terrible danger, and if you are a true man—as I firmly believe you are—you will save him."

The Moor smiled very slightly at the youth's vehemence, pointed with the mouthpiece of his hookah to a cushion, and bade him sit down and tell him all about it.

The middy at once squatted *à la Turk*, not on the cushion, but on the floor, in front of his master, and, with earnest voice and gesture, related the story which Peter the Great had just told him.

Ben-Ahmed was visibly affected by it.

"But how can I save him?" he asked, with a look of perplexity.

"Did you not once save the life of the Dey?" asked Foster.

"I did. How came you to know that?"

"I heard it from Peter the Great, who aided you on the occasion. And he told me that the Dey has often since then offered to do you some good turn, but that you have always declined."

"That is true," said Ben-Ahmed, with the look of a man into whose mind a new idea had been introduced.

"Yes, something may be done in that way, and it would grieve me that the father of my poor little Hester should die. I will try. Go, have my horse saddled, and send Peter to me."

Our midshipman bounded rather than rose from the floor, and uttered an irresistible, "God bless you," as he vanished through the doorway on his errand.

"Peter," he cried—encountering that worthy as he ran—"we'll manage it! Go to Ben-Ahmed! He wants you—quick! I'm off to fetch his horse."

Foster was much too anxious to have the thing done quickly to give the order to the head groom. He ran direct to the stable, and, choosing the fleetest of the Moor's Arab steeds, quickly put on its crimson saddle, with its un-European peaks before and behind, and the other gay portions of harness with which Easterns are wont to caparison their horses.

In a wonderfully short space of time he had the steed round to the front door, and sent another slave to tell his master that it was ready.

The Moor had also caparisoned himself, if we may say so, for the intended visit, and he had evidently done it in haste. Nevertheless, his gait was stately, and his movements were slow, as he gravely mounted the horse and rode away. The impatience of the middy was somewhat relieved, however, when he saw that Ben-Ahmed, on reaching the main road, put spurs to his horse, and rode towards the city at full gallop.

Chapter Fifteen.

A Strange Visit, a Strange Commission, and a Strange Display of Temper.

After Ben-Ahmed had departed on his mission to the Dey of Algiers, George Foster and Peter the Great re-entered the house, and in the seclusion of the bower continued to discuss the hopes, fears, and possibilities connected with the situation.

"Dat was a clebber dodge ob yours, Geo'ge," remarked the negro, "an' I's got good hope dat somet'ing will come ob it, for massa's pretty sure to succeed w'en he take a t'ing in hand."

"I'm glad you think so, Peter. And, to say truth, I am myself very sanguine."

"But dere's one t'ing dat 'plexes me bery much. What is we to do about poo' Hester's fadder w'en he's pardoned? De Dey can spare his life, but he won't set him free—an' if he don't set him free de slabe-drivers 'll be sure to kill 'im out ob spite."

The middy was silent, for he could not see his way out of this difficulty.

"Perhaps," he said, "Ben-Ahmed may have thought of that, and will provide against it, for of course he knows all the outs and ins of Moorish life, and he is a thoughtful man."

"Das true, Geo'ge. He *am* a t'oughtful man. Anyhow, we kin do not'ing more, 'cept wait an' see. But I's much more 'plexed about Hester, for eben if de sailor am a good an' true man, as you say, he can't keep her or his-self alibe on not'ing in de mountains, no more'n he could swim wid her on his back across de Mederainyon!"

Again the middy was silent for a time. He could by no means see his way out of this greater difficulty, and his heart almost failed him as he thought of the poor girl wandering in the wilderness without food or shelter.

"P'r'aps," suggested Peter, "she may manage to git into de town an' pass for a nigger as she's dood before, an'

make tracks for her old place wid Missis Lilly—or wid Dinah."

"No doubt she may," cried Foster, grasping at the hope as a drowning man grasps at a plank. "Nothing more likely. Wouldn't it be a good plan for you to go into town at once and make inquiry?"

"Dessay it would," returned the negro. "Das just what I'll do, an' if she's not dere, Dinah may gib my int'lec' a jog. She's a wonderful woman, Dinah, for workin' up de human mind w'en it's like goin' to sleep. Poo' Samson hab diskivered dat many times. I'll go at once."

"Do, Peter, my fine fellow, and you'll lay me for ever under the deepest ob—"

He was interrupted by a slave who at the moment approached the bower and said that a man wanted to see Peter the Great.

"To see Ben-Ahmed, you mean," said Peter.

"No—to see yourself," returned the slave.

"Sen' 'im here," said the negro, with a magnificent wave of the hand.

In a few minutes the slave returned accompanied by a negro, who limped so badly that he was obliged to use a stick, and whose head was bandaged up with a blue cloth. Arrived at the bower, he stood before Peter the Great and groaned.

"You may go," said Peter to the slave, who lingered as if anxious to hear the news of the visitor. When he was out

of hearing, Peter turned to the lame man, looked him sharply in the face, and said—

"You's bery black in de face, my frind, but you's much blacker in de h'art. What business hab you to come here widout washin' your white face clean?"

"Well, you're a pretty smart chap for a nigger. An' I dare say you'll understand that I'd have had some difficulty in fetchin' this here port at all if I'd washed my face," answered the lame man, in excellent nautical English.

While he spoke, Foster ran towards him, laid a hand on his shoulder, and looked earnestly into his face.

"You are the British sailor," he said, "who rescued Hes—Miss Sommers from the janissaries?"

"That's me to a tee," replied the sailor, with a broad grin.

"Is Miss Sommers safe?" asked the middy anxiously.

"Ay! safe as any woman can be in this world. Leastwise, she's in a cave wi' three o' the toughest sea-dogs as any man could wish to see—one o' them bein' a Maltese an' the other two bein' true-blue John Bulls as well as Jack Tars. But Miss Sommers gave me orders to say my say to Peter the Great, so if this nigger is him, I'll be obleeged if he'll have a little private conversation wi' me."

"Did Miss Sommers say that I was not to hear the message?" asked the middy, in some surprise.

"She made no mention o' *you*, or anybody else at all, as I knows on," returned the sailor firmly, "an' as my orders was to Peter the Great, an' as this seems to be him,

from Sally's description—a monstrous big, fine-lookin' nigger, with a lively face—I'll say my say to him *alone*, with your leave."

"You may say it where you is, for dis yar gen'lem'n is a frind ob mine, an' a hofficer in the Bri'sh navy, an' a most 'tickler friend of Hester Sommers, so we all frinds togidder."

"You'll excuse me, sir," said the seaman, touching his forelock, "but you don't look much like a' officer in your present costoom. Well, then, here's wot I've got to say —"

"Don't waste your time, Brown, in spinning the yarn of your rescue of the girl," said Foster, interrupting; "we've heard all about it already from Sally, and can never sufficiently express our thanks to you for your brave conduct. Tell us, now, what happened after you disappeared from Sally's view."

The sailor thereupon told them all about his subsequent proceedings—how he had persuaded Hester to accompany him through the woods and by a round about route to a part of the coast where he expected ere long to find friends to rescue him. From some reason or other best known to himself, he was very secretive in regard to the way in which these friends had managed to communicate with him.

"You see I'm not free to speak out all I knows," he said. "But surely it's enough to say that my friends have not failed me; that I found them waitin' there with a small boat, so light that they had dragged it up an' concealed it among the rocks, an' that I'd have bin on my way to old England at this good hour if it hadn't bin for poor

Miss Sommers, whom we couldn't think of desartin'."

"Then she refused to go with you?" said Foster.

"Refused! I should think she did! Nothing, she said, would indooce her to leave Algiers while her father was in it. One o' my mates was for forcing her into the boat, an' carryin' her off, willin' or not willin', but I stood out agin' him, as I'd done enough o' that to the poor thing already. Then she axed me to come along here an' ax Peter the Great if he knowed anything about her father. 'But I don't know Peter the Great,' says I, 'nor where he lives.' 'Go to Sally,' says she, 'an' you'll get all the information you need.' 'But I'll never get the length o' Sally without being nabbed,' says I. 'Oh!' says she, 'no fear o' that. Just you let me make a nigger of you. I always keep the stuff about me in my pocket, for I so often cry it off that I need to renew it frequently.' An' with that she out with a parcel o' black stuff and made me into a nigger before you could say Jack Robinson. Fort'nately, I've got a pretty fat lump of a nose of my own, an' my lips are pretty thick by natur', so that with a little what you may call hard poutin' when I had to pass guards, janissaries, an' such like, I managed to get to where Missis Lilly an' Sally lived, an' they sent me on here. An' now the question is, what's to be done, for it's quite clear that my mates an' me can't remain for ever hidin' among the rocks. We must be off; an' I want to know, are we to take this poor gal with us, or are we to leave her behind, an', if so, what are her friends a-goin' to do for her?"

"There's no fear of your friends going off without you, I suppose?"

"Well, as they risked their precious lives to rescue me, it

ain't likely," returned the seaman.

"Would it not be well to keep Brown here till Ben-Ahmed returns?" asked Foster, turning to Peter the Great.

The negro knitted his brows and looked vacantly up through the leafy roof of the bower, as if in profound meditation. Some of the brighter stars were beginning to twinkle in the darkening sky by that time, and one of them seemed to wink at him encouragingly, for he suddenly turned to the middy with all the energy of his nature, exclaiming, "I's got it!" and brought his great palm down on his greater thigh with a resounding slap.

"If it's in your breeches pocket you must have squashed it, then!" said Brown—referring to the slap. "Anyhow, if you've got it, hold on to it an' let's hear what it is."

"No—not now. All in good time. Patience, my frind, is a virtoo wuf cultivation—"

"You needn't go for to tell *that* to a Bagnio slave like me, Mister Peter. Your greatness might have made you aware o' that," returned the sailor quietly.

An eye-shutting grin was Peter's reply to this, and further converse was stopped by the sound of clattering hoofs.

"Massa!" exclaimed the negro, listening. "Das good. No time lost. Come wid me, you sham nigger, an' I's gib you somet'ing to tickle you stummik. You go an' look arter de hoss, Geo'ge."

While the middy ran to the gate to receive his master, Peter the Great led the sham nigger to the culinary regions, where, in a sequestered corner, he supplied him

with a bowl containing a savoury compound of chicken and rice.

"I hope that all has gone well?" Foster ventured to ask as the Moor dismounted.

"All well. Send Peter to me immediately," he replied, and, without another word, hurried into the house.

Calling another slave and handing over the smoking horse to him, Foster ran to the kitchen.

"Peter, you're—"

"Wanted 'meeditly—yes, yes—I knows dat. What a t'ing it is to be in'spensible to anybody! I don't know how he'll eber git along widout me."

Saying which he hurried away, leaving the middy to do the honours of the house to the sailor.

"I s'pose, sir, you haven't a notion what sort o' plans that nigger has got in his head?" asked the latter.

"Not the least idea. All I know is that he is a very clever fellow and never seems very confident about anything without good reason."

"Well, whatever he's a-goin' to do, I hope he'll look sharp about it, for poor Miss Sommers's fate and the lives o' my mates, to say nothin' of my own, is hangin' at this moment on a hair—so to speak," returned the sailor, as he carefully scraped up and consumed the very last grain of the savoury mess, murmuring, as he did so, that it was out o' sight the wery best blow-out he'd had since he enjoyed his last Christmas dinner in old England.

"Will you have some more?" asked the sympathetic middy.

"No more, sir, thankee. I'm loaded fairly down to the water-line. Another grain would bust up the hatches; but if I might ventur' to putt forth a wish now, a glass o'—no? well, no matter, a drop o' water'll do. I'm well used to it now, havin' drunk enough to float a seventy-four since I come to this city o' pirates."

"You will find coffee much more agreeable as well as better for you. I have learned that from experience," said the middy, pouring out a tiny cupful from an earthen coffee-pot that always stood simmering beside the charcoal fire.

"Another of that same, sir, if you please," said the seaman, tossing off the cupful, which, indeed, scarcely sufficed to fill his capacious mouth. "Why they should take their liquor in these parts out o' things that ain't much bigger than my old mother's thimble, passes my comprehension. You wouldn't mind another?—thankee."

"As many as you please, Brown," said the middy, laughing, as he poured out cupful after cupful; "there's no fear of your getting half-seas-over on that tipple!"

"I only wish I *was* half-seas-over, or even a quarter that length. Your health, sir!" returned Brown, with a sigh, as he drained the last cup.

Just then Peter the Great burst into the kitchen in a very elated condition.

"Geo'ge," he cried, "you be off. Massa wants you

—'meeditly. But fust, let me ax—you understan' de place among de rocks whar Brown's mates and de boat am hidden?"

"Yes, I know the place well."

"You knows how to get to it?"

"Of course I do."

"Das all right; now come along—come along, you sham nigger, wid me. Has you got enuff?"

"Bustin'—all but."

"Das good now; you follow me; do what you's tol'; hol' you tongue, an' look sharp, if you don' want your head cut off."

"Heave ahead, cap'n; I'm your man."

The two left the house together and took the road that led to the hill country in rear of the dwelling.

Meanwhile George Foster went to the chamber of the Moor. He found his master seated, as was his wont, with the hookah before him, but with the mouthpiece lying idly on his knee, and his forehead resting on one hand. So deeply was he absorbed in communing with his own thoughts, that he did not observe the entrance of his slave until he had been twice addressed. Then, looking up as if he had been slightly startled, he bade him sit down.

"George Foster," he began impressively, at the same time applying a light to his hookah and puffing sedately,

"you will be glad to hear that I have been successful with my suit to the Dey. God has favoured me; but a great deal yet remains to be done, and that must be done by *you*—else—"

He stopped here, looked pointedly at the middy, and delivered the remainder of his meaning in pufflets of smoke.

"I suppose you would say, sir, that unless it is done by me it won't be done at all?"

To this the Moor nodded twice emphatically, and blew a thin cloud towards the ceiling.

"Then you may count upon my doing my utmost, if that which I am to do is in the interest of Hester Sommers or her father, as no doubt it is."

"Yes, it is in their interest," rejoined Ben-Ahmed. "I have done my part, but dare not go further; for much though I love little Hester—who has been to me as a sweet daughter—I must not risk my neck for her unnecessarily. But, if I mistake not, you are not unwilling to risk that?"

"Ay, fifty necks would I risk for her sake if I had them," returned our middy with enthusiasm, for he was in that stage of love which glories in the acknowledgment of thraldom.

Ben-Ahmed looked at him with interest, sighed, and sought solace in the pipe.

After a few meditative puffs, he continued—

"After all, you run little risk, as you shall see. When I

asked the Dey, with whom I am familiar, for the pardon of the slave Sommers, he did not seem pleased, and objected that there had been too many revolts of late; that this man's case was a bad one, and that it was necessary to make an example or two.

"'Very true, your highness,' I replied, 'but may I beg you to make an example of some other slaves, and forgive Sommers?'

"'Why do you take so much interest in this man?' demanded the Dey, who seemed to me rather short in his temper at the time.

"'Because he is the father of one of my female slaves, your highness,' I replied; 'and it is the fear that they will be separated for ever that makes the man desperate and the girl miserable. If you will permit me, I should like to reunite them. Your highness has often expressed a wish to do me some kindness for the privilege I once had of saving your highness's life. Will you now refuse me this man's life?' 'Nay, I will not refuse you, Ben-Ahmed. But I do not see that my granting your request will reunite the father and child, unless, indeed, you are prepared to purchase the man.'

"'I am prepared to do so, your highness,' I said.

"'In that case you are at liberty to go to the Bagnio and take him out. Here is my ring.'

"Now, Foster," continued the Moor, drawing the ring in question from his vest-pocket, "take this. Show it to the captain of the guard at the Bagnio, who will admit you. Tell him that I sent you for one of the slaves. After that your own intelligence must guide you. Go, and God go

with you."

"I will do as you command, Ben-Ahmed," said Foster; "but I must tell you frankly that I will not—"

"Silence!" thundered the Moor, with a look of ferocity which the amazed midshipman could not account for. "Have you not understood me?"

"Yes, sir, perfectly, but—"

"When a slave receives a command," cried Ben-Ahmed in rising wrath, "it is his duty to obey in silence. Again I say —go!"

The middy bowed with feelings of indignation, but on reaching the door paused, and again essayed to speak.

"I give you fair warning, Ben-Ahmed, that I will *not*—"

"Silence!" again roared the Moor, seizing an ornamental box and hurling it violently at his slave, who, dipping his head, allowed it to go crashing against the wall, while he went out and shut the door.

"Well, old boy, I'm absolved from any allegiance to *you*," he muttered, as he walked smartly down the garden walk towards the gate; "so if I do a good deal more than your bidding you mustn't be surprised. But your sudden burst of anger is incomprehensible. However, that's not my business now."

Had any one been there to observe the Moor after the middy had taken his departure, he would have seen that the passion he had displayed evaporated as rapidly as it had arisen, and that he resumed the amber mouthpiece

of his hookah with a peculiar smile and an air of calm contentment. Thereafter he ordered out his horse, mounted it in his usual dignified manner, and quietly rode away into the darkness of the night.

It may be observed here our middy had improved greatly in the matter of costume since his appointment to the rank of limner to Ben-Ahmed. The old canvas jacket, straw hat, etcetera, had given place to a picturesque Moorish costume which, with the middy's fine figure and natural bearing, led people to suppose him a man of some note, so that his appearance was not unsuited to the mission he had in hand.

We need scarcely say that his spirit was greatly agitated, as he walked towards the town, by uncertainty as to how he ought to act in the present emergency, and his mind was much confused by the varied, and, to some extent, inexplicable incidents of the evening. His thoughts crystallised, however, as he went along, and he had finally made up his mind what to do by the time he passed the portals Bab-Azoun and entered the streets of Algiers.

Chapter Sixteen.

Mysterious and Daring Deeds are Crowned with Success.

Threading his way carefully through the badly lighted streets, our middy went straight to the Kasba, and, rapping boldly at the gate, demanded admittance.

"Show me to the guard-room. I wish to speak with the officer in command," he said, in the tone of one accustomed to obedience.

The soldier who admitted him introduced him to the officer in charge for the night.

"I come, sir," said Foster, with quiet gentlemanly assurance, "to demand an escort for slaves."

"By whose orders?" asked the officer.

"The order of his Highness the Dey," answered Foster, producing the ring.

The officer examined it, touched his forehead with it in token of submission, and asked how many men were required.

"Six will do," returned the middy, in a slow, meditative manner, as if a little uncertain on the point—"yes, six will suffice. I only wish their escort beyond the gates. Friends might attempt a rescue in the town. When I have them a short distance beyond the gates I can manage

without assistance."

He touched, as he spoke, the handle of a silver-mounted pistol which he carried in his belt. Of course, as he spoke Lingua Franca, the officer of the guard knew quite well that he was a foreigner, but as the notables and Deys of Algiers were in the habit of using all kinds of trusted messengers and agents to do their work, he saw nothing unusual in the circumstance. Six armed soldiers were at once turned out, and with these obedient, unquestioning slaves he marched down the tortuous streets to the Bagnio.

The ring procured him admittance at once, and the same talisman converted the head jailer into an obsequious servant.

"I have come for one of your slaves," said the middy, walking smartly into the court where most of the miserable creatures had already forgotten their wretchedness in the profound sleep of the weary. The tramp of the soldiers on the stone pavement and the clang of their arms awoke some of them. "The name of the man I want is Hugh Sommers."

On hearing this one of the slaves was observed to reach out his hand and shake another slave who still slumbered.

"Rouse up, Sommers! You are wanted, my poor friend."

"What say you, Laronde?" exclaimed the merchant, starting up and rubbing his eyes.

"Get up and follow me," said Foster, in a stern commanding tone.

"And who are *you*, that orders me as if I were a dog?" fiercely returned Sommers, who, since the day of the unsuccessful mutiny, had again become desperate, and was in consequence heavily ironed.

"The Dey of Algiers gives the order through me," replied Foster, pointing to the soldiers, "and it will be your highest wisdom to obey without question. Knock off his irons," he added, turning abruptly to the chief jailer.

The air of insolent authority which our 'hipperkritical' middy assumed was so effective that even Sommers was slightly overawed. While the irons were being removed, the unhappy Frenchman, Edouard Laronde, sought to console him.

"I told you it would soon come to this," he said in English. "I only wish I was going to die with you."

"Knock off this man's irons also," said the middy, to whom a new idea had suddenly occurred, and who was glad to find that his altered costume and bearing proved such a complete disguise that his old comrade in sorrow did not recognise him.

"I thought," said the jailer, "that you said only one slave was wanted."

"I say *two* slaves are wanted," growled the midshipman, with a look so fierce that the jailer promptly ordered the removal of Laronde's fetters.

"Did I not often tell you," muttered Hugh Sommers, "that your unguarded tongue would bring you to grief?"

"It matters not. I submit, and am ready," returned the Frenchman in a sad tone. "If it were not for my poor wife and child, the world would be well rid of such a useless rebel as I."

When the two slaves were ready, Foster demanded a piece of rope with which he fastened the left and right wrists of the two men together. Then, placing them in the midst of the soldiers, he led them out of the prison and along the main street in the direction of the western gate of the city. Passing through this the little party advanced into the suburbs until they reached a part of the road beyond which pedestrians usually found it convenient not to travel after dark. Here Foster called a halt.

"I thank you," he said to the leader of the soldiers, at the same time giving him a piece of money. "There is no further occasion for your services, all danger of rescue being past. I can now take care of them myself, being armed, as you see, while they are bound. Convey my thanks and compliments to your commanding officer."

The soldier acknowledged the piece of money with a grave inclination of the head, ordered his men to right-about-face, and marched back to the Kasba, leaving the three slaves standing not far from the seashore, and gazing at each other in silence.

"You seem to have forgotten me, friends," said the middy in English, pulling a clasp-knife out of his pocket. "Yet you have both met me before when we were slaves."

"*Were* slaves!" repeated the Frenchman, who was the first to recover from his astonishment, "are we not still slaves?" he asked, glancing at the cords that bound their

wrists.

"Not now," said Foster, cutting the cords with his knife —"at least we shall soon be free if we make good use of our opportunities."

"Free!" exclaimed both men together, with the energy of a sudden and almost overwhelming hope.

"Ay, free! But this is no time for explanation. Follow me closely, and in silence."

Scarcely crediting their senses, and more than half disposed to believe that the whole affair was one of their too familiar dreams, yet strangely convinced at the same time that it was a reality, the two men followed their young leader with alacrity.

The reader will remember that before parting from Foster that day Peter the Great had taken special care to ascertain that he knew the whereabouts of the rocks where the boat belonging to Brown and his friends was concealed. As Foster walked along in the dark he thought a good deal about this, and felt convinced that Peter must have had some idea of the event that was likely to follow from his mission to the Bagnio. But he was much perplexed in attempting to account for his reticence in the matter. Altogether, there was mystery about it which he could not see through, so he wisely gave up thinking about it, and braced his energies to the carrying out of his own little plot. This was, to lead Hugh Sommers to his daughter and assist them to escape in the boat, along with Brown the sailor and his companions—intending, of course, to escape along with them! His taking advantage of the opportunity to free Edouard Laronde was the result of a sudden inspiration—a mere

afterthought!

The distance to the spot for which they were making was considerable, and at first the fugitives proceeded with caution and in silence, but as their distance from the pirate city increased, and the danger of pursuit diminished, the middy relaxed a little, gave his companions interjectional scraps of information, and finally revealed to them all that he knew and purposed.

Suddenly their conversation was interrupted by the sight of something moving at the side of the road. It looked too small for a man, yet its movements seemed too intelligent for a dog or a stray donkey.

"Stay here, I will soon find out," whispered Foster, drawing his pistol, and bounding towards the object in question.

It ran from him, but our middy was swift of foot. He quickly overtook it, and seized firmly by the arm what in the dark he thought to be a boy.

A slight scream undeceived him, and at the same time caused his heart to bound.

"Oh, you hurt me!" exclaimed a well-remembered voice.

"Hester!" cried the youth, and next moment, folding her in his arms, he kissed her—quite unintentionally, but irresistibly.

Thrusting him away with indignation, the maiden said, with flashing eyes, "You forget yourself, sir, and take advantage of my defenceless position."

"No—no, indeed! I did not intend to frighten you, dear child," (in his desperation the middy assumed the paternal *rôle*). "Pray forgive me, it was only my joy at the prospect of reuniting you to your father, and—"

"My father!" cried Hester, forgetting her offended dignity. "Where is he? You are alone! Peter the Great sent me here to meet him, but he did not say I should meet *you*."

"Peter the Great sent you here—and alone!" exclaimed Foster, in amazement.

"Yes; he went out first to make sure that my father was coming, and then sent me to meet him that we might be alone. But Peter is close at hand."

"Ho, yis! bery close at hand, Geo'ge!" said Peter himself, suddenly emerging from a place of concealment. "Now you come along wid me, sar, an' let dat poo' chile meet her fadder in private."

"But she cannot do that, Peter, for Edouard Laronde is with him."

"Who'n all de wurld's Eddard Larongd?"

Before Foster could reply Hester had bounded from his side, and next moment was locked in her father's arms.

"Come away, Geo'ge—an' you too, Eddard La—La-whatever-it-is!" cried the negro, grasping the latter by the arm and hurrying him along the road in the direction of the seashore, while the reunited father and child knelt down together and poured out their gratitude to God.

"Dey'll foller us in a minnit or two," continued the negro.

"What kep' you so long, Geo'ge?"

"Couldn't manage it sooner. But can you guess, Peter, why Ben-Ahmed behaved in the strange way he has done? He got into a rage when I attempted to tell him honestly, that I did not intend to go back to him, or to take Sommers to his house, and that I'd try to escape along with him if I could, but he would not listen or let me say a word."

"Did you t'ink ob tellin' him all dat?" asked Peter.

"I certainly did."

"Well, you're not half such a hipperkrite as I t'ink you was."

"I'm glad to hear you say so, for I don't like to play the part of a hypocrite, Peter; I like to be all fair and above-board."

"Was it all fair an' above-board, Geo'ge, to kiss dat leetle gal when she was all alone and unpurtected? Was it all fair an' above-board to call her you dear *chile*, as if you was her fadder?"

"Come, come, Peter, 'everything is fair,' you know, 'in love and war.' But that's not the point. Can you guess, I ask, Ben-Ahmed's motive for acting so oddly?"

"Oh! yis, Geo'ge, I kin guess a'most anybody's motives, zough, p'r'aps, I mightn't guess right. I shouldn't wonder, now, if Ben-Ahmed will hab to account to do Dey for de tottle disappearance of Hugh Sommers—to say not'ing ob Eddard La—La—what's-'is-name—an' p'r'aps he'd like to be able to say he'd no notion o' what de man he sent to

fetch de slabe was goin' to do. Now he couldn't hab say dat, you know, if he let you tell him all about it—like a goose as you was. So he let you go off, d'ye see, gib you your orders so far, an' labes de rest to your good sense—zough dere wasn't too much ob dat to leab it to, or you wouldn't hab bring away Eddard La—La—t'ing-um-bob."

"But do you really mean to tell me, Peter, that Ben-Ahmed intended me and Hugh Sommers to escape?"

"Das really what I means to tell you, Geo'ge."

"Then why didn't you tell me all, this before, and save me from a deal of uncertainty?"

"Cause, in de fuss' place, I had no time to tell you; in de second place, I was ordered not to tell you; in de t'ird place, it's good for midshipmen to be put on deir mettle, an' lef' to find deir own way out ob diffikilties, an', in de fourf place, slabes hab no business to be axin' de outs an' ins, de whys an' de wherefores of deir massa's affairs."

"Well, I always knew Ben-Ahmed had a kind heart, but little thought it was so kind and self-sacrificing as to buy Sommers for the very purpose of setting him free. I regret, deeply, that I did not know this sooner, and that I cannot now have the chance of thanking him with all my heart and soul, and bidding the good man farewell. It is one comfort, however, that I'll be able to send a message back by you. And I'm also glad that I shall not have to part from you, my dear Peter, without telling you how much I love you and how sorry, very, *very* sorry, I am to say good-bye."

"Geo'ge," returned the negro earnestly, "don't you count

your cheekins afore dey's hatched! You're not away yit."

Foster made no reply. To say truth, he felt a little hurt by the way in which his protestations of regard were received, and, by way of changing the subject, he asked if Peter had ever heard anything about the old Dane and his wife and daughter who had been captured at the same time with himself.

"Dey's bin ransom'd, all ob dem. Got rich friends, you see. Hole your tongue now, Geo'ge, we's comin' to de place."

By that time Sommers and his daughter had overtaken the party. As they all proceeded silently along the road, wondering how the matter would end, they observed a figure, like that of a female, glide, as it were, out of the darkness, and, taking Peter quietly by the arm, walk along with him.

Impelled by curiosity, Foster went forward and looked into her face.

"Angelica!" he exclaimed in surprise.

"Ob course!" answered her husband for her, "you don't suppose de wife ob Peter de Great would let Geo'ge Foster go away widout comin' to de boat to see him off?"

Ere the middy could recover from his astonishment the party came suddenly upon a small cavern in which a light glimmered. At its entrance lay a boat, and beside it, engaged in putting it to rights, were Brown and his three companions—the two British tars and the Maltese seaman.

"Is all right?" asked Brown, in a low voice, as they approached.

"All right," answered Peter.

"Now, Geo'ge, you go in."

The middy entered the cave, and with, if possible, increased surprise, he found Ben-Ahmed standing there!

"You are astonished, my friend," said the Moor with a gentle smile, as he extended his hand.

"I am indeed," returned the middy, heartily grasping and warmly shaking it, "but I am also rejoiced that I have the opportunity—which I had not hoped for—of thanking you for all your great kindness to me in time past—especially for this crowning act."

"You have not to thank me," returned the Moor, "you have to thank the little English girl;" as he spoke he made a graceful motion of the hand towards Hester, who, with her father, entered the cave at the moment. "Little Hester has taught me—not by word but by example—the grand lesson of your Christian Scriptures, that a man should do to others what he would have others do to him. I have resolved to keep no more slaves, and, as a first step, I now set you all free!"

"God's blessing rest on you for that, sir," said Hugh Sommers, stepping forward and grasping the hand that Foster had relinquished. "Have you, then, forsaken the faith of Mohammed and adopted that of Christ?"

"Be not over-curious," said the Moor reprovingly. "Sufficient for you to know that fresh water cannot spring

from a salt fountain. We must not waste time. The boat is in the water by this time. Farewell. Kiss me, my child. We may not meet again on earth, but—we shall certainly meet hereafter!”

Hester, who saw the Moor assume all shapes and sizes through the tears that filled her eyes, ran to him, and, throwing her arms round his neck gave him a hug that made even her father jealous.

“Now, away, all of you,” cried Ben-Ahmed, when he was released, “and may the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob go with you.”

While he was yet speaking the clatter of horses’ hoofs in the distance was heard. Instantly the party made for the boat. There was no time for last adieux. Ben-Ahmed helped to shove off the boat and bundle them in.

“You will hear pistol-shots,” he cried, “but fear not for me. My horse can outrun the best in Algiers. I will only fire to decoy them away. Farewell!”

He ran up into the shrubbery that bordered the road, and next minute the sound of the horse’s feet was heard in the distance, as the boat skimmed swiftly out to sea under the powerful impulse of its stalwart crew.

A few minutes later and, as the Moor had prophesied, pistol-shots were heard on shore. From the sound they appeared to come from a short distance in the interior of the land, but musket-shots were also heard among them, and from the flashes on the beach it became evident that the Moor had not succeeded in turning all their pursuers off the scent—a fact which was further illustrated by the skipping of a musket ball close past the boat.

Just then it struck George Foster that Peter the Great and his wife were seated beside him.

"Hallo, Peter!" he exclaimed; "how are you and Angelica to get on shore?"

"We's not goin' on shore at all, Geo'ge."

"What do you mean, Peter?"

"I means what I says. De fact is, Geo'ge, dat I's come to de conclusion dat I couldn't lib widout you. Angelica's ob de same opinion, so we's made up our minds, wid massa's purmission, to go wid you to ole England. We's all goin' togidder, Geo'ge. Ain't dat jolly?"

"But how can we ever get to England in a small boat like this?" asked the middy, in much anxiety, for in the hurry and excitement of the start the difficulty had not occurred to him.

"No fear about that, sir," answered Brown, who pulled the bow oar; "we ain't such fools as to make the voyage in a cockle-shell like this! The boat b'longs to a privateer as is owned by a friend o' mine, an' the wessel's lyin' off an' on waitin' for us."

"There she goes!" said one of the sailors. "Look out!"

As he spoke a large schooner loomed up against the dark sky, and was hailed. A gruff voice replied. Another moment the sails flapped, and the boat was towing alongside. Our middy was first to leap on deck—and not without a purpose in view, for he was thus in a position to hand up the passengers.

“Do you forgive me, Hester?” he whispered humbly, as he stooped to grasp her little hand.

“I forgive you!” she whispered timidly, as she passed him, and was led by her father into the vessel’s cabin.

That night two of the swiftest of the piratical war-vessels were seen to warp out from the Mole, and put to sea, but long before the land breeze filled their peaked sails the privateer was cleaving her way, homeward bound, through the dark waters of the Mediterranean.

Chapter Seventeen.

The Last.

“Geo’ge, your mudder wants you.”

Such were the words which aroused George Foster from a reverie one morning as he stood at the window of a villa on the coast of Kent, fastening his necktie and contemplating the sea.

“Nothing wrong, I hope,” said the middy, turning quickly round, and regarding with some anxiety the unusually solemn visage of Peter the Great.

“Wheder dere’s anyfing wrong or not, ’snot for me to say, massa, but I t’ink dere’s suffin’ up, for she seems in a carfuffle.”

“Tell her I shall be with her instantly.” Completing his

toilet hastily, our hero repaired to his mother's apartment, where he found her seated in dishabille with an open letter in her hand, and some excitement in her face.

"Is Laronde better this morning?" she asked as her son sat down on a sofa at the foot of her bed.

"I don't know, mother—haven't been to his room this morning. Why do you ask? Has anything happened?"

"I will tell you presently, but first let me know what success you have had in your search."

"Nothing but failure," said the middy, in a desponding tone. "If there had been anything good to tell you I would have come to your room last night despite the lateness of the hour. We were later than usual in arriving because a trace broke, and after that one of the horses cast a shoe."

"Where did you make inquiries, George?"

"At the solicitors' office, of course. It is through them that we obtained what we hoped would be a clue, and it is to them that poor Marie Laronde used to go to inquire whether there was any chance of her husband being released for a smaller sum than was at first demanded. They had heard of a dressmaker who employed a girl or woman named Laronde in the West End, so I hunted her up with rather sanguine expectations, but she turned out to be a girl of sixteen, dark instead of fair, and unmarried! But again I ask, mother, what news, for I see by your face that you have something to tell me. That is a letter from Minnie, is it not?"

"It is, George, and I am very hopeful that while you have been away on the wrong scent in the West End of London, Minnie has fallen, quite unexpectedly, on the right scent in one of the low quarters of Liverpool. You know that she has been nursing Aunt Jeanette there for more than a fortnight."

"Yes, I know it only too well," answered the middy. "It is too bad that Aunt Jeanette should take it into her head to get ill and send for Minnie just three weeks after my return from slavery!—But what do you mean by her having fallen on the right scent? Surely she has not found leisure and strength both to hunt and nurse at the same time!"

"Yes, indeed, she has. Our last winter in that charming south of France has so completely restored her—through the blessing of God—that she has found herself equal to almost anything. It happens that Aunt Jeanette has got a friend living close to her who is an enthusiastic worker amongst the poor of the town, and she has taken your sister several times to visit the districts where the very poor people live. It was while she was thus engaged, probably never thinking of poor Laronde's wife at all, that she—but here is the letter. Read it for yourself, you need not trouble yourself to read the last page—just down to here."

Retiring to the window the middy read as follows:—

> "Darling Mother,—I must begin at once with what my mind is full of, just remarking, by the way, that Aunt Jeanette is improving steadily, and that I hope to be home again in less than a week.
>
> "Well, I told you in my last that Miss Love—who is

most appropriately named—had taken me out once or twice on her visits among the poor. And, do you know, it has opened up a new world of ideas and feelings to me. It is such a terrible revelation of the intensity of sorrow and suffering that is endured by a large mass of our fellow-creatures! I am persuaded that thousands of the well-to-do and the rich have no conception of it, for it must be seen to be understood. I feel as if my heart had become a great fountain of pity! And I can well—at least better—understand how our dear Saviour, when He wanted to give evidence of the truth and character of His mission, said, 'The poor have the gospel preached unto them,' for if any class of beings on the face of this earth stand in need of good news it is the poor. God help and bless them!

"Well, the other day Miss Love came to ask me to go out with her to visit some of her poor people, among others one—a very singular character—a woman who was reported to be a desperate miser, insomuch that she starved herself and her child for the sake of saving money. It was said that she was very ill at the time—thought to be dying—and seemed to be in a wretched state of destitution. Her name, Miss Love told me, was Lundy.

"As Auntie was pretty well that day I gladly accompanied my friend to her district. And it *was* an awful place! I shudder even now when I think of the sights and sounds and dreadful language I saw and heard there—but I must not turn aside from what I have to tell. I pass over our visits to various families and come at once to the reputed miser. She was in bed, and from her flushed face and glittering eyes I

could see that she was in high fever. She started, raised herself on an elbow, and glared at us as we entered.

"I was deeply interested in her from the first moment. Although worn and thin, with lines of prolonged suffering indelibly stamped on her, she had a beautiful and refined face. Her age appeared to be about thirty-five. A lovely, but wretchedly clothed girl, of about fourteen years of age, sat on a low stool at her bedside. And oh! such a bed it was. Merely a heap of straw with a piece of sacking over it, on a broken bedstead. One worn blanket covered her thin form. Besides these things, a small table, and a corner cupboard, there was literally nothing else in the room.

"The girl rose to receive us, and expressed regret that she had no chairs to offer. While Miss Love went forward and talked tenderly to the mother, I drew the girl aside, took her hand affectionately, and said, 'You have not always been as poor as you now are?'

"'No indeed,' she said, while tears filled her eyes, 'but work failed us in London, where we once lived, and mother came to Liverpool to a brother, who said he would help her, but he died soon after our arrival, and then mother got ill and I had to begin and spend our savings—savings that darling mother had scraped and toiled so hard to gain—and this made her much worse, for she was *so* anxious to save money!'

"This last remark reminded me of the reports about the mother's miserly nature, so I asked a question that made the poor girl reply quickly—

"'Oh! you mustn't think that darling mother is a miser. People so often fall into that mistake! She has been saving for ever so many years to buy father back—'

"'Buy father back!' I repeated, with a sudden start.

"'Yes, to buy him from the Algerine pirates—'

"I waited for no more, but, running to the bedside, looked the poor woman steadily in the face. There could be no doubt about it. There was the fair hair, blue eyes, and clear complexion, though the last was sadly faded from ill-health.

"You should have seen the look of surprise she gave me. But I had been foolishly precipitate. Her mind had been wandering a little before we came in. The shock seemed to throw it further off the balance, for she suddenly looked at me with a calm sweet smile.

"'Yes,' she said, 'he always called me Marie, though my name was Mary, being a Frenchman, you know—his little Marie he called me! I often think how pleased he will be to see another little Marie grown big when we get him back—but oh! how long—how *long* they are about sending him, though I have sent the money over and over again. Hush!'

"She looked round with a terrified expression and clutched my shawl with her thin hand. 'You won't tell, will you?' she went on; 'you have a kind face, I am sure you will not tell, but I have been saving—saving—saving, to send more money to the Moors. I keep it in a bag here under my pillow, but I often fear that some one will discover and steal it. Oh! these Moors

must have hard, hard hearts to keep him from me so long—so *very* long!'

"Here she thrust me from her with unexpected violence, burst into a wild laugh, and began in her delirium to rave against the Moors. Yet, even in the midst of her reproaches, the poor thing prayed that God would soften their hearts and forgive her for being so revengeful.

"Now, mother, I want to know what is to be done, for when we sent for a doctor he said that not a word must be said about the return of her husband until she is out of danger and restored to some degree of health."

Thus far the middy read the letter.

"Mother," he said, firmly, "the doctor may say what he likes, but I am convinced that the best cure for fever and every other disease under the sun is joy—administered judiciously, in small or large doses as the patient is able to bear it! Now, the primary cause of poor Marie's illness is the loss of her husband, therefore the removal of the cause—that is, the recovery of her husband—"

"With God's blessing," interjected Mrs Foster.

"Admitted—with the blessing of the Great Physician—that is the natural cure."

"Very true, George, but you wisely spoke of small doses. I am not sure that it would be safe to tell Monsieur Laronde that we have actually found his wife and child. He also is too weak to bear much agitation."

"Not so weak as you think, mother, though the sufferings of slave-life and subsequent anxiety have brought him very near to the grave. But I will break it to him judiciously. We will get my dear little Hester to do it."

"*Your* Hester!" exclaimed Mrs Foster, in surprise. "I trust, George, that you, a mere midshipman, have not dared to speak to that child of—"

"Make your mind easy, mother," replied the middy, with a laugh, "I have not said a word. Haven't required to. We have both spoken to each other with our eyes, and that is quite enough at present. I feel as sure of my little Hester as if we were fairly spliced. There goes the breakfast-bell. Will you be down soon?"

"No. I am too happy to-day to be able to eat in public, George. Send it up to me."

The breakfast-room in that seaside villa presented an interesting company, for the fugitives had stuck together with feelings of powerful sympathy since they had landed in England. Hugh Sommers was there, but it was not easy to recognise in the fine, massive, genial gentleman, in a shooting suit of grey, the ragged, wretched slave who, not long before, had struggled like a tiger with the janissaries on the walls of Algiers. And Hester was there, of course, with her sunny hair and sunny looks and general aspect of human sunniness all over, as unlike to the veiled and timid Moorish lady, or the little thin-nosed negress, as chalk is to cheese! Edouard Laronde was also there, and he, like the others, had undergone wonderful transformation in the matter of clothing, but he had also changed in body, for a severe illness had seized him when he landed, and it required all Mrs Foster's careful nursing to "pull him through," as the middy styled it.

Brown the sailor was also there, for, being a pleasant as well as a sharp man, young Foster resolved to get him into the Navy, and, if possible, into the same ship with himself. Meanwhile he retained him to assist in the search for Marie Laronde and her daughter. Last, but by no means least, Peter the Great was there—not as one of the breakfast party, but as a waiter.

Peter had from the first positively refused to sit down to meals in a dining-party room!

"No, Geo'ge," he said, when our middy proposed it to him, on the occasion of their arrival at his mother's home—"No, Geo'ge. I *won't* do it. Das flat! I's not bin used to it. My proper speer is de kitchen. Besides, do you t'ink I'd forsake my Angelica an' leabe her to feed alone downstairs, w'ile her husband was a-gorgin' of his-self above? Neber! It's no use for you, Geo'ge, to say you'd be happy to see her too, for she wouldn't do it, an' she's as obsnit as me—an' more! Now you make your mind easy, I'll be your mudder's black flunkey—for lub, not for munny. So you hole your tongue, Geo'ge!"

Thus the arrangement came to be made—at least for a time.

The middy was unusually grave that morning as he sat down to breakfast. They were all aware that he had returned from London late the previous night, and were more or less eager to know the result of his visit, but on observing his gravity they forbore to ask questions. Only the poor Frenchman ventured to say sadly, "Failed again, I see."

"Not absolutely," said Foster, who was anxious that the invalid should not have his breakfast spoilt by being

excited. "The visit I paid to the solicitor did indeed turn out a failure, but—but I have still strong hopes," he added cheerily.

"So hab I, Geo'ge," remarked Peter the Great, from behind the chair of Miss Sommers, who presided at the breakfast table, for although Peter had resigned his right to equality as to feeding, he by no means gave up his claim to that of social intercourse.

"Come, Laronde. Cheer up, my friend," said Hugh Sommers heartily; "I feel sure that we'll manage it amongst us, for we have all entered on the search heart and soul."

"Right you are, sir," ejaculated Brown, through a mouthful of buttered toast.

"It only requires patience," said the middy, "for London is a big place, you know, and can't be gone over in a week or two."

"Das so, Geo'ge," said Peter, nodding approval.

After breakfast Foster sought a private interview with Hester, who undertook, with much fear, to communicate the news to Laronde.

"You see, I think it will come best from you, Hester," said George in a grave fatherly manner, "because a woman always does these sort of things better than a man, and besides, poor Laronde is uncommonly fond of you, as—"

He was going to have said "as everybody is," but, with much sagacity, he stopped short and sneezed instead.

He felt that a commonplace cough from a man with a sound chest would inevitably have betrayed him—so he sneezed. "A hyperkrite as usual!" he thought, and continued aloud—

"So, you see, Hester, it is very important that you should undertake it, and it will be very kind of you, too."

"I would gladly undertake a great deal more than that for the poor man," said Hester earnestly. "When must I do it?"

"Now—at once. The sooner the better. He usually goes to the bower at the foot of the garden after breakfast."

Without a word, but with a glance that spoke volumes, the maiden ran to the bower.

What she said to the Frenchman we need not write down in detail. It is sufficient to note the result. In the course of a short time after she had entered the bower, a loud shout was heard, and next moment Laronde was seen rushing towards the house with a flushed countenance and the vigour of an athlete!

"My little girl has been too precipitate, I fear," remarked Hugh Sommers to the middy.

"Your little girl is never '*too*'—anything!" replied the middy to Hugh, with much gravity.

The ex-Bagnio slave smiled, but whether at the reply or at the rushing Frenchman we cannot tell.

When Laronde reached his room he found Peter the Great there, on his knees, packing a small valise.

"Hallo! Peter, what are you doing? I want that."

"Yes, Eddard, I know dat. Das why I's packin'."

"You're a good fellow, Peter, a true friend, but let me do it; I'm in terrible haste!"

"No, sar, you's not in haste. Dere's lots ob time." (He pulled out a watch of the warming-pan type and consulted it.) "De coach don't start till one o'clock; it's now eleben; so dere's no hurry. You jest lie down on de bed an' I'll pack de bag."

Instead of lying down the poor Frenchman fell on his knees beside the bed and laid his face in his hands.

"Yes—das better. Dere's some sense in *dat*," muttered the negro as he quietly continued to pack the valise.

Two hours later and Laronde was dashing across country as fast as four good horses could take him, with George Foster on one side, Peter the Great on the other, and Brown on the box-seat—the fo'c'sl, he called it—beside the red-coated driver.

Whatever may be true of your modern forty-mile-an-hour iron horse, there can be no question that the ten-mile-an-hour of those days, behind a spanking team with clattering wheels, and swaying springs, and cracking whip, and sounding horn, *felt* uncommonly swift and satisfactory. Laronde shut his eyes and enjoyed it at first. But the strength engendered by excitement soon began to fail. The long weary journey helped to make things worse, and when at last they arrived at the journey's end, and went with Miss Love and Minnie to the

lodging, poor Laronde had scarcely strength left to totter to his wife's bedside. This was fortunate, however, for he was the better able to restrain his feelings.

"She has had a long satisfactory sleep—is still sleeping—and is much better," was the nurse's report as they entered. The daughter looked with surprise at the weak worn man who was led forward. Laronde did not observe her. His eyes were fixed on the bed where the pale thin figure lay. One of Marie's hands lay outside the blanket. The husband knelt, took it gently and laid his cheek on it. Then he began to stroke it softly. The action awoke the sleeper, but she did not open her eyes.

"Go on," she murmured gently; "you always used to do that when I was ill or tired—don't stop it yet, as you *always* do now, and go away."

The sound of her own voice seemed to awake her. She turned her head and her eyes opened wide while she gazed in his face with a steady stare. Uttering a sharp cry she seized him round the neck, exclaiming, "Praise the Lord!"

"Yes, Marie—my own! Praise the Lord, for He has been merciful to me—a sinner."

The unbeliever, whom lash, torture, toil, and woe could not soften, was broken now, for "the goodness of the Lord had led him to repentance."

Did the middy, after all, marry Hester, *alias* Geo'giana Sommers? No, of course, he did not! He was a full-fledged lieutenant in his Majesty's navy when he did that! But it was not long—only a couple of years after his return from slavery—when he threw little Hester into a

state of tremendous consternation one day by abruptly proposing that they should get spliced immediately, and thenceforward sail the sea of life in company. Hester said timidly she couldn't think of it. George said boldly he didn't want her to *think* of it, but to *do it*!

This was putting the subject in quite a new light, so she smiled, blushed, and hurriedly hid her face on his shoulder!

Of course all the fugitive slaves were at the wedding. There was likewise a large quantity of dark-blue cloth, gold lace, and brass buttons at it.

Peter the Great came out strong upon that occasion. Although he consented to do menial work, he utterly refused to accept a menial position. Indeed he claimed as much right to, and interest in, the bride as her own radiant "fadder," for had he not been the chief instrument in "sabing dem bof from de Moors?"

As no one ventured to deny the claim, Peter retired to the privacy of the back kitchen, put his arm round Angelica's neck, told her that he had got a gift of enough money to "ransom his sister Dinah," laid his woolly head on her shoulder, and absolutely howled for joy.

It may be well to remark, in conclusion, that Peter the Great finally agreed to become Mrs Foster's gardener, as being the surest way of seeing "Geo'ge" during his periodical visits home. For much the same reason Hugh Sommers settled down in a small house near them. Laronde obtained a situation as French master in an academy not far off, and his wife and daughter soon gave evidence that joy is indeed a wonderful medicine!

As for George Foster himself, he rose to the top of his profession. How could it be otherwise with such an experience—and such a wife? And when, in after years, his sons and daughters clamoured, as they were often wont to do, for "stories from father," he would invariably send for Peter the Great, in order that he might listen and corroborate or correct what he related of his wonderful adventures when he was a Middy among the Moors.

The End.

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