

XIII - LEGENDS OF THE NORTHERN COAST.

From the time when we left St. Ives, we walked through the last part of our journey much faster than we walked through the first; faster, perhaps, than the reader may have perceived from these pages. When we stopped at the town of St. Columb Major, to visit the neighbouring vale of Mawgan, we had already advanced half way up the northern coast of Cornwall. Throughout this part of the county the towns lay wide asunder; and, as pedestrian tourists, we were obliged to lengthen our walks and hasten our pace accordingly.

After we had quitted St. Columb Major, our rambles began to draw rapidly to their close. Little more was now left for us to examine than the different localities connected with certain interesting Cornish legends. The places thus associated with the quaint fancies of the olden time, were all situated close together, some fifteen or twenty miles farther on, along the coast. The first among them that we reached was Tintagel Castle, an ancient ruin magnificently situated on a precipice overhanging the sea, and romantically, if not historically, reputed as the birthplace of King Arthur.

The date of the Castle of Tintagel is as much a subject of perplexity among modern antiquaries, as is the existence of King Arthur among modern historians. We may still see some ruins of the Castle; but when or by whom the building was erected which those ruins represent, we have no means of discovering: we only know that, after the Conquest, it was inhabited by some of our English princes, and that it was used as a state prison so late as the reign of Elizabeth. The rest is, for the most part, mere conjecture, raised upon the weak foundation of a few mouldering fragments of walls which must soon crumble and disappear as the rest of the Castle has crumbled and disappeared before them.

The position of the old fortress was, probably, almost impregnable in the days of its strength and glory. The outer part of it was built on a precipitous projection of cliff, three hundred feet high, which must have been wrenched away from the mainland by some tremendous convulsion of Nature. The inner part stood on the opposite side of the chasm formed by this convulsion; and both divisions of the fortress were formerly connected by a draw-bridge. The most interesting portion of the few ruins now remaining, is that on the outermost promontory, which is almost entirely surrounded by the sea. The way up to this cliff is by a steep and somewhat perilous path; so narrow in certain places, where it winds along the verge of the precipice,

that a single false step would be certain destruction. The difficulties of the ascent appear to have impressed the old historian of Cornwall, Norden, so vividly that he tries in his "Survey," to frighten all his readers from attempting it; warning "unstable man," if he will try to mount the cliff, that "while he respecteth his footing he indaungers his head; and looking to save the head, indaungers the footing, accordinge to the old proverbe: Incidit in Scyllam qui vult vitare Charybdim. He must have eyes,"--ominously adds the worthy Norden--"that will scale Tintagel."

The ruins on the summit of the promontory only consist of a few straggling walls, loosely piled up, rather than built, with dark-coloured stone. Some still remain entire enough to show the square loopholes that were pierced in them for arrows; and, here and there, fragments of rough irregular arches, which might have been either doorways or windows, are still visible. Those parts of the building which have fallen, are concealed by long, thickly growing grass--the foot may sometimes strike against them, but the eye perceives them not. These are all the vestiges which remain of the once mighty castle; all the signs that are left to point out the site of the old halls, where the bold knights of Arthur gathered for the feast or prepared for the fight, at their royal master's command.

The Cornish legends tell us that the British hero held his last court, solemnized his last feast, reviewed his last array of warriors, at Tintagel, before he went out to the fatal battle-field of Camelford, to combat his nephew Mordred, who had rebelled against his power. In the morning, the martial assemblage marched out of the castle in triumph, led by the king, with his death-dealing sword "Excalibur" slung at his shoulder, and his magic lance "Rou," in his hand. In the evening the warriors returned, fatally victorious, from the struggle. The rebel army had been routed and the rebel chief slain; but they brought back with them, their renowned leader--the favourite hero of martial adventure, the conqueror of the Saxons in twelve battles--mortally wounded, from the field which he had quitted a victor.

That night, the wise and valiant king died in the castle of his birth; died among his followers who had feasted and sung around him at the festal table but a few hours before. The deep-toned bells of Tintagel rang his death peal; and the awe-stricken populace from the country round, gathering together hurriedly before the fortress, heard portentous wailings from supernatural voices, which mingled in ghostly harmony with the moaning of the restless sea, the dirging of the dreary wind, and the dull deep thunder of the funeral knell. About the heights of the castle, and in the caverns beneath it, these sounds ceased not night or day, until the corpse of the hero was conveyed to the ship destined to bear it to its burial-place in

Glastonbury Abbey. Then, dirging winds, and moaning sea, and wailing voices, ceased; and in the intervals between the slow pealing of the funeral bells, clear child-like voices arose from the calmed waters, and told the mourning people that Arthur was gone from them but for a little time, to be healed of all his wounds in the Fairy Land; and that he would yet return to lead and to govern them, as of old.

Such is the scene--strange compound of fiction and truth, of the typical and the real--which legends teach us to imagine in the Tintagel Castle of thirteen centuries ago! What is the scene that we look on now?--A solitude where the decaying works of man, and the enduring works of Nature appear mingled in beauty together. The grass grows high and luxuriant, where the rushes were strewn over the floor of Arthur's banqueting hall. Sheep are cropping the fresh pasture, within the walls which once echoed to the sweetest songs, or rang to the clash of the stoutest swords of ancient England! About the fortress nothing remains unchanged, but the sun which at evening still brightens it in its weak old age with the same glory that shone over its lusty youth; the sea that rolls and dashes, as at first, against its foundation rocks; and the wild Cornish country outspread on either side of it, as desolately and as magnificently as ever.

The grandeur of the scenery at Tintagel, the romantic interest of the old British traditions connected with the castle, might well have delayed us many hours on these solitary heights; but we had other places still to visit, other and far different legends still to gossip over. Descending the cliff while the day gave us ample time to wander at our will; we strolled away inland to track the scene of a new romance as far as the waterfall called Nighton's Keive.

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A walk of little more than half-a-mile brings us to the entrance of a valley, bounded on either side by high, gently-sloping hills, with a small stream running through its centre, fed by the waterfall of which we are in search. We now follow a footpath a few hundred yards, pass by a mill, and looking up the valley, see one compact mass of vegetation entirely filling it to its remotest corners, and not leaving the slightest vestige of a path, the merest patch of clear ground, visible in any direction, far or near.

It seems as if all the foliage which ought to have grown on the Cornish moorlands, had been mischievously crammed into this place, within the narrow limits of one Cornish valley. Weeds, ferns, brambles, bushes, and young trees, are flourishing together here, thickly intertwined in every

possible position, in triumphant security from any invasion of bill-hook or axe. You win every step of your way through this miniature forest of vegetation, by the labour of your arms and the weight of your body. Tangled branches and thorny bushes press against you in front and behind, meet over your head, knock off your cap, flap in your face, twist about your legs, and tear your coat skirts; so obstructing you in every conceivable manner and in every conceivable direction, that they seem possessed with a living power of opposition, and commissioned by some evil genius of Fairy Mythology to prevent mortal footsteps from intruding into the valley. Whether you try a zig-zag or a straight course, whether you go up or down, it is the same thing--you must squeeze, and push, and jostle your way through the crowd of bushes, just as you would through a crowd of men--or else stand still, surrounded by leaves, like "a Jack-in-the-Green," and wait for the very remote chance of somebody coming to help you out.

Forcing our road incessantly through these obstructions, for a full half-hour, and taking care to keep our only guide--the sound of the running-water--always within hearing, we came at last to a little break in the vegetation, crossed the stream at this place, and found, on the opposite side of the bank, a faintly-marked track, which might have been once a footpath. Following it as well as we could among the branches and brambles, and now ascending steep ground, we soon heard the dash of the waterfall. But to attempt to see it, was no easy undertaking. The trees, the bushes, and the wild herbage grew here thicker than ever, stretching in perfect canopies of leaves so closely across the overhanging banks of the stream, as entirely to hide it from view. We heard the monotonous, eternal splashing of the water, close at our ears, and yet vainly tried to obtain even a glimpse of the fall. Adverse Fate led us up and down, and round and round, and backwards and forwards, amid a labyrinth of overgrown bushes which might have bewildered an Australian settler; and still the nymph of the waterfall coyly hid herself from our eyes. Our ears informed us that the invisible object of which we were in search was of very inconsiderable height; our patience was evaporating; our time was wasting away--in short, to confess the truth here, as I have confessed it elsewhere in these pages, let me acknowledge that we both concurred in a sound determination to consult our own convenience, and give up the attempt to discover Nighton's Keive!

Our wanderings, however, though useless enough in one direction, procured us this compensating advantage in another: they led us accidentally to the exact scene of the legend which we knew to be connected with this part of the valley, and which had, indeed, first induced us to visit it.

We found ourselves standing before the damp, dismantled stone walls of a

solitary cottage, placed on a plot of partially open ground, near the outskirts of the wood. Long dark herbage grew about the inside of the ruined little building; a toad was crawling where the leaves clustered thickest, on what had once been the floor of a room; in every direction corruption and decay were visibly battenning on the lonesome place. Its aspect would repel rather than allure curiosity, but for the mysterious story associated with it, which gives it an attraction and an interest that are not its own.

Years and years ago, when this desolate building was a neat comfortable cottage, it was inhabited by two ladies, of whose histories, and even names, all the people of the district were perfectly ignorant. One day they were accidentally found living in their solitary abode, before any one knew that they had so much as entered it, or that they existed at all. Both appeared to be about the same age, and both were inflexibly taciturn. One was never seen without the other; if they ever left the house, they only left it to walk in the most unfrequented parts of the wood; they kept no servant, and never had a visitor; no living souls but themselves ever crossed the door of their cottage. They procured their food and other necessaries from the people in the nearest village, paying for everything they received when it was delivered, and neither asking nor answering a single unnecessary question. Their manners were gentle, but grave and sorrowful as well. The people who brought them their household supplies, felt awed and uneasy, without knowing why, in their presence; and were always relieved when they had dispatched their errand and had got well away from the cottage and the wood.

Gradually, as month by month passed on, and the mystery hanging over the solitary pair was still not cleared up, superstitious doubts spread widely through the neighbourhood. Harmless as the conduct of the ladies always appeared to be, there was something so sinister and startling about the unearthly seclusion and secrecy of their lives, that people began to feel vaguely suspicious, to whisper awful imaginary rumours about them, to gossip over old stories of ghosts and false accusations that had never been properly sifted to the end, whenever the inhabitants of the cottage were mentioned. At last they were secretly watched by the less scrupulous among the villagers, whom intense curiosity had endowed with a morbid courage and resolution. Even this proceeding led to no results whatever, but increased rather than diminished the mystery.

The expertest eavesdroppers who had listened at the door, brought away no information with them for their pains. Some declared that when the ladies held any conversation together, they spoke in so low a tone that it was impossible to distinguish a word they said. Others, of more imaginative

temperament, protested, on the contrary, that their voices were perfectly audible, but that the language they talked was some mysterious or diabolical language of their own, incomprehensible to everybody but themselves. One or two expert and daring spies had even contrived to look in at them through the window, unperceived; but had seen nothing uncommon, nothing supernatural,--nothing, in short, beyond the spectacle of two ladies sitting quietly and silently by their own fireside.

So matters went on, until one day universal agitation was excited in the neighbourhood by a rumour that one of the ladies was dead. The rustic authorities immediately repaired to the cottage, accompanied by a long train of eager followers; and found that the report was true. The surviving lady was seated by her companion's bedside, weeping over a corpse. She spoke not a word; she never looked up at the villagers as they entered. Question after question was put to her without ever eliciting an answer; kind words were useless--even threats proved equally inefficient: the lady still remained weeping by the corpse, and still said nothing. Gradually her inexorable silence began to infect the visitors to the cottage. For a few moments nothing was heard in the room but the dash of the waterfall hard by, and the singing of birds in the surrounding wood. Bitterly as the lady was weeping, it was now first observed by everybody that she wept silently, that she never sobbed, never even sighed under the oppression of her grief.

People began to urge each other, superstitiously, to leave the place. It was determined that the corpse should be removed and buried; and that afterwards some new expedient should be tried to induce the survivor of the mysterious pair to abandon her inflexible silence. It was anticipated that she would have made some sign, or spoken some few words when they lifted the body from the bed on which it lay; but even this proceeding produced no visible effect. As the villagers quitted the dwelling with their dead burden, the last of them who went out left her in her solitude, still speechless, still weeping, as they had found her at first.

Days passed, and she sent no message to any one. Weeks elapsed, and the idlers who waited about the woodland paths where they knew that she was once wont to walk with her companion, never saw her, watch for her as patiently as they might. From haunting the wood, they soon got on to hovering round the cottage, and to looking in stealthily at the window. They saw her sitting on the same seat that she had always occupied, with a vacant chair opposite; her figure wasted, her face wan already with incessant weeping. It was a dismal sight to all who beheld it--a vision of affliction and solitude that sickened their hearts.

No one knew what to do; the kindest-hearted people hesitated, the hardest-hearted people dreaded to disturb her. While they were still irresolute, the end was at hand. One morning a little girl, who had looked in at the cottage window in imitation of her elders, reported, when she returned home, that she had seen the lady still sitting in her accustomed place, but that one of her hands hung strangely over the arm of the chair, and that she never moved to pick up her pocket-handkerchief, which lay on the ground beside her. At these ominous tidings, the villagers summoned their resolution, and immediately repaired to the lonesome cottage in the wood.

They knocked and called at the door--it was not opened to them. They raised the latch and entered. She still occupied her chair; her head was resting on one of her hands; the other hung down, as the little girl had told them. The handkerchief, too, was on the ground, and was wet with tears. Was she sleeping? They went round in front to look. Her eyes were wide open; her drooping hand, worn almost to mere bone, was cold to the touch as the waters of the valley-stream on a winter's day. She had died in her wonted place; died in mystery and in solitude as she had lived.

They buried her where they had buried her companion. No traces of the real history of either the one or the other have ever been discovered from that time to this.

Such is the tale that was related to us of the cottage in the valley of Nighton's Keive. It may be only imagination; but the stained roofless walls, the damp clotted herbage, and the reptiles crawling about the ruins, give the place a gloomy and disastrous look. The air, too, seems just now unusually still and heavy here--for the evening is at hand, and the vapours are rising in the wood. The shadows of the trees are deepening; the rustling music of the waterfall is growing dreary; the utter stillness of all things besides, becomes wearying to the ear. Let us pass on, and get into bright wide space again, where the down leads back to happier solitudes by the seashore.

We now rapidly lose sight of the trees which have hitherto so closely surrounded us, and find ourselves treading the short scanty grass of the cliff-top once more. We still advance northward, walking along rough cart-roads, and skirting the extremities of narrow gullies leading down to the sea, until we enter the picturesque village of Boscastle. Then, descending a long street of irregular houses, of all sizes, shapes, and ages, we are soon conducted to the bottom of a deep hollow. Beyond this, the bare ground rises again abruptly up to the highest point of the high cliffs which overhang the shore; and here, where the site is most elevated, and where neither cottages nor cultivation appear, we descry the ancient walls and gloomy

tower of Forrabury Church.

The interior of the building still contains a part of the finely-carved rood-loft which once adorned it. Its rickety wooden pews are blackened with extreme old age, and covered with curiously-cut patterns and cyphers. The place is so dark that it is difficult to read the inscriptions on many of the mouldering monuments, fixed together without order or symmetry on the walls. Outside are some Saxon arches, oddly built of black slate-stone; and the window-mouldings are ornamented with rough carving, which at once proclaims its own antiquity. But it is in the tower that the interest attached to the church chiefly centres. Square, thick, and of no extraordinary height, it resembles in appearance most other towers in Cornwall--except in one particular, all the belfry windows are completely stopped up.

This peculiarity is to be explained simply enough; the church has never had any bells; the old tower has been mute, and useless except for ornament, since it was first built. The congregation of the district must trust to their watches and their punctuality to get to service in good time on Sundays. At Forrabury the chimes have never sounded for a marriage: the knell has never been heard for a funeral.

To know the reason of this; to discover why the church, though tower and belfry have always been waiting ready for them, has never had a peal of bells, we must seek instruction from another popular tradition, from a third legend of these legendary shores. Let us go down a little to the brink of the cliff, where the sea is rolling into a black, yawning, perpendicular pit of slate rock. The scene of our third story is the view over the waters from this place.

In ancient times, when Forrabury Church was still regarded as a building of recent date, it was a subject of sore vexation to all the people of the neighbourhood that their tower had no bells, while the inhabitants of Tintagel still possessed the famous peal that had rung for King Arthur's funeral. For some years, this superiority of the rival village was borne with composure by the people of Forrabury; but, in process of time, they lost all patience, and it was publicly determined by the rustic council, that the honour of their church should be vindicated. Money was immediately collected, and bells of magnificent tones and dimensions were forthwith ordered from the best manufactory that London could supply.

The bells were cast, blessed by high ecclesiastical authorities, and shipped for transportation to Forrabury. The voyage was one of the most prosperous that had ever been known. Fair winds and calm seas so expedited the passage of the ship, that she appeared in sight of the downs on which the

church stood, many days before she had been expected. Great was the triumph of the populace on shore, as they watched her working into the bay with a steady evening breeze.

On board, however, the scene was very different. Here there was more uproar than happiness, for the captain and the pilot were at open opposition. As the ship neared the harbour, the bells of Tintagel were faintly heard across the water, ringing for the evening service. The pilot, who was a devout man, took off his hat as he heard the sound, crossed himself, and thanked God aloud for a prosperous voyage. The captain, who was a reckless, vain-glorious fellow, reviled the pilot as a fool, and impiously swore that the ship's company had only to thank his skill as a navigator, and their own strong arms and ready wills, for bringing the ship safely in sight of harbour. The pilot, in reply, rebuked him as an infidel, and still piously continued to return thanks as before; while the captain, joined by the crew, tried to drown his voice by oaths and blasphemy. They were still shouting their loudest, when the vengeance of Heaven descended in judgment on them all.

The clouds supernaturally gathered, the wind rose to a gale in a moment. An immense sea, higher than any man had ever beheld, overwhelmed the ship; and, to the horror of the people on shore, she went down in an instant, close to land. Of all the crew, the pilot only was saved.

The bells were never recovered. They were heard tolling a muffled death-peal, as they sank with the ship; and even yet, on stormy days, while the great waves roll over them, they still ring their ghostly knell above the fiercest roaring of wind and sea.

This is the ancient story of the bells--this is why the chimes are never heard from the belfry of Forrabury Church.

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Now that we have visited the scene of our third legend, what is it that keeps me and my companion still lingering on the downs? Why we are still delaying the hour of our departure long after the time which we have ourselves appointed for it?

We both know but too well. At this point we leave the coast, not to return to it again: at Forrabury we look our last on the sea from these rocky shores. With this evening, our pleasant days of strolling travel are ended. To-morrow we go direct to Launceston, and from Launceston at once to Plymouth. To-

morrow the adventures of the walking tourist are ours no longer; for on that day our rambles in Cornwall will have virtually closed!

Rise, brother-traveller! We have lingered until twilight already; the seaward crags grow vast and dim around us, and the inland view narrows and darkens solemnly in the waning light. Shut up your sketch-book which you have so industriously filled, and pocket your pencils which you have worn down to stumps, even as I now shut up my dogs-eared old journal, and pocket my empty ink-bottle. One more of the few and fleeting scenes of life is fast closing, soon to leave us nothing but the remembrance that it once existed--a happy remembrance of a holiday walk in dear old England, which will always be welcome and vivid to the last, like other remembrances of home.

Come! the night is drawing round us her curtain of mist; let us strap on our trusty old friends, the knapsacks for the last time, and turn resolutely from the shore by which we have delayed too long. Come! let us once again "jog on the footpath way" as contentedly, if not quite as merrily, as ever; and, remembering how much we have seen and learnt that must surely better us both, let us, as we now lose sight of the dark, grey waters, gratefully, though sadly, speak the parting word:--

FAREWELL TO CORNWALL! - POSTSCRIPT TO RAMBLES BEYOND RAILWAYS.

The Scilly Islands.

THE CRUISE OF THE TOMTIT.

I.

"At any other time of the year and for a shorter cruise, I should be delighted to join you. But as I prefer dying a dry death, I must decline accompanying you all the way to the Scilly Islands in a little pleasure boat of thirteen tons, just at the time of the autumnal equinox. You may meet with a gale that will blow you out of the water. You are running a risk, in my opinion, of the most senseless kind--and, if I thought my advice had any weight with you, I should say most earnestly, be warned in time, and give up the trip."--Extract from the letter of A Prudent Friend.

"If I were only a single man, there is nothing I should like better than to join you. But I have a wife and family, and I can't reconcile it to my conscience to risk being drowned."--Report from the Personal Statement of a Married Friend.

"Don't come back bottom upwards."--Final Valedictory Blessing of a Facetious Friend.

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My messmate and I, having absolutely made up our minds to go to the Scilly Islands, received the expressions of opinion quoted above, with the supreme composure which distinguishes all resolute men. In other words, we held

fast to our original determination, engaged the boat and the crew, and put to sea on our appointed day, in the teeth of the wind and of our friends' objections. But before I float the present narrative into blue water, I have certain indispensable formalities to accomplish which will keep me and my readers for a little while yet on dry land. First of all, let me introduce our boat, our crew, and ourselves.

Our boat is named the Tomtit. She is cutter-rigged. Her utmost length from stem to stern is thirty-six feet, and her greatest breadth on deck is ten feet. As her size does not admit of bulwarks, her deck, between the cabin-hatch and the stern, dips into a kind of well, with seats round three sides of it, which we call the Cockpit. Here we can stand up in rough weather without any danger of being rolled overboard; elsewhere, the sides of the vessel do not rise more than a few inches above the deck. The cabin of the Tomtit is twelve feet long, eight feet wide, and five feet six inches high. It has roomy lockers, and a snug little fireplace, and it leads into two recesses forward, which make capital storerooms for water, coals, firewood, and so forth. When I have added that the Tomtit has a bright red bottom, continued, as to colour, up her sides to a little above the watermark; and when I have further stated that she is a fast sailer, and that she proved herself on our cruise to be a capital little seaboat, I have said all that is needful at present on the subject of our yacht, and may get on to our crew and ourselves.

Our crew is composed of three brothers: Sam Dobbs, Dick Dobbs, and Bob Dobbs; all active seamen, and as worthy and hearty fellows as any man in the world could wish to sail with. My friend's name is Mr. Migott, and mine is Mr. Jollins. Thus, we are five on board altogether. As for our characters, I shall leave them to come out as they may in the course of this narrative. I am going to tell things plainly just as they happened. Smart writing, comic colouring, and graphic description, are departments of authorship at which I snap my fingers in contempt.

The port we sailed from was a famous watering-place on the western coast, called Mangerton-on-the-Mud; and our intention, as intimated at the beginning of these pages, was to go even farther than the Land's End, and to reach those last morsels of English ground called the Scilly Islands. But if the reader thinks he is now to get afloat at once, he is lamentably mistaken. One very important and interesting part of our voyage was entirely comprised in the preparations that we made for it. To this portion of the subject, therefore, I shall wholly devote myself in the first instance. On paper, or off it, neither Mr. Migott nor myself are men to be hurried.

We left London with nothing but our clothes, our wrappers, some tobacco,

some French novels, and some Egyptian cigars. Everything that was to be bought for the voyage was to be procured at Bristol. Everything that could be extracted from private benevolence, was to be taken in unlimited quantities from hospitable friends living more or less in the neighbourhood of our place of embarkation. At Bristol we plunged over head and ears in naval business immediately. After ordering a ham, and a tongue, marmalade, lemons, anchovy paste, and general groceries, we set forth to the quay to equip ourselves and our vessel.

We began with charts, sailing directions, and a compass; we got on to a hammock apiece and a flag; and we rose to a nautical climax by buying tarpaulin-coats, leggings, and sou'-westers, at a sailors' public-house. With these sea-stores, and with a noble loaf of home-made bread (the offering of private benevolence) we left Bristol to scour the friendly country beyond, in search of further contributions to the larder of the Tomtit.

The first scene of our ravages was a large country-house, surrounded by the most charming grounds. From the moment when we and our multifarious packages poured tumultuous into the hall, to the moment when we and the said packages poured out of it again into a carriage and a cart, I have no recollection, excepting meal-times and bedtime, of having been still for an instant. Escorted everywhere by two handsome, high-spirited boys, in a wild state of excitement about our voyage, we ranged the house from top to bottom, and laid hands on everything portable and eatable that we wanted in it. The inexhaustible hospitality of our hostess was proof against all the inroads that we could make on it. The priceless gift of packing perishable commodities securely in small spaces, possessed by a lady living in the house and placed perpetually at our disposal, encouraged our propensities for unlimited accumulation. We ravaged the kitchen garden and the fruit-garden; we rushed into the awful presence of the cook (with our ham and tongue from Bristol as an excuse) and ranged predatory over the lower regions. We scaled back-staircases, and tramped along remote corridors, and burst into secluded lumber-rooms, with accompaniment of shouting from the boys, and of operatic humming from Mr. Migott and myself, who happen, among other social accomplishments, to be both of us musical in a desultory way. We turned out, in these same lumber-rooms, plans of estates from their neat tin cases, and put in lemons and loaf-sugar instead. Mr. Migott pounced upon a stray telescope, and strapped it over my shoulders forthwith. The two boys found two japanned boxes, with the epaulettes and shako of an ex-military member of the family inside, which articles of martial equipment (though these are war-times, and nobody is meritorious or respectable now who does not wear a uniform) I, with my own irreverent hands, shook out on the floor; and straightway conveyed the empty cases

down-stairs to be profaned by tea, sugar, Harvey's sauce, pickles, pepper, and other products of the arts of peace. In a word, and not to dwell too long on the purely piratical part of our preparations for the voyage, we doubled the number of our packages at this hospitable country house, before we left it for Mangerton-on-the-Mud, and the dangers of the sea that lay beyond.

At Mangerton we made a second piratical swoop upon another long-suffering friend, the resident doctor. We let this gentleman off, however, very easily, only lightening him of a lanthorn, and two milk-cans to hold our freshwater. We felt strongly inclined to take his warmest cape away from him also; but Mr. Migott leaned towards the side of mercy, and Mr. Jollins was, as usual, only too ready to sacrifice himself on the altar of friendship--so the doctor kept his cape, after all.

Not so fortunate was our next victim, Mr. Purler, the Port Admiral of Mangerton-on-the-Mud, and the convivial host of the Metropolitan Inn. Wisely entering his house empty-handed, we left it with sheets, blankets, mattresses, pillows, table-cloths, napkins, knives, forks, spoons, crockery, a frying-pan, a gridiron, and a saucepan. When to these articles of domestic use were added the parcels we had brought from Bristol, the packages we had collected at the country-house, the doctor's milk-cans, the personal baggage of the two enterprising voyagers, additions to the eating and drinking department in the shape of a cold curry in a jar, a piece of spiced beef, a side of bacon, and a liberal supply of wine, spirits, and beer--nobody can be surprised to hear that we found some difficulty in making only one cart-load of our whole collection of stores. The packing process was, in fact, not accomplished till after dark. The tide was then flowing; we were to sail the next morning; and it was necessary to get everything put on board that night, while there was water enough for the Tomtit to be moored close to the jetty.

This jetty, it must be acknowledged, was nothing but a narrow stone causeway, sloping down from the land into the sea. Our cart, loaded with breakable things, was drawn up at the high end of the jetty; the Tomtit waiting to receive the contents of the cart at the low end, in the water. We had no moon, no stars, no lamp of any kind on shore; and the one small lanthorn on board the vessel just showed how dark it was, and did nothing more. Imagine the doctor, and the doctor's friend, and the doctor's two dogs, and Mr. Migott and Mr. Jollins, all huddled together in a fussy state of expectation, midway on the jetty, seeing nothing, doing nothing, and being very much in the way--and then wonder, as we wondered, at the marvellous dexterity of our three valiant sailors, who succeeded in transporting piecemeal the crockery, cookery, and general contents of the cart into the

vessel, on that pitchy night, without breaking, dropping, or forgetting anything. When I hear of professional conjurors performing remarkable feats, I think of the brothers Dobbs, and the loading of the Tomtit in the darkness; and I ask myself if any landsman's mechanical legerdemain can be more extraordinary than the natural neat-handedness of a sailor?

The next morning the sky was black, the wind was blowing hard against us, and the waves were showing their white frills angrily in the offing. A double row of spectators had assembled at the jetty, to see us beat out of the bay. If they had come to see us hanged, their grim faces could not have expressed greater commiseration. Our only cheerful farewell came from the doctor and his friend and the two dogs. The remainder of the spectators evidently felt that they were having a last long stare at us, and that it would be indecent and unfeeling, under the circumstances, to look happy. Produce me a respectable inhabitant of an English country town, and I will match him, in the matter of stolid and silent staring, against any other man, civilized or savage, over the whole surface of the globe.

If we had felt any doubts of the sea-going qualities of the Tomtit, they would have been solved when we "went about," for the first time, after leaving the jetty. A livelier, stiffer, and drier little vessel of her size never was built. She jumped over the waves, as if the sea was a great play-ground, and the game for the morning, Leap-Frog. Though the wind was so high that we were obliged to lower our foresail, and to double-reef the mainsail, the only water we got on board was the spray that was blown over us from the tops of the waves. In the state of the weather, getting down Channel was out of the question. We were obliged to be contented, on this first day of our voyage, with running across to the Welsh coast, and there sheltering ourselves--amid a perfect fleet of outward-bound merchantmen driven back by the wind--in a snug roadstead, for the afternoon and the night.

This delay, which might have been disagreeable enough later in our voyage, gave us just the time we wanted for setting things to rights on board.

Our little twelve-foot cabin, it must be remembered, was bed-room, sitting-room, dining-room, storeroom, and kitchen, all in one. Everything we wanted for sleeping, reading, eating, and drinking, had to be arranged in its proper place. The butter and candles, the soap and cheese, the salt and sugar, the bread and onions, the oil-bottle and the brandy-bottle, for example, had to be put in places where the motion of the vessel could not roll them together, and where, also, we could any of us find them at a moment's notice. Other things, not of the eatable sort, we gave up all idea of separating. Mr. Migott and I mingled our stock of shirts as we mingled our

sympathies, our fortunes, and our flowing punch-bowl after dinner. We both of us have our faults; but incapability of adapting ourselves cheerfully to circumstances is not among them. Mr. Migott, especially, is one of those rare men who could dine politely off blubber in the company of Esquimaux, and discover the latent social advantages of his position if he was lost in the darkness of the North Pole.

After the arrangement of goods and chattels, came dinner (the curry warmed up with a second course of fried onions)--then the slinging of our hammocks by the neat hands of the Brothers Dobbs--and then the practice of how to get into the hammocks, by Messrs. Migott and Jollins. No landsman who has not tried the experiment can form the faintest notion of the luxury of the sailor's swinging bed, or of the extraordinary difficulty of getting into it for the first time. The preliminary action is to stand with your back against the middle of your hammock, and to hold by the edge of the canvas on either side. You then duck your head down, throw your heels up, turn round on your back, and let go with your hands, all at the same moment. If you succeed in doing this, you are in the most luxurious bed that the ingenuity of man has ever invented. If you fail, you measure your length on the floor. So much for hammocks.

After learning how to get into bed, the writer of the present narrative tried his hand at the composition of whisky punch, and succeeded in imparting satisfaction to his intemperate fellow-creatures. When the punch and the pipes accompanying it had come to an end, a pilot-boat anchored alongside of us for the night. Once embarked on our own element, we old sea-dogs are, after all, a polite race of men. We asked the pilot where he had come from--and he asked us. We asked the pilot where he was bound to, tomorrow morning--and he asked us. We asked the pilot whether he would like a drop of rum--and the pilot, to encourage us, said Yes. After that, there was a little pause; and then the pilot asked us, whether we would come on board his boat--and we, to encourage the pilot, said Yes, and did go, and came back, and asked the pilot whether he would come on board our boat--and he said Yes, and did come on board, and drank another drop of rum. Thus in the practice of the social virtues did we while away the hours--six jolly tars in a twelve-foot cabin--till it was past eleven o'clock, and time, as we say at sea, to tumble in, or tumble out, as the case may be, when a jolly tar wants practice in the art of getting into his hammock.

So began and ended our first day afloat.

II.

The wind blew itself out in the night. As the morning got on, it fell almost to a calm; and the merchantmen about us began weighing anchor, to drop down Channel with the tide. The Tomtit, it is unnecessary to say, scorned to be left behind, and hoisted her sails with the best of them. Favoured by the lightness of the wind, we sailed past every vessel proceeding in our direction. Barques, brigs, and schooners, French luggers and Dutch galliots, we showed our stern to all of them; and when the weather cleared, and the breeze freshened towards the afternoon, the little Tomtit was heading the whole fleet.

In the evening we brought up close to the high coast of Somersetshire, to wait for the tide. Weighed again, at ten at night, and sailed for Ilfracombe. Got becalmed towards morning, but managed to reach our port at ten, with the help of the sweeps, or long oars. Went ashore for more bread, beer, and fresh water; feeling so nautical by this time, that the earth was difficult to walk upon; and all the people we had dealings with presented themselves to us in the guise of unmitigated land-sharks. O, my dear eyes! what a relief it was to Mr. Migott and myself to find ourselves in our floating castle, boxing the compass, dancing the hornpipe, and splicing the mainbrace freely in our ocean-home.

About noon we sailed for Clovelly. Our smooth passage across the magnificent Bay of Bideford is the recollection of our happy voyage which I find myself looking back on most admiringly while I now write.

No cloud was in the sky. Far away, on the left, sloped inward the winding shore; so clear, so fresh, so divinely tender in its blue and purple hues, that it was the most inexhaustible of luxuries only to look at it. Over the watery horizon, to the right, the autumn sun hung grandly, with the fire-path below heaving on a sea of lustrous blue. Flocks of wild birds at rest, floated chirping on the water all around. The fragrant steady breeze was just enough to fill our sails. On and on we went, with the bubbling sea-song at our bows to soothe us; on and on, till the blue lustre of the ocean grew darker, till the sun sank redly towards the far water-line, till the sacred evening stillness crept over the sweet air, and hushed it with a foretaste of the coming night.

What sight of mystery and enchantment rises before us now? Steep, solemn cliffs, bare in some places--where the dark-red rock has been rent away, and

the winding chasms open grimly to the view--but clothed for the most part with trees, which soften their summits into the sky, and sweep all down them, in glorious masses of wood, to the very water's edge. Climbing from the beach, up the precipitous face of the cliff, a little fishing village coyly shows itself. The small white cottages rise one above another; now perching on a bit of rock, now peeping out of a clump of trees: sometimes two or three together; sometimes one standing alone; here, placed sideways to the sea, there, fronting it,--but rising always one over the other, as if, instead of being founded on the earth, they were hung from the trees on the top of the cliff. Over all this lovely scene the evening shadows are stealing. The last rays of the sun just tinge the quiet water, and touch the white walls of the cottages. From out at sea comes the sound of a horn--blown from the nearest fishing-vessel, as a signal to the rest to follow her to shore. From the land, the voices of children at play, and the still fall of the small waves on the beach, are the only audible sounds. This is Clovelly. If we had travelled a thousand miles to see it, we should have said that our journey had not been taken in vain.

On getting to shore, we found the one street of Clovelly nothing but a succession of irregular steps, from the beginning at the beach, to the end half way up the cliffs. It was like climbing to the top of an old castle, instead of walking through a village. When we reached the summit of the cliff, the hour was too advanced to hope for seeing much of the country. We strayed away, however, to look for the church, and found ourselves, at twilight, near some ghastly deserted out-houses, approached by a half-ruinous gateway, and a damp dark avenue of trees. The church was near, but shut off from us by ivy-grown walls. No living creature appeared; not even a dog barked at us. We were surrounded by silence, solitude, darkness, and desolation; and it struck us both forcibly, that the best thing we could do was to give up the church, and get back to humanity with all convenient speed.

The descent of the High Street of Clovelly, at night, turned out to be a matter of more difficulty than we had anticipated. There was no such thing as a lamp in the whole village; and we had to grope our way in the darkness down steps of irregular sizes and heights, paved with slippery pebbles, and ornamented with nothing in the shape of a bannister, even at the most dangerous places. Half-way down, my friend and I had an argument in the dark--standing with our noses against a wall, and with nothing visible on either side--as to which way we should turn next. I guessed to the left, and he guessed to the right; and I, being the more obstinate of the two, we ended in following my route, and at last stumbled our way down to the pier. Looking at the place the next morning, we found that the steps to the right led through a bit of cottage-garden to a snug little precipice, over which

inquisitive tourists might fall quietly, without let or hindrance. Talk of the perils of the deep! what are they in comparison with the perils of the shore?

The adventures of the night were not exhausted, so far as I was concerned, even when we got back to our vessel.

I have already informed the reader that the cabin of the Tomtit was twelve feet long by eight feet wide--a snug apartment, but scarcely large enough, as it struck me, for five men to sleep in comfortably. Nevertheless, the experiment was to be tried in Clovelly harbour. I bargained, at the outset, for one thing--that the cabin hatch should be kept raised at least a foot all night. This ventilatory condition being complied with, I tumbled into my hammock; Mr. Migott rolled into his; and Sam Dobbs, Dick Dobbs, and Bob Dobbs cast themselves down promiscuously on the floor and the lockers under us. Out went the lights; and off went my friend and the Brothers Dobbs into the most intolerable concert of snoring that it is possible to imagine.

No alternative was left for my unfortunate self but to lie awake listening, and studying the character of the snore in each of the four sleeping individuals. The snore of Mr. Migott I found to be superior to the rest in point of amiability, softness, and regularity--it was a kind of oily, long-sustained purr, amusing and not unmusical for the first five minutes. Next in point of merit to Mr. Migott, came Bob Dobbs. His note was several octaves lower than my friend's, and his tone was a grunt--but I will do him justice; I will not scruple to admit that the sounds he produced were regular as clockwork. Very inferior was the performance of Sam Dobbs, who, as owner of the boat, ought, I think, to have set a good example. If an idle carpenter planed a board very quickly at one time, and very slowly at another, and if he groaned at intervals over his work, he would produce the best imitation of Sam Dobbs's style of snoring that I can think of. Last, and worst of all, came Dick Dobbs, who was afflicted with a cold, and whose snore consisted of a succession of loud chokes, gasps, and puffs, all contending together, as it appeared to me, which should suffocate him soonest. There I lay, wide awake, suffering under the awful nose-chorus which I have attempted to describe, for nearly an hour. It was a dark night: there was no wind, and very little air. Horrible doubts about the sufficiency of our ventilation began to beset me. Reminiscences of early reading on the subject of the Black Hole at Calcutta came back vividly to my memory. I thought of the twelve feet by eight, in which we were all huddled together--terror and indignation overpowered me--and I roared for a light, before the cabin of the Tomtit became too mephitic for flame of any kind to exist in it. Uprose they then my Merry Merry Men, bewildered and grumbling, to grope for the match-box. It

was found, the lantern was lit, the face of Mr. Migott appeared serenely over the side of his hammock, and the voice of Mr. Migott sweetly and sleepily inquired what was the matter?

"Matter! The Black Hole at Calcutta is the matter. Poisonous, gaseous exhalation is the matter! Outrageous, ungentlemanly snoring is the matter! give me my bedding, and my drop of brandy, and my pipe, and let me go on deck. Let me be a Chaldean shepherd, and contemplate the stars. Let me be the careful watch who patrols the deck, and guards the ship from foes and wreck. Let me be anything but the companion of men who snore like the famous Furies in the old Greek play." While I am venting my indignation, and collecting my bedding, the smiling and sleepy face of Mr. Migott disappears slowly from the side of the hammock--and before I am on deck, I hear the oily purr once more, just as amiable, soft, and regular as ever.

What a relief it was to have the sky to look up at, the fresh night air to breathe, the quiet murmur of the sea to listen to! I rolled myself up in my blankets; and, for aught I know to the contrary, was soon snoring on deck as industriously as my companions were snoring below.

The first sounds that woke me in the morning were produced by the tongues of the natives of Clovelly, assembled on the pier, staring down on me in my nest of blankets, and shouting to each other incessantly. I assumed that they were making fun of the interesting stranger stretched in repose on the deck of the Tomtit; but I could not understand one word of the Devonshire language in which they spoke. Whatever they said of me, I forgive them, however, in consideration of their cream and fresh herrings. Our breakfast on the cabin-hatch in Clovelly harbour, after a dip in the sea, is a remembrance of gustatory bliss which I gratefully cherish. When we had reduced the herrings to skeletons, and the cream-pot to a whited sepulchre of emptiness, we slipped from our moorings, and sailed away from the lovely little village with sincere regret. By noon we were off Hartland Point.

We had now arrived at the important part of our voyage--the part at which it was necessary to decide, once for all, on our future destination. Mr. Migott and I took counsel together solemnly, unrolled the charts, and then astonished our trusty crew by announcing that the end of the voyage was to be the Scilly Islands. Up to this time the Brothers Dobbs had been inclined to laugh at the notion of getting so far in so small a boat. But they began to look grave now, and to hint at cautious objections. The weather was certainly beautiful; but then the wind was dead against us. Our little vessel was stiff and sturdy enough for any service, but nobody on board knew the strange waters into which we were going--and, as for the charts, could any

one of us study them with a proper knowledge of the science of navigation? Would it not be better to take a little cruise to Lundy Island, away there on the starboard bow? And another little cruise about the Welsh coast, where the Dobbses had been before? To these cautious questions, we replied by rash and peremptory negatives; and the Brothers, thereupon, abandoned their view of the case, and accepted ours with great resignation.

For the Scilly Islands, therefore, we now shaped our course, alternately standing out to sea, and running in for the land, so as to get down ultimately to the Land's End, against the wind, in a series of long zig-zags, now in a westerly and now in an easterly direction. Our first tack from Hartland Point was a sail of six hours out to sea. At sunset, the little Tomtit had lost sight of land for the first time since she was launched, and was rising and falling gently on the long swells of the Atlantic. It was a deliciously calm, clear evening, with every promise of the fine weather lasting. The spirits of the Brothers Dobbs, when they found themselves at last in the blue water, rose amazingly.

"Only give us decent weather, sir," said Bob Dobbs, cheerfully smacking the tiller of the Tomtit; "and we'll find our way to Scilly somehow, in spite of the wind."

How we found our way, remains to be seen.

III.

We were now fairly at sea, keeping a regular watch on deck at night, and never running nearer the Cornish coast than was necessary to enable us to compare the great headlands with the marks on our chart. Under present circumstances, no more than three of us could sleep in the cabin at one time--the combined powers of the snoring party were thus weakened, and the ventilation below could be preserved in a satisfactory state. Instead of chronicling our slow zig-zag progress to the Land's End--which is unlikely to interest anybody not familiar with Cornish names and nautical phrases--I will try to describe the manner in which we passed the day on board the Tomtit, now that we were away from land events and amusements. If there was to be any such thing as an alloy of dulness in our cruise, this was assuredly the part of it in which Time and the Hour were likely to run slowest through the day.

* * * * *

In the first place, let me record with just pride, that we have solved the difficult problem of a pure republic in our modest little craft. No man in particular among us is master--no man in particular is servant. The man who can do at the right time, and in the best way, the thing that is most wanted, is always the hero of the situation among us. When Dick Dobbs is frying the onions for dinner, he is the person most respected in the ship, and Mr. Migott and myself are his faithful and expectant subjects. When grog is to be made, or sauces are to be prepared, Mr. Jollins becomes in his turn the monarch of all he surveys. When musical entertainments are in progress, Mr. Migott is vocal king, and sole conductor of band and chorus. When nautical talk and sea-stories rule the hour, Bob Dobbs, who has voyaged in various merchantmen all over the world, and is every inch of him a thorough sailor, becomes the best man of the company. When any affairs connected with the internal management of the vessel are under consideration, Sam Dobbs is Chairman of the Committee in the cockpit. So we sail along; and such is the perfect constitution of society at which we mariners of England have been able to arrive.

Our freedom extends to the smallest details. We have no stated hours, and we are well a-head of all rules and regulations. We have no breakfast hour, no dinner hour, no time for rising or for going to bed. We have no particular eatables at particular meals. We don't know the day of the month, or the day of the week; and never look at our watches, except when we wind them up.

Our voice is frequently the voice of the sluggard; but we never complain, because nobody ever wakes us too soon, or thinks of interfering with our slumbering again. We wear each other's coats, smoke each other's pipes, poach on each other's victuals. We are a happy, dawdling, undisciplined, slovenly lot. We have no principles, no respectability, no business, no stake in the country, no knowledge of Mrs. Grundy. We are a parcel of Lotus-Eaters; and we know nothing, except that we are poking our way along anyhow to the Scilly Islands in the Tomtit.

We rise when we have had sleep enough--any time you like between seven and ten. If I happen to be on deck first, I begin by hearing the news of the weather and the wind, from Sam, Dick, or Bob at the helm. Soon the face of Mr. Migott, rosy with recent snoring, rises from the cabin, and his body follows it slowly, clad in the blue Jersey frock which he persists in wearing night and day--in the heat of noon as in the cool of evening. He cannot be prevailed upon to give any reason for his violent attachment to this garment--only wagging his head and smiling mysteriously when we ask why, sleeping or waking, he never parts with it. Well, being up, the next thing is to make the toilette. We keep our fresh water, for minor ablutions, in an old wine cask from Bristol. The colour of the liquid is a tawny yellow: it is, in fact, weak sherry and water. For the major ablutions, we have the ship's bucket and the sea, and a good stock of rough towels to finish with. The next thing is breakfast on deck. When we can catch fish (which is very seldom, though we are well provided with lines and bait) we fall upon the spoil immediately. At other times we range through our sea stores, eating anything we like, cooked anyhow we like. After breakfast we have two words to say to our box of peaches, nectarines, and grapes, from the hospitable country-house. Then the bedding is brought up to air; the deck is cleaned; the breakfast things are taken away; the pipes, cigars, and French novels are produced from the cabin; Mr. Migott coils himself up in a corner of the cockpit, and I perch upon the taffrail; and the studies of the morning begin. They end invariably in small-talk, beer, and sleep. So the time slips away cosily till it is necessary to think about dinner.

Now, all is activity on board the Tomtit. Except the man at the helm, every one is occupied with preparations for the banquet of the day. The potatoes, onions, and celery, form one department; the fire and solid cookery another; the washing of plates and dishes, knives and forks, a third; the laying of the cloth on deck a fourth; the concoction of sauces and production of bottles from the cellar a fifth. No man has any particular department assigned to him: the most active republican of the community, for the time being, plunges into the most active work, and the others follow as they please.

The exercise we get is principally at this period of the day, and consists in incessant dropping down from the deck to the cabin, and incessant scrambling up from the cabin to the deck. The dinner is a long business; but what do we care for that? We have no appointments to keep, no visitors to interrupt us, and nothing in the world to do but to tickle our palates, wet our whistles, and amuse ourselves in any way we please. Dinner at last over, it is superfluous to say, that the pipes become visible again, and that the taking of forty winks is only a prohibited operation on the part of the man at the helm.

As for tea-time, it is entirely regulated by the wants and wakefulness of Mr. Migott, who, since the death of Dr. Johnson, is the most desperate drinker of tea in all England. When the cups and saucers are cleared away, a *conversazione* is held in the cockpit. Sam Dobbs is the best listener of the company; Dick Dobbs, who has been a yachtsman, is the jester; Bob Dobbs, the merchant sailor, is the teller of adventures; and my friend and I keep the ball going smartly in all sorts of ways, till it gets dark, and a great drought falls upon the members of the *conversazione*. Then, if the mermaids are anywhere near us, they may smell the fragrant fumes which tell of sacrifice to Bacchus, and may hear, shortly afterwards, the muse of song invoked by cheerful toppers. Thus the dark hours roll on jovial till the soft influences of sleep descend upon the tuneful choir, and the cabin receives its lodgers for the night.

This is the general rule of life on board the *Tomtit*. Exceptional incidents of all kinds--saving sea-sickness, to which nobody on board is liable--are never wanting to vary existence pleasantly from day to day. Sometimes Mr. Migott gets on from taking a nap to having a dream, and records the fact by a screech of terror, which rings through the vessel and wakes the sleeper himself, who always asks, "What's that, eh?"--never believes that the screech has not come from somebody else--never knows what he has been dreaming of--and never fails to go to sleep again before the rest of the ship's company have half done expostulating with him.

Sometimes a little interesting indigestion appears among us, by way of change. Dick Dobbs, for example (who is as bilious as an Indian nabob), is seen to turn yellow at the helm, and to steer with a glazed eye; is asked what is the matter; replies that he has "the boil terrible bad on his stomach;" is instantly treated by Jollins (M.D.) as follows:--Two teaspoonfuls of essence of ginger, two dessert-spoonfuls of brown brandy, two table spoonfuls of strong tea. Pour down patient's throat very hot, and smack his back smartly to promote the operation of the draught. What follows? The cure of Dick. How simple is medicine, when reduced to its first principles!

Another source of amusement is provided by the ships we meet with.

Whenever we get near enough, we hail the largest merchantmen in the most peremptory manner, as coolly as if we had three decks under us and an admiral on board. The large ships, for the most part paralysed by our audacity, reply meekly. Sometimes we meet with a foreigner, and get answered by inarticulate yelling or disrespectful grins. But this is a rare case; the general rule is, that we maintain our dignity unimpaired all down the Channel. Then, again, when no ships are near, there is the constant excitement of consulting our charts and wondering where we are. Every man of us has a different theory on this subject every time he looks at the chart; but no man rudely thrusts his theory on another, or aspires to govern the ideas of the rest in virtue of his superior obstinacy in backing his own opinion. Did I not assert a little while since that we were a pure republic? And is not this another and a striking proof of it?

In such pursuits and diversions as I have endeavoured to describe, the time passes quickly, happily, and adventurously, until we ultimately succeed, at four in the morning on the sixth day of our cruise, in discovering the light of the Longship's Lighthouse, which we know to be situated off the Land's End. We are now only some seven-and-twenty miles from the Scilly Islands, and the discovery of the lighthouse enables us to set our course by the compass cleverly enough. The wind which has thus far always remained against us, falls, on the afternoon of this sixth day, to a dead calm, but springs up again in another and a favourable quarter at eleven o'clock at night. By daybreak we are all on the watch for the Scilly Islands. Not a sign of them. The sun rises; it is a magnificent morning; the favourable breeze still holds; we have been bowling along before it since eleven the previous night; and ought to have sighted the islands long since. But we sight nothing: no land is visible anywhere all round the horizon.

Where are we? Have we overshot Scilly?--and is the next land we are likely to see Ushant or Finisterre? Nobody knows. The faces of the Brothers Dobbs darken; and they recall to each other how they deprecated from the first this rash venturing into unknown waters. We hail two ships piteously, to ask our way. The two ships can't tell us. We unroll the charts, and differ in opinion over them more remarkably than ever. The Dobbses grimly opine that it is no use looking at charts, when we have not got a pair of parallels to measure by, and are all ignorant of the scientific parts of navigation. Mr. Migott and I manfully cheer the drooping spirits of the crew with Guinness's stout, and put a smiling face upon it. But in our innermost hearts, we think of Columbus, and feel for him.

The last resource is to post a man at the masthead (if so lofty an expression may be allowed in reference to so little a vessel as the Tomtit), to keep a look-out. Up the rigging swarms Dick the Bilious, in the lowest spirits-- strains his eyes over the waters, and suddenly hails the gaping deck with a joyous shout. The runaway islands are caught at last--he sees them a-head of us--he has no objection to make to the course we are steering--nothing particular to say but "Crack on!"--and nothing in the world to do but slide down the rigging again. Contentment beams once more on the faces of Sam, Dick, and Bob. Mr. Migott and I say nothing; but we look at each other with a smile of triumph. We remember the injurious doubts of the crew when the charts were last unrolled--and think of Columbus again, and feel for him more than ever.

Soon the islands are visible from the deck, and by noon we have run in as near them as we dare without local guidance. They are low-lying, and picturesque in an artistic point of view; but treacherous-looking and full of peril to the wary nautical eye. Horrible jagged rocks, and sinister swirlings and foamings of the sea, seem to forbid the approach to them. The Tomtit is hove to--our ensign is run up half-mast high--and we fire our double-barrelled gun fiercely for a pilot.

The pilot arrives in a long, serviceable-looking boat, with a wild, handsome, dark-haired son, and a silent, solemn old man for his crew. He himself is lean, wrinkled, hungry-looking; his eyes are restless with excitement, and his tongue overwhelms us with a torrent of words, spoken in a strange accent, but singularly free from provincialisms and bad grammar. He informs us that we must have been set to the northward in the night by a current, and goes on to acquaint us with so many other things, with such a fidgety sparkling of the eyes and such a ceaseless patter of the tongue, that he fairly drives me to the fore part of the vessel out of his way. Smoothly we glide along, parallel with the jagged rocks and the swirling eddies, till we come to a channel between two islands; and, sailing through that, make for a sandy isthmus, where we see some houses and a little harbour. This is Hugh Town, the chief place in St. Mary's, which is the largest island of the Scilly group. We jump ashore in high glee, feeling that we have succeeded in carrying out the purpose of our voyage in defiance of the prognostications of all our prudent friends. At sea or on shore, how sweet is triumph, even in the smallest things!

Bating the one fact of the wind having blown from an unfavourable quarter, unvarying good fortune had, thus far, accompanied our cruise, and our luck did not desert us when we got on shore at St. Mary's. We went, happily for

our own comfort, to the hotel kept by the master of the packet plying between Hugh Town and Penzance. By our landlord and his cordial wife and family we were received with such kindness and treated with such care, that we felt really and truly at home before we had been half an hour in the house. And, by way of farther familiarizing us with Scilly at first sight, who should the resident medical man turn out to be but a gentleman whom I knew. These were certainly fortunate auspices under which to begin our short sojourn in one of the remotest and wildest places in the Queen's dominions.

IV.

The Scilly Islands seem, at a rough glance, to form a great irregular circle, enclosing a kind of lagoon of sea, communicating by various channels with the main ocean all around.

The circumference of the largest of the group is, as we heard, not more than thirteen miles. Five of the islands are inhabited; the rest may be generally described as masses of rock, wonderfully varied in shape and size. Inland, in the larger islands, the earth, where it is not planted or sown, is covered with heather and with the most beautiful ferns. Potatoes used to be the main product of Scilly; but the disease has appeared lately in the island crops, and the potatoes have suffered so severely that when we filled our sack for the return voyage, we were obliged to allow for two-thirds of our supply proving unfit for use. The views inland are chiefly remarkable as natural panoramas of land and sea--the two always presenting themselves intermixed in the loveliest varieties of form and colour. On the coast, the granite rocks, though not notably high, take the most wildly and magnificently picturesque shapes. They are rent into the strangest chasms and piled up in the grandest confusion; and they look down, every here and there, on the loveliest little sandy bays, where the sea, in calm weather, is as tenderly blue and as limpid in its clearness as the Mediterranean itself. The softness and purity of the climate may be imagined, when I state that in the winter none of the freshwater pools are strongly enough frozen to bear being skated on. The balmy sea air blows over each little island as freely as it might blow over the deck of a ship.

The people have the same great merit which I had previously observed among their Cornish neighbours--the merit of good manners. We two strangers were so little stared at as we walked about, that it was almost like being on the Continent. The pilot who had taken us into Hugh Town harbour we found to be a fair specimen, as regarded his excessive talkativeness and the purity of his English, of the islanders generally. The longest tellers of very long stories, so far as my experience goes, are to be found in Scilly. Ask the people the commonest question, and their answer generally exhausts the whole subject before you can say another word. Their anxiety, whenever we had occasion to inquire our way, to guard us from the remotest chance of missing it, and the honest pride with which they told us all about local sights and marvels, formed a very pleasant trait in the general character. Wherever we went, we found the natural kindness and natural hospitality of the people always ready to welcome us.

Strangely enough, in this softest and healthiest of climates consumption is a prevalent disease. If I may venture on an opinion, after a very short observation of the habits of the people, I should say that distrust of fresh air and unwillingness to take exercise were the chief causes of consumptive maladies among the islanders. I longed to break windows in the main street of Hugh Town as I never longed to break them anywhere else. One lovely afternoon I went out for the purpose of seeing how many of the inhabitants of the place had a notion of airing their bed-rooms. I found two houses with open windows--all the rest were fast closed from top to bottom, as if a pestilence were abroad instead of the softest, purest sea-breeze that ever blew. Then, again, as to walking, the people ask you seriously when you inquire your way on foot, whether you are aware that the destination you want to arrive at is three miles off! As for a pedestrian excursion round the largest island--a circuit of thirteen miles--when we talked of performing that feat in the hearing of a respectable inhabitant, he laughed at the idea as incredulously as if we had proposed a swimming match to the Cornish coast. When people will not give themselves the first great chance of breathing healthily and freely as often as they can, who can wonder that consumption should be common among them?

In addition to our other pieces of good fortune, we were enabled to profit by a very kind invitation from the gentleman to whom the islands belong, to stay with him at his house, built on the site of an ancient abbey, and surrounded by gardens of the most exquisite beauty.

To the firm and benevolent rule of the present proprietor of Scilly, the islanders are indebted for the prosperity which they now enjoy. It was not the least pleasant part of a very delightful visit, to observe for ourselves, under our host's guidance, all that he had done, and was doing, for the welfare and the happiness of the people committed to his charge. From what we had heard, and from what we had previously observed for ourselves, we had formed the most agreeable impressions of the social condition of the islanders; and we now found the best of these impressions more than confirmed. When the present proprietor first came among his tenantry he found them living miserably and ignorantly. He has succoured, reformed, and taught them; and there is now, probably, no place in England where the direr hardships of poverty are so little known as in the Scilly Islands.

I might write more particularly on this topic; but I am unwilling to run the risk of saying more on the subject of these good deeds than the good-doer himself would sanction. And besides, I must remember that the object of this narrative is to record a holiday-cruise, and not to enter into details on

the subject of Scilly; details which have already been put into print by previous travellers. Let me only add then, that our sojourn in the islands terminated with the close of our stay in the house of our kind entertainer. It had been blowing a gale of wind for two days before our departure; and we put to sea with a doubled-reefed mainsail, and with more doubts than we liked to confess to each other, about the prospects of the return voyage.

* * * * *

However, lucky we had been hitherto, and lucky we were to continue to the end. Before we had been long at sea, the wind began to get capricious; then to diminish almost to a calm; then, towards evening, to blow again, steadily and strongly, from the very quarter of all others most favourable to our return voyage. "If this holds," was the sentiment of the Brothers Dobbs, as we were making things snug for the night, "we shall be back again at Mangerton before we have had time to get half through our victuals and drink."

The wind did hold, and more than hold: and the Tomtit flew, in consequence, as if she was going to give up the sea altogether, and take to the sky for a change. Our homeward run was the most perfect contrast to our outward voyage. No tacking, no need to study the charts, no laggard luxurious dining on the cabin hatch. It was too rough for anything but picnicking in the cockpit, jammed into a corner, with our plates on our knees. I had to make the grog with one hand, and clutch at the nearest rope with the other--Mr. Migott holding the bowl while I mixed, and the man at the helm holding Mr. Migott. As for reading, it was hopeless to try it; for there was breeze enough to blow the leaves out of the book--and singing was not to be so much as thought of; for the moment you opened your mouth the wind rushed in, and snatched away the song immediately. The nearer we got to Mangerton, the faster we flew. My last recollection of the sea, dates at the ghostly time of midnight. The wind had been increasing and increasing, since sunset, till it contemptuously blew out our fire in the cabin, as if the stove with its artful revolving chimney had been nothing but a farthing rushlight. When I climbed on deck, we were already in the Bristol Channel.

That last view at sea was the grandest view of the voyage. Ragged black clouds were flying like spectres all over the sky; the moonlight streaming fitful behind them. One great ship, shadowy and mysterious, was pitching heavily towards us from the land. Backward out at sea, streamed the red gleam from the lighthouse on Lundy Island; and marching after us magnificently, to the music of the howling wind, came the great rollers from

the Atlantic, rushing in between Hartland Point and Lundy, turning over and over in long black hills of water, with the seething spray at their tops sparkling in the moonshine. It was a fine breathless sensation to feel our sturdy little vessel tearing along through this heavy sea--jumping stern up, as the great waves caught her--dashing the water gaily from her bows, at the return dip--and holding on her way as bravely and surely as the largest yacht that ever was built. After a long look at the sublime view around us, my friend and I went below again; and in spite of the noise of wind and sea, managed to fall asleep. The next event was a call from deck at half-past six in the morning, informing us that we were entering Mangerton Bay. By seven o'clock we were alongside the jetty again, after a run of only forty-three hours from the Scilly Islands.

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Thus our cruise ended; and thus we falsified the predictions of our prudent friends, and came back with our right side uppermost. "Here's luck to you, gentlemen!"--was the toast which our honest sailor-brothers proposed, when we met together later in the day, and pledged each other in a parting cup. "Here's luck," we answered, on our side--"luck to the Brothers Dobbs; and thanks besides for hearty companionship and faithful service." And here, in the last glass with one cheer more,--here's luck to the vessel that carried us, our lively little Tomtit! Tiny home of joyous days, may thy sea-fortunes be happy, and thy trim sails be set prosperously for many a year still, to the favouring breeze!

With those good wishes, our holiday trip closed at the time--as the record of it closes here. With those last words, the book is shut up; the reader is released; and the writer drops his pen.

THE END.