

VI. HE IS INITIATED IN THE BUSINESS OF CLEANING OUT THE PIG-PEN, AND SLUSHING DOWN THE TOP-MAST

By the time I got back to the ship, every thing was in an uproar. The pea-jacket man was there, ordering about a good many men in the rigging, and people were bringing off chickens, and pigs, and beef, and vegetables from the shore. Soon after, another man, in a striped calico shirt, a short blue jacket and beaver hat, made his appearance, and went to ordering about the man in the big pea-jacket; and at last the captain came up the side, and began to order about both of them.

These two men turned out to be the first and second mates of the ship.

Thinking to make friends with the second mate, I took out an old tortoise-shell snuff-box of my father's, in which I had put a piece of Cavendish tobacco, to look sailor-like, and offered the box to him very politely. He stared at me a moment, and then exclaimed, "Do you think we take snuff aboard here, youngster? no, no, no time for snuff-taking at sea; don't let the 'old man' see that snuff-box; take my advice and pitch it overboard as quick as you can."

I told him it was not snuff, but tobacco; when he said, he had plenty of tobacco of his own, and never carried any such nonsense about him as a tobacco-box. With that, he went off about his business, and left me feeling foolish enough. But I had reason to be glad he had acted thus,

for if he had not, I think I should have offered my box to the chief mate, who in that case, from what I afterward learned of him, would have knocked me down, or done something else equally uncivil.

As I was standing looking round me, the chief mate approached in a great hurry about something, and seeing me in his way, cried out, "Ashore with you, you young loafer! There's no stealings here; sail away, I tell you, with that shooting-jacket!"

Upon this I retreated, saying that I was going out in the ship as a sailor.

"A sailor!" he cried, "a barber's clerk, you mean; you going out in the ship? what, in that jacket? Hang me, I hope the old man hasn't been shipping any more greenhorns like you--he'll make a shipwreck of it if he has. But this is the way nowadays; to save a few dollars in seamen's wages, they think nothing of shipping a parcel of farmers and clodhoppers and baby-boys. What's your name, Pillgarlic?"

"Redburn," said I.

"A pretty handle to a man, that; scorch you to take hold of it; haven't you got any other?"

"Wellingborough," said I.

"Worse yet. Who had the baptizing of ye? Why didn't they call you Jack, or Jill, or something short and handy. But I'll baptize you over again. D'ye hear, sir, henceforth your name is Buttons. And now do you go, Buttons, and clean out that pig-pen in the long-boat; it has not been cleaned out since last voyage. And bear a hand about it, d'ye hear; there's them pigs there waiting to be put in; come, be off about it, now."

Was this then the beginning of my sea-career? set to cleaning out a pig-pen, the very first thing?

But I thought it best to say nothing; I had bound myself to obey orders, and it was too late to retreat. So I only asked for a shovel, or spade, or something else to work with.

"We don't dig gardens here," was the reply; "dig it out with your teeth!"

After looking round, I found a stick and went to scraping out the pen, which was awkward work enough, for another boat called the "jolly-boat," was capsized right over the longboat, which brought them almost close together. These two boats were in the middle of the deck. I managed to crawl inside of the long-boat; and after barking my shins against the seats, and bumping my head a good many times, I got along to the stern, where the pig-pen was.

While I was hard at work a drunken sailor peeped in, and cried out to his comrades, "Look here, my lads, what sort of a pig do you call this? Hallo! inside there! what are you 'bout there? trying to stow yourself away to steal a passage to Liverpool? Out of that! out of that, I say." But just then the mate came along and ordered this drunken rascal ashore.

The pig-pen being cleaned out, I was set to work picking up some shavings, which lay about the deck; for there had been carpenters at work on board. The mate ordered me to throw these shavings into the long-boat at a particular place between two of the seats. But as I found it hard work to push the shavings through in that place, and as it looked wet there, I thought it would be better for the shavings as well as myself, to thrust them where there was a larger opening and a dry spot. While I was thus employed, the mate observing me, exclaimed with an oath, "Didn't I tell you to put those shavings somewhere else? Do what I tell you, now, Buttons, or mind your eye!"

Stifling my indignation at his rudeness, which by this time I found was my only plan, I replied that that was not so good a place for the shavings as that which I myself had selected, and asked him to tell me why he wanted me to put them in the place he designated. Upon this, he flew into a terrible rage, and without explanation reiterated his order like a clap of thunder.

This was my first lesson in the discipline of the sea, and I never

forgot it. From that time I learned that sea-officers never gave reasons for any thing they order to be done. It is enough that they command it, so that the motto is, "Obey orders, though you break owners."

I now began to feel very faint and sick again, and longed for the ship to be leaving the dock; for then I made no doubt we would soon be having something to eat. But as yet, I saw none of the sailors on board, and as for the men at work in the rigging, I found out that they were "riggers," that is, men living ashore, who worked by the day in getting ships ready for sea; and this I found out to my cost, for yielding to the kind blandishment of one of these riggers, I had swapped away my jackknife with him for a much poorer one of his own, thinking to secure a sailor friend for the voyage. At last I watched my chance, and while people's backs were turned, I seized a carrot from several bunches lying on deck, and clapping it under the skirts of my shooting-jacket, went forward to eat it; for I had often eaten raw carrots, which taste something like chestnuts. This carrot refreshed me a good deal, though at the expense of a little pain in my stomach. Hardly had I disposed of it, when I heard the chief mate's voice crying out for "Buttons." I ran after him, and received an order to go aloft and "slush down the main-top mast."

This was all Greek to me, and after receiving the order, I stood staring about me, wondering what it was that was to be done. But the mate had turned on his heel, and made no explanations. At length I followed after him, and asked what I must do.

"Didn't I tell you to slush down the main-top mast?" he shouted.

"You did," said I, "but I don't know what that means."

"Green as grass! a regular cabbage-head!" he exclaimed to himself. "A fine time I'll have with such a greenhorn aboard. Look you, youngster. Look up to that long pole there--d'ye see it? that piece of a tree there, you timber-head--well--take this bucket here, and go up the rigging--that rope-ladder there--do you understand?--and dab this slush all over the mast, and look out for your head if one drop falls on deck. Be off now, Buttons."

The eventful hour had arrived; for the first time in my life I was to ascend a ship's mast. Had I been well and hearty, perhaps I should have felt a little shaky at the thought; but as I was then, weak and faint, the bare thought appalled me.

But there was no hanging back; it would look like cowardice, and I could not bring myself to confess that I was suffering for want of food; so rallying again, I took up the bucket.

It was a heavy bucket, with strong iron hoops, and might have held perhaps two gallons. But it was only half full now of a sort of thick lobbered gravy, which I afterward learned was boiled out of the salt beef used by the sailors. Upon getting into the rigging, I found it was

no easy job to carry this heavy bucket up with me. The rope handle of it was so slippery with grease, that although I twisted it several times about my wrist, it would be still twirling round and round, and slipping off. Spite of this, however, I managed to mount as far as the "top," the clumsy bucket half the time straddling and swinging about between my legs, and in momentary danger of capsizing. Arrived at the "top," I came to a dead halt, and looked up. How to surmount that overhanging impediment completely posed me for the time. But at last, with much straining, I contrived to place my bucket in the "top;" and then, trusting to Providence, swung myself up after it. The rest of the road was comparatively easy; though whenever I incautiously looked down toward the deck, my head spun round so from weakness, that I was obliged to shut my eyes to recover myself. I do not remember much more. I only recollect my safe return to the deck.

In a short time the bustle of the ship increased; the trunks of cabin passengers arrived, and the chests and boxes of the steerage passengers, besides baskets of wine and fruit for the captain.

At last we cast loose, and swinging out into the stream, came to anchor, and hoisted the signal for sailing. Every thing, it seemed, was on board but the crew; who in a few hours after, came off, one by one, in Whitehall boats, their chests in the bow, and themselves lying back in the stem like lords; and showing very plainly the complacency they felt in keeping the whole ship waiting for their lordships.

"Ay, ay," muttered the chief mate, as they rolled out of their boats and swaggered on deck, "it's your turn now, but it will be mine before long. Yaw about while you may, my hearties, I'll do the yawing after the anchor's up."

Several of the sailors were very drunk, and one of them was lifted on board insensible by his landlord, who carried him down below and dumped him into a bunk. And two other sailors, as soon as they made their appearance, immediately went below to sleep off the fumes of their drink.

At last, all the crew being on board, word was passed to go to dinner fore and aft, an order that made my heart jump with delight, for now my long fast would be broken. But though the sailors, surfeited with eating and drinking ashore, did not then touch the salt beef and potatoes which the black cook handed down into the fore-castle; and though this left the whole allowance to me; to my surprise, I found that I could eat little or nothing; for now I only felt deadly faint, but not hungry.