

XLV. HARRY BOLTON KIDNAPS REDBURN, AND CARRIES HIM OFF TO LONDON

It might have been a week after our glimpse of Lord Lovely, that Harry, who had been expecting a letter, which, he told me, might possibly alter his plans, one afternoon came bounding on board the ship, and sprang down the hatchway into the between-decks, where, in perfect solitude, I was engaged picking oakum; at which business the mate had set me, for want of any thing better.

"Hey for London, Wellingborough!" he cried. "Off tomorrow! first train--be there the same night--come! I have money to rig you all out--drop that hangman's stuff there, and away! Pah! how it smells here! Come; up you jump!"

I trembled with amazement and delight.

London? it could not be!--and Harry--how kind of him! he was then indeed what he seemed. But instantly I thought of all the circumstances of the case, and was eager to know what it was that had induced this sudden departure.

In reply my friend told me, that he had received a remittance, and had hopes of recovering a considerable sum, lost in some way that he chose to conceal.

"But how am I to leave the ship, Harry?" said I; "they will not let me go, will they? You had better leave me behind, after all; I don't care very much about going; and besides, I have no money to share the expenses."

This I said, only pretending indifference, for my heart was jumping all the time.

"Tut! my Yankee bantam," said Harry; "look here!" and he showed me a handful of gold.

"But they are yours, and not mine, Harry," said I.

"Yours and mine, my sweet fellow," exclaimed Harry. "Come, sink the ship, and let's go!"

"But you don't consider, if I quit the ship, they'll be sending a constable after me, won't they?"

"What! and do you think, then, they value your services so highly? Ha! ha!-Up, up, Wellingborough: I can't wait."

True enough. I well knew that Captain Riga would not trouble himself much, if I did take French leave of him. So, without further thought of the matter, I told Harry to wait a few moments, till the ship's bell

struck four; at which time I used to go to supper, and be free for the rest of the day.

The bell struck; and off we went. As we hurried across the quay, and along the dock walls, I asked Harry all about his intentions. He said, that go to London he must, and to Bury St. Edmunds; but that whether he should for any time remain at either place, he could not now tell; and it was by no means impossible, that in less than a week's time we would be back again in Liverpool, and ready for sea. But all he said was enveloped in a mystery that I did not much like; and I hardly know whether I have repeated correctly what he said at the time.

Arrived at the Golden Anchor, where Harry put up, he at once led me to his room, and began turning over the contents of his chest, to see what clothing he might have, that would fit me.

Though he was some years my senior, we were about the same size--if any thing, I was larger than he; so, with a little stretching, a shirt, vest, and pantaloons were soon found to suit. As for a coat and hat, those Harry ran out and bought without delay; returning with a loose, stylish sack-coat, and a sort of foraging cap, very neat, genteel, and unpretending.

My friend himself soon doffed his Guernsey frock, and stood before me, arrayed in a perfectly plain suit, which he had bought on purpose that very morning. I asked him why he had gone to that unnecessary expense,

when he had plenty of other clothes in his chest. But he only winked, and looked knowing. This, again, I did not like. But I strove to drown ugly thoughts.

Till quite dark, we sat talking together; when, locking his chest, and charging his landlady to look after it well, till he called, or sent for it; Harry seized my arm, and we sallied into the street.

Pursuing our way through crowds of frolicking sailors and fiddlers, we turned into a street leading to the Exchange. There, under the shadow of the colonnade, Harry told me to stop, while he left me, and went to finish his toilet. Wondering what he meant, I stood to one side; and presently was joined by a stranger in whiskers and mustache.

"It's me" said the stranger; and who was me but Harry, who had thus metamorphosed himself? I asked him the reason; and in a faltering voice, which I tried to make humorous, expressed a hope that he was not going to turn gentleman forger.

He laughed, and assured me that it was only a precaution against being recognized by his own particular friends in London, that he had adopted this mode of disguising himself.

"And why afraid of your friends?" asked I, in astonishment, "and we are not in London yet."

"Pshaw! what a Yankee you are, Wellingborough. Can't you see very plainly that I have a plan in my head? And this disguise is only for a short time, you know. But I'll tell you all by and by."

I acquiesced, though not feeling at ease; and we walked on, till we came to a public house, in the vicinity of the place at which the cars are taken.

We stopped there that night, and next day were off, whirled along through boundless landscapes of villages, and meadows, and parks: and over arching viaducts, and through wonderful tunnels; till, half delirious with excitement, I found myself dropped down in the evening among gas-lights, under a great roof in Euston Square.

London at last, and in the West-End!