

CHAPTER IX.

HOW AMYAS KEPT HIS CHRISTMAS DAY

"Take aim, you noble musqueteers,
And shoot you round about,
Stand to it, valiant pikemen,
And we shall keep them out.
There's not a man of all of us
A foot will backward flee,
I'll be the foremost man in fight,
Says brave Lord Willoughby!"

Elizabethan Ballad.

It was the blessed Christmas afternoon. The light was fading down; the even-song was done; and the good folks of Bideford were trooping home in merry groups, the father with his children, the lover with his sweetheart, to cakes and ale, and flapdragons and mummer's plays, and all the happy sports of Christmas night. One lady only, wrapped close in her black muffler and followed by her maid, walked swiftly, yet sadly, toward the long causeway and bridge which led to Northam town. Sir Richard Grenvile and his wife caught her up and stopped her courteously.

"You will come home with us, Mrs. Leigh," said Lady Grenvile, "and spend a pleasant Christmas night?"

Mrs. Leigh smiled sweetly, and laying one hand on Lady Grenvile's arm, pointed with the other to the westward, and said—

"I cannot well spend a merry Christmas night while that sound is in my ears."

The whole party round looked in the direction in which she pointed. Above their heads the soft blue sky was fading into gray, and here and there a misty star peeped out: but to the westward, where the downs and woods of Raleigh closed in with those of Abbotsham, the blue was webbed and turfed with delicate white flakes; iridescent spots, marking the path by which the sun had sunk, showed all the colors of the dying dolphin; and low on the horizon lay a long band of grassy green. But what was the sound which troubled Mrs. Leigh! None of them, with their merry hearts and ears dulled with the din and

attle of the town, had heard it till that moment: and yet now—listen! It was dead calm. There was not a breath to stir a blade of grass. And yet the air was full of sound, a low deep roar which hovered over down and wood, salt-marsh and river, like the roll of a thousand wheels, the tramp of endless armies, or—what it was—the thunder of a mighty surge upon the boulders of the pebble ridge.

"The ridge is noisy tonight," said Sir Richard. "There has been wind somewhere."

"There is wind now, where my boy is, God help him!" said Mrs. Leigh: and all knew that she spoke truly. The spirit of the Atlantic storm had sent forward the token of his coming, in the smooth ground-swell which was heard inland, two miles away. Tomorrow the pebbles, which were now rattling down with each retreating wave, might be leaping to the ridge-top, and hurled like round shot far ashore upon the marsh by the force of the advancing wave, fleeing before the wrath of the western hurricane.

"God help my boy!" said Mrs. Leigh again.

"God is as near him by sea as by land," said good Sir Richard.

"True: but I am a lone mother; and one that has no heart just now but to go home and pray."

And so Mrs. Leigh went onward up the lane, and spent all that night in listening between her prayers to the thunder of the surge till it was drowned, long ere the sun rose, in the thunder of the storm.

And where is Amyas on this same Christmas afternoon? Amyas is sitting bareheaded in a boat's stern in Smerwick bay, with the spray whistling through his curls, as he shouts cheerfully—

"Pull, and with a will, my merry men all, and never mind shipping a sea. Cannon balls are a cargo that don't spoil by taking salt-water."

His mother's presage has been true enough. Christmas eve has been the last of the still, dark, steaming nights of the early winter; and the western gale has been roaring for the last twelve hours upon the Irish coast.

The short light of the winter day is fading fast. Behind him is a leaping line of billows lashed into mist by the tempest. Beside him green foam-fringed columns are rising up the black rocks, and falling again in a thousand cataracts of snow. Before him is the deep and sheltered bay; but it is not far up the bay that he and his can see;

for some four miles out at sea begins a sloping roof of thick gray cloud, which stretches over their heads, and up and far away inland, cutting the cliffs off at mid-height, hiding all the Kerry mountains, and darkening the hollows of the distant firths into the blackness of night. And underneath that awful roof of whirling mist the storm is howling inland ever, sweeping before it the great foam sponges, and the gray salt spray, till all the land is hazy, dim, and dun. Let it howl on! for there is more mist than ever salt spray made, flying before that gale; more thunder than ever sea-surge wakened echoing among the cliffs of Smerwick bay; along those sand-hills flash in the evening gloom red sparks which never came from heaven; for that fort, now christened by the invaders the Fort Del Oro, where flaunts the hated golden flag of Spain, holds San Josepho and eight hundred of the foe; and but three nights ago, Amyas and Yeo, and the rest of Winter's shrewdest hands, slung four culverins out of the Admiral's main deck, and floated them ashore, and dragged them up to the battery among the sand-hills; and now it shall be seen whether Spanish and Italian condottieri can hold their own on British ground against the men of Devon.

Small blame to Amyas if he was thinking, not of his lonely mother at Burrough Court, but of those quick, bright flashes on sand-hill and on fort, where Salvation Yeo was hurling the eighteen-pound shot with deadly aim, and watching with a cool and bitter smile of triumph the flying of the sand, and the crashing of the gabions. Amyas and his party had been on board, at the risk of their lives, for a fresh supply of shot; for Winter's battery was out of ball, and had been firing stones for the last four hours, in default of better missiles. They ran the boat on shore through the surf, where a cove in the shore made landing possible, and almost careless whether she stove or not, scrambled over the sand-hills with each man his brace of shot slung across his shoulder; and Amyas, leaping into the trenches, shouted cheerfully to Salvation Yeo,—

“More food for the bull-dogs, Gunner, and plums for the Spaniards' Christmas pudding!”

“Don't speak to a man at his business, Master Amyas. Five mortal times have I missed; but I will have that accursed Popish rag down, as I'm a sinner.”

“Down with it, then; nobody wants you to shoot

crooked. Take good iron to it, and not footy paving stones.”

“I believe, sir, that the foul fiend is there, a turning of my shot aside, I do. I thought I saw him once; but, thank Heaven, here's ball again. Ah, sir, if one could but cast a silver one! Now, stand by, men!”

And once again Yeo's eighteen-pounder roared, and away. And, oh glory! the great yellow flag of Spain, which streamed in the gale, lifted clean into the air, flag-staff and all, and then pitched wildly down head-foremost, far to leeward.

A hurrah from the sailors, answered by the soldiers of the opposite camp, shook the very cloud above them: but ere its echoes had died away, a tall officer leapt upon the parapet of the fort, with the fallen flag in his hand, and rearing it as well as he could upon his lance point, held it firmly against the gale, while the fallen flagstaff was raised again within.

In a moment a dozen long bows were bent at the daring foeman: but Amyas behind shouted—

“Shame, lads! Stop and let the gallant gentleman have due courtesy!”

So they stopped, while Amyas, springing on the rampart of the battery, took off his hat, and bowed to the flagholder, who, as soon as relieved of his charge, returned the bow courteously, and descended.

It was by this time all but dark, and the firing began to slacken on all sides; Salvation and his brother gunners, having covered up their slaughtering tackle with tarpaulings, retired for the night, leaving Amyas, who had volunteered to take the watch till midnight; and the rest of the force having got their scanty supper of biscuit (for provisions were running very short) lay down under arms among the sand-hills, and grumbled themselves to sleep.

He had paced up and down in the gusty darkness for some hour or more, exchanging a passing word now and then with the sentinel, when two men entered the battery, chatting busily together. One was in complete armor; the other wrapt in the plain short cloak of a man of pens and peace: but the talk of both was neither of sieges nor of sallies, catapult, bombard, nor culverin, but simply of English hexameters.

And fancy not, gentle reader, that the two were therein fiddling while Rome was burning; for the commonweal of

poetry and letters, in that same critical year 1580, was in far greater danger from those same hexameters than the common woe of Ireland (as Raleigh called it) was from the Spaniards.

Imitating the classic metres, "versifying," as it was called in contradistinction to rhyming, was becoming fast the fashion among the more learned. Stonyhurst and others had tried their hands at hexameter translations from the Latin and Greek epics which seem to have been doggerel enough; and ever and anon some youthful wit broke out in iambics, sapphics, elegiacs, and what not, to the great detriment of the queen's English and her subjects' ears.

I know not whether Mr. William Webbe had yet given to the world any fragments of his precious hints for the "Reformation of English poetry," to the tune of his own "Tityrus, happily thou liest tumbling under a beech-tree:" but the Cambridge Malvolio, Gabriel Harvey, had succeeded in arguing Spenser, Dyer, Sidney, and probably Sidney's sister, and the whole clique of beau-esprits round them, into following his model of

"What might I call this tree? A laurel? O bonny laurel!
Needes to thy bowes will I bowe this knee, and vail my bonetto;"

after snubbing the first book of "that Elvish Queene," which was then in manuscript, as a base declension from the classical to the romantic school.

And now Spenser (perhaps in mere melancholy wilfulness and want of purpose, for he had just been jilted by a fair maid of Kent) was wasting his mighty genius upon doggerel which he fancied antique; and some piratical publisher (Bitter Tom Nash swears, and with likelihood, that Harvey did it himself) had just given to the world,— "Three proper wittie and familiar Letters, lately past between two University men, touching the Earthquake in April last, and our English reformed Versifying," which had set all town wits a-buzzing like a swarm of flies, being none other than a correspondence between Spenser and Harvey, which was to prove to the world forever the correctness and melody of such lines as,

"For like magnificoes, not a beck but glorious in show.
In deede most frivolous, not a looke but Tuscanish always."

Let them pass—Alma Mater has seen as bad hexameters

since. But then the matter was serious. There is a story (I know not how true), that Spenser was half bullied into rewriting the "Fairy Queen" in hexameters, had not Raleigh, a true romanticist, "whose vein for ditty or amorous ode was most lofty, insolent, and passionate," persuaded him to follow his better genius. The great dramatists had not yet arisen, to form completely that truly English school, of which Spenser, unconscious of his own vast powers, was laying the foundation. And, indeed, it was not till Daniel, twenty years after, in his admirable apology for rhyme, had smashed Mr. Campian and his "eight several kinds of classical numbers," that the matter was finally settled, and the English tongue left to go the road on which Heaven had started it. So that we may excuse Raleigh's answering somewhat waspish to some quotation of Spenser's from the three letters of "Immerito and G. H."

"Tut, tut, Colin Clout, much learning has made thee mad. A good old fishwives' ballad jingle is worth all your sapphics and trimeters, and 'riff-raff thurlery bouncing.' Hey? have I you there, old lad! Do you mind that precious verse!"

"But, dear Wat, Homer and Virgil——"

"But, dear Ned, Petrarch and Ovid——"

"But, Wat, what have we that we do not owe to the ancients!"

"Ancients, quotha? Why, the legend of King Arthur, and Chevy Chase too, of which even your fellow-sinner Sidney cannot deny that every time he hears it even from a blind fiddler it stirs his heart like a trumpet-blast. Speak well of the bridge that carries you over, man! Did you find your Redcross Knight in Virgil, or such a dame as Una in old Ovid? No more than you did your Pater and Credo, you renegado baptized heathen, you!"

"Yet, surely, our younger and more barbarous taste must bow before divine antiquity, and imitate afar——"

"As dottrels do fowlers. If Homer was blind, lad, why dost not poke out thine eye? Ay, this hexameter is of an ancient house, truly, Ned Spenser, and so is many a rogue: but he cannot make way on our rough English roads. He goes hopping and twitching in our language like a three-legged terrier over a pebble-bank, tumble and up again. Little and crash."

"Nay, hear, now——"

' See ye the blindfolded pretty god that feathered archer,
Of lovers' miseries which maketh his bloody game?'

True, the accent gapes in places, as I have often confessed to Harvey, but—

"Harvey be hanged for a pedant, and the whole crew of versifiers, from Lord Dorset (but he, poor man, has been past hanging some time since) to yourself! Why delude you into playing Procrustes as he does with the queen's English, racking one word till its joints be pulled asunder, and squeezing the next all a-heap as the Inquisitors do heretics in their banca cava? Out upon him and you, and Sidney, and the whole kin. You have not made a verse among you, and never will, which is not as lame a gosling as Harvey's own—

' Oh thou weathercocke, that stands on the top of Allhallows,
Come thy ways down, if thou dar'st for thy crown, and take the wall on us.'

"Hark, now! There is our young giant comforting his soul with a ballad. You will hear rhyme and reason together here, now. He will not miscall 'blind-folded,' 'blind-fold-ed,' I warrant; or make an 'of' and a 'which' and a 'his' carry a whole verse on their wretched little backs."

And as he spoke, Amyas, who had been grumbling to himself some Christmas carol, broke out full-mouthed:—

"As Joseph was a-walking
He heard an angel sing—
'This night shall be the birth night
Of Christ, our heavenly King.

His birth bed shall be neither
In housen nor in hall,
Nor in the place of Paradise,
But in the oxen's stall.

He neither shall be rocked
In silver nor in gold,
But in the wooden manger
That lieth on the mould.

He neither shall be washen
With white wine nor with red,
But with the fair spring water
That on you shall be shed.

*Strange as it may seem, this distich is Spenser's own: and the other hexameters are all authentic.

He neither shall be clothed
In purple nor in pall,
But in the fair white linen
That usen babies all.'

As Joseph was a-walking
Thus did the angel sing,
And Mary's Son at midnight
Was born to be our King.

Then be you glad, good people,
At this time of the year;
And light you up your candles,
For His star it shineth clear."

"There, Edmunde Classicaster," said Raleigh, "does not that simple strain go nearer to the heart of him who wrote 'The Shepherd's Calendar,' than all artificial and outlandish

' Wote ye why his mother with a veil hath covered his face?'

Why dost not answer, man?"

But Spenser was silent awhile, and then,—

"Because I was thinking rather of the rhymer than the rhyme. Good Heaven! how that brave lad shames me, singing here the hymns which his mother taught him, before the very muzzles of Spanish guns; instead of bemoaning unmanly, as I have done, the love which he held, I doubt not, as dear as I did even my Rosalind. This is his welcome to the winter's storm; while I, who dream, forsooth, of heavenly inspiration, can but see therein an image of mine own cowardly despair.

'Thou barren ground, whom Winter's wrath has wasted,
Art made a mirror to behold my plight.*'

Pah! away with frosts, icicles and tears, and sighs—"

"And with hexameters and trimeters too, I hope," interrupted Raleigh: "and all the tricks of self-pleasing sorrow."

"—I will set my heart to higher work, than barking at the hand which chastens me."

"Wilt put the lad into the 'Fairy Queen,' then, by my side? He deserves as good a place there, believe me, as ever a Guyon, or even as Lord Gray your Arthegall. Let us hail him. Hallo! young chanticleer of Devon! Art

* "The Shepherd's Calendar."

not afraid of a chance shot, that thou crowest so lustily upon thine own mixen?"

"Cocks crow all night long at Christmas, Captain Raleigh, and so do I," said Amyas' cheerful voice; "but who's there with you?"

"A penitent pupil of yours—Mr. Secretary Spenser."

"Pupil of mine?" said Amyas. "I wish he'd teach me a little of his art; I could fill up my time here with making verses."

"And who would be your theme, fair sir?" said Spenser.

"No 'who' at all. I don't want to make sonnets to blue eyes, nor black either: but if I could put down some of the things I saw in the Spice Islands——"

"Ah," said Raleigh, "he would beat you out of Parnassus, Mr. Secretary. Remember, you may write about Fairyland, but he has seen it."

"And so have others," said Spenser; "it is not so far off from any one of us. Wherever is love and loyalty, great purposes, and lofty souls, even though in a hovel or a mine, there is Fairyland."

"Then Fairyland should be here, friend: for you represent love, and Leigh loyalty; while as for great purposes and lofty souls, who so fit to stand for them as I, being (unless my enemies and my conscience are liars both) as ambitious and as proud as Lucifer's own self?"

"Ah, Walter, Walter, why wilt always slander thyself thus?"

"Slander? Tut.—I do but give the world a fair challenge, and tell it, 'There—you know the worst of me: come on and try a fall, for either you or I must down.' Slander? Ask Leigh here, who has but known me a fortnight, whether I am not as vain as a peacock, as selfish as a fox, as imperious as a bona roba, and ready to make a cat's paw of him or any man, if there be a chestnut in the fire: and yet the poor fool cannot help loving me, and running of my errands, and taking all my schemes and my dreams for gospel; and verily believes now, I think, that I shall be the man in the moon some day, and he my big dog."

"Well," said Amyas, half apologetically, "if you are the cleverest man in the world, what harm in my thinking so?"

"Hearken to him, Edmund! He will know better when he has outgrown this same callow trick of honesty, and

learnt of the great goddess Detraction how to show himself wiser than the wise, by pointing out to the world the fool's motley which peeps through the rents in the philosopher's cloak. Go to, lad! slander thy equals, envy thy betters, pray for an eye which sees spots in every sun, and for a vulture's nose to scent carrion in every rose-bed. If thy friend win a battle, show that he has needlessly thrown away his men; if he lose one, hint that he sold it; if he rise to a place, argue favor; if he fall from one, argue divine justice. Believe nothing, hope nothing, but endure all things, even to kicking, if aught may be got thereby; so shalt thou be clothed in purple and fine linen, and sit in king's palaces, and fare sumptuously every day."

"And wake with Dives in the torment," said Amyas. "Thank you for nothing, Captain."

"Go to, Misanthropos," said Spenser. "Thou hast not yet tasted the sweets of this world's comfits, and thou raillest at them?"

"The grapes are sour, lad."

"And will be to the end," said Amyas, "if they come off such a devil's tree as that. I really think you are out of your mind, Captain Raleigh, at times."

"I wish I were; for it is a troublesome, hungry, windy mind as man ever was cursed withal. But come in, lad. We were sent from the Lord Deputy to bid thee to supper. There is a dainty lump of dead horse waiting for thee."

"Send me some out, then," said matter-of-fact Amyas. "And tell his Lordship that, with his good leave, I don't stir from here till morning, if I can keep awake. There is a stir in the fort, and I expect them out on us."

"Tut, man! their hearts are broken. We know it by their deserters."

"Seeing's believing. I never trust runaway rogues. If they are false to their masters, they'll be false to us."

"Well, go thy ways, old honesty; and Mr. Secretary shall give you a book to yourself in the 'Fairy Queen'—'Sir Monoculus or the Legend of Common sense,' eh, Edmund?"

"Monoculus?"

"Ay, Single-eye, my prince of word-coiners—won't that fit?—And give him the Cyclop's head for a device. Heigho! They may laugh that win. I am sick of this

Irish work; were it not for the chance of advancement I'd sooner be driving a team of red Devons on Dartside; and now I am angry with the dear lad because he is not sick of it, too. What a plague business has he to be paddling up and down, contentedly doing his duty, like any city watchman? It is an insult to the mighty aspirations of our nobler hearts,—eh, my would-be Ariosto?"

"Ah, Raleigh! you can afford to confess yourself less than some, for you are greater than all. Go on and conquer, noble heart! But as for me, I sow the wind, and I suppose I shall reap the whirlwind."

"Your harvest seems come already; what a blast that was! Hold on by me, Colin Clout, and I'll hold on by thee. So! Don't tread on that pikeman's stomach, lest he take thee for a marauding Don, and with sudden dagger slit Colin's pipe, and Colin's weasand, too."

And the two stumbled away into the darkness, leaving Amyas to stride up and down as before, puzzling his brains over Raleigh's wild words and Spenser's melancholy, till he came to the conclusion that there was some mysterious connection between cleverness and unhappiness, and thanking his stars that he was neither scholar, courtier, nor poet, said grace over his lump of horseflesh when it arrived, devoured it as if it had been venison, and then returned to his pacing up and down; but this time in silence, for the night was drawing on, and there was no need to tell the Spaniards that any one was awake and watching.

So he began to think about his mother, and how she might be spending her Christmas; and then about Frank, and wondered at what grand Court festival he was assisting, amid bright lights and sweet music and gay ladies, and how he was dressed, and whether he thought of his brother there far away on the dark Atlantic shore; and then he said his prayers and his creed; and then he tried not to think of Rose Salterne, and of course thought about her all the more. So on passed the dull hours, till it might be past eleven o'clock, and all lights were out in the battery and the shipping, and there was no sound of living thing but the monotonous tramp of the two sentinels beside him, and now and then a grunt from the party who slept under arms some twenty yards to the rear.

So he paced to and fro, looking carefully out now and then over the strip of sand-hill which lay between him and

the fort; but all was blank and black, and moreover it began to rain furiously.

Suddenly he seemed to hear a rustle among the harsh sand-grass. True, the wind was whistling through it loudly enough: but that sound was not altogether like the wind. Then a soft, sliding noise; something had slipped down a bank, and brought the sand down after it. Amyas stopped, crouched down beside a gun, and laid his ear to the rampart, whereby he heard clearly, as he thought, the noise of approaching feet; whether rabbits or Christians, he knew not: but he shrewdly guessed the latter.

Now Amyas was of a sober and business-like turn, at least when he was not in a passion; and thinking within himself that if he made any noise, the enemy (whether four or two-legged) would retire, and all the sport be lost, he did not call to the two sentries, who were at the opposite ends of the battery; neither did he think it worth while to rouse the sleeping company, lest his ears should have deceived him, and the whole camp turn out to repulse the attack of a buck rabbit. So he crouched lower and lower beside the culverin, and was rewarded in a minute or two by hearing something gently deposited against the mouth of the embrasure, which, by the noise, should be a piece of timber.

"So far, so good," said he to himself; "when the scaling ladder is up, the soldier follows, I suppose. I can only humbly thank them for giving my embrasure the preference. There he comes! I hear his feet scuffling."

He could hear plainly enough some one working himself into the mouth of the embrasure: but the plague was, that it was so dark that he could not see his hand between him and the sky, much less his foe at two yards off. However, he made a pretty fair guess as to the whereabouts, and, rising softly, discharged such a blow downwards as would have split a yule log. A volley of sparks flew up from the hapless Spaniard's armor, and a grunt issued from within it, which proved that, whether he was killed or not, the blow had not improved his respiration.

Amyas felt for his head, seized it, dragged him in over the gun, sprang into the embrasure on his knees, felt for the top of the ladder, found it, hove it clean off and out, with four or five men on it, and then of course tumbled after it ten feet into the sand, roaring like a town bull to her Majesty's liege subjects in general.

Sailor-fashion, he had no armor on but a light morion and a cuirass, so he was not too much encumbered to prevent his springing to his legs instantly, and setting to work, cutting and foining right and left at every sound, for sight there was none.

Battles (as soldiers know, and newspaper editors do not) are usually fought, not as they ought to be fought, but as they can be fought: and while the literary man is laying down the law at his desk as to how many troops should be moved here, and what rivers should be crossed there, and where the cavalry should have been brought up, and when the flank should have been turned, the wretched man who has to do the work finds the matter settled for him by pestilence, want of shoes, empty stomachs, bad roads, heavy rains, hot suns, and a thousand other stern warriors who never show on paper.

So with this skirmish; "according to Cocker," it ought to have been a very pretty one; for Hercules of Pisa, who planned the sortie, had arranged it all (being a very *sans-appel* in all military science) upon the best Italian precedents, and had brought against this very hapless battery a column of a hundred to attack directly in front, a company of fifty to turn the right flank, and a company of fifty to turn the left flank, with regulations, orders, passwords, countersigns, and what not; so that if every man had had his rights (as seldom happens), Don Guzman Maria Magdalena de Soto, who commanded the sortie, ought to have taken the work out of hand, and annihilated all therein. But alas! here stern fate interfered. They had chosen a dark night, as was politic; they had waited till the moon was up, lest it should be too dark, as was politic likewise: but, just as they had started, on came a heavy squall of rain, through which seven moons would have given no light, and which washed out the plans of Hercules of Pisa as if they had been written on a school-boy's slate. The company who were to turn the left flank walked manfully down into the sea, and never found out where they were going till they were knee-deep in water. The company who were to turn the right flank, bewildered by the utter darkness, turned their own flank so often, that tired of falling into rabbit-burrows and filling their mouths with sand, they halted and prayed to all the saints for a compass and lantern; while the centre body, who held straight on by a trackway to within fifty yards of the

battery, so miscalculated that short distance, that while they thought the ditch two pikes' length off, they fell into it one over the other, and of six scaling ladders, the only one which could be found was the very one which Amyas threw down again. After which the clouds broke, the wind shifted, and the moon shone out merrily. And so was the deep policy of Hercules of Pisa, on which hung the fate of Ireland and the Papacy, decided by a ten minutes' squall.

But where is Amyas?

In the ditch, aware that the enemy is tumbling into it, but unable to find them; while the company above, finding it much too dark to attempt a counter sortie, have opened a smart fire of musketry and arrows on things in general, wherewith the Spaniards are swearing like Spaniards (I need say no more), and the Italians spitting like venomous cats; while Amyas, not wishing to be riddled by friendly balls, has got his back against the foot of the rampart, and waits on Providence.

Suddenly the moon clears; and with one more fierce volley, the English sailors, seeing the confusion, leap down from the embrasures, and to it pell-mell. Whether this also was "according to Cocker," I know not: but the sailor, then as now, is not susceptible of highly-finished drill.

Amyas is now in his element, and so are the brave fellows at his heels; and there are ten breathless, furious minutes among the sand-hills; and then the trumpets blow a recall, and the sailors drop back again by twos and threes, and are helped up into the embrasures over many a dead and dying foe; while the guns of Fort del Oro open on them, and blaze away for half-an-hour without reply; and then all is still once more. And in the meanwhile, the sortie against the Deputy's camp has fared no better, and the victory of the night remains with the English.

Twenty minutes after, Winter and the captains who were on shore were drying themselves round a peat-fire on the beach, and talking over the skirmish, when Will Cary asked—

"Where is Leigh? who has seen him? I am sadly afraid he has gone too far, and been slain."

"Slain? Never less, gentlemen!" replied the voice of the very person in question, as he stalked out of the darkness into the glare of the fire, and shot down from his shoulders into the midst of the ring, as he might a sack of

corn, a huge dark body, which was gradually seen to be a man in rich armor; who being so shot down, lay quietly where he was dropped, with his feet (luckily for him mailed) in the fire.

"I say," quoth Amyas, "some of you had better take him up, if he is to be of any use. Unlace his helm, Will Cary."

"Pull his feet out of the embers; I dare say he would have been glad enough to put us to the scarpines; but that's no reason we should put him to them."

As has been hinted, there was no love lost between Admiral Winter and Amyas; and Amyas might certainly have reported himself in a more ceremonious manner. So Winter, whom Amyas either had not seen, or had not chosen to see, asked him pretty sharply, "What the plague he had to do with bringing dead men into camp?"

"If he's dead, it's not my fault. He was alive enough when I started with him, and I kept him right end uppermost all the way and what would you have more, sir?"

"Mr. Leigh!" said Winter, "it behooves you to speak with somewhat more courtesy, if not respect, to captains who are your elders and commanders."

"Ask your pardon, sir," said the giant, as he stood in front of the fire with the rain steaming and smoking off his armor; "but I was bred in a school where getting good service done was more esteemed than making fine speeches."

"Whatsoever school you were trained in, sir," said Winter, nettled at the hint about Drake, "it does not seem to have been one in which you learned to obey orders. Why did you not come in when the recall was sounded?"

"Because," said Amyas, very coolly, "in the first place I did not hear it; and in the next, in my school I was taught when I had once started not to come home empty-handed."

This was too pointed; and Winter sprang up with an oath—"Do you mean to insult me, sir?"

"I am sorry, sir, that you should take a compliment to Sir Francis Drake as an insult to yourself. I brought in this gentleman because I thought he might give you good information; if he dies meanwhile, the loss will be yours, or rather the queen's."

"Help me, then," said Cary, glad to create a diversion in Amyas' favor, "and we will bring him round;" while

Raleigh rose, and catching Winter's arm, drew him aside, and began talking earnestly.

"What a murrain have you, Leigh, to quarrel with Winter?" asked two or three.

"I say, my reverend fathers and dear children, do get the Don's talking tackle free again, and leave me and the Admiral to settle it our own way."

There was more than one captain sitting in the ring; but discipline, and the degrees of rank, were not so severely defined as now; and Amyas, as a "gentleman adventurer," was, on land, in a position very difficult to be settled, though at sea he was as liable to be hanged as any other person on board; and on the whole it was found expedient to patch the matter up. So Captain Raleigh returning, said that though Admiral Winter had doubtless taken umbrage at certain words of Mr. Leigh's yet that he had no doubt that Mr. Leigh meant nothing thereby but what was consistent with the profession of a soldier and a gentleman, and worthy both of himself and of the Admiral.

From which proposition Amyas found it impossible to dissent; whereon Raleigh went back, and informed Winter that Leigh had freely retracted his words, and fully wiped off any imputation which Mr. Winter might conceive to have been put upon him, and so forth. So Winter returned, and Amyas said frankly enough—

"Admiral Winter, I hope, as a loyal soldier, that you will understand thus far; that naught which has passed tonight shall in any way prevent you finding me a forward and obedient servant to all your commands, be they what they may, and a supporter of your authority among the men, and honor against the foe, even with my life. For I should be ashamed if private differences should ever prejudice by a grain the public weal."

This was a great effort of oratory for Amyas; and he therefore, in order to be safe by following precedent, tried to talk as much as he could like Sir Richard Grenville. Of course Winter could answer nothing to it, in spite of the plain hint of private differences, but that he should not fail to show himself a captain worthy of so valiant and trusty a gentleman; whereon the whole party turned their attention to the captive, who thanks to Will Cary was by this time sitting up, standing much in need of a handkerchief, and looking about him, having been unhelmed, in a confused and doleful manner.