from the boat just as he was, and touched his hat as he passed the first lieutenant.

"Perfectly sober, sir, but I've lost my trousers."

"So it appears, sir," replied Mr. Sawbridge, as Mr. Biggs stood on the planeshear of the sloop where the hammock netting divides for an entrance, with his shirt tails fluttering in the sea breeze; but Mr. Sawbridge could not contain himself any longer, he ran down the ship ladder which led on the quarter-deck, choked with laughter. Mr. Biggs could not descend until after Mr. Sawbridge, and the conversation had attracted the notice of all, and every eye in the ship was on him.

"What's all this?" said Captain Wilson, coming to the gangway.

"Duty before decency," replied Jack, who stood by enjoying the joke.

Mr. Biggs recollected the day before—he cast a furious look at Jack, as he touched his hat to the captain, and then dived down to the lower deck.

If anything could add to the indignation of the boatswain, it was to find that his trousers had come on board before him. He now felt that a trick had been played him, and also that our hero must have been the party, but he could prove nothing; he could not say who slept in the same room, for he was fast asleep when Jack went to bed, and fast asleep when Jack quitted the room.

The truth of the story soon became known to all the ship, and "duty before decency" became a by-word. All that the boatswain could do he did, which was to revenge himself upon the poor boy—and Gascoigne and Jack never got any fishing tackle. The boatswain was as obnoxious to the men as Vigors, and in consequence of Jack's known opinions upon the rights of man, and his having floored their two greatest enemies, he became a great favourite with the seamen, and as all favourites are honoured by them with a sobriquet, our hero obtained that of Equality Jack.

CHAPTER XII

In which our hero prefers going down to going up; a choice, it is to be hoped, he will reverse upon a more important occasion.

THE next day being Sunday, the hands were turned up to divisions, and the weather not being favourable, instead of the service the articles of war were read with all due respect shown to the same, the captain, officers, and crew with their hats off in a mizzling rain. Jack, who had been told by the captain that these articles of war were the rules and regulations of the service, by which the captain, officers, and men were equally bound, listened to them as they were read by the clerk with the greatest attention. He little thought that there were about five hundred orders from the admiralty tacked on to them, which, like the numerous codicils of some wills, contained the most important matter, and to a certain degree make the will nugatory.

Jack listened very attentively, and as each article was propounded felt that he was not likely to commit himself in that point, and although he was rather astonished to find such a positive injunction against swearing, considered quite a dead letter in the ship, he thought that, altogether, he saw his way very clear. But to make certain of it, as soon as the hands had been piped down, he begged the clerk to let him have a copy of the articles.

Now the clerk had three, being the allowance of the ship, or at least all that he had in his possession, and made some demur at parting with one; but at last he proposed—some rascal, as he said, having stolen his toothbrush—that if Jack would give him one he would give him one of the copies of the articles of war. Jack replied that the one he had in use was very much worn, and that unfortunately he had but one new one, which he could not spare. Thereupon the clerk, who was a very clean personage, and could not bear that his teeth should be dirty, agreed to accept the one in use, as Jack could not part with the other. The exchange was made, and Jack read the articles of war over and over again, till he thought he was fully master of them.

"Now," says Jack, "I know what I am to do, and what I am to expect, and these articles of war I will carry in my pocket as long as I'm in the service—that is to say, if they last so long; and provided they do not, I am able to replace them with another old toothbrush, which appears to be the value attached to them."

The *Harpy* remained a fortnight in Gibraltar Bay, and Jack had occasionally a run on shore, and Mr. Asper invariably went with him to keep him out of mischief; that is to say, he allowed him to throw his money away on no one more worthless than himself.

One morning Jack went down into the berth, and found young Gossett blubbering.

"What's the matter, my dear Mr. Gossett?" inquired Jack, who was just as polite to the youngster as he was to anybody else.

"Vigors has been thrashing me with a rope's end," replied Gossett, rubbing his arm and shoulders.

"What for?" inquired Jack.

"Because he says the service is going to hell—(I'm sure it's no fault of mine)—and that now all subordination is destroyed, and that upstarts join the ship who, because they have a five-pound note in their pocket, are allowed to do just as they please. He said he was determined to uphold the service, and then he knocked me down—and when I got up again he told me that I could stand a little more—and then he took out his colt, and said he was determined to ride the high horse—and that there should be no Equality Jack in future."

"Well," replied Jack.

"And then he colted me for half-an-hour, and that's all."

"By de soul of my fader, but it all for true, Massa Easy—he larrup um, sure enough—all for noteing, bad luck to him—I tink," continued Mesty, "he hab debelish bad memory—and he want a little more of Equality Jack."

"And he shall have it too," replied our hero; "why, it's against the articles of war, 'all quarrelling, fighting, &c.' I say, Mr. Gossett, have you got the spirit of a louse?"

"Yes," replied Gossett.

"Well then, will you do what I tell you next time, and trust to me for protection?"

"I don't care what I do," replied the boy, "if you will back me against the cowardly tyrant?"

"Do you refer to me?" cried Vigors, who had stopped at the door of the berth.

"Say yes," said Jack.

"Yes, I do," cried Gossett.

"You do, do you?—well then, my chick, I must trouble you with a little more of this," said Vigors, drawing out his colt.

"I think that you had better not, Mr. Vigors," observed Jack.

"Mind your own business, if you please," returned Vigors, not much liking the interference. "I am not addressing my conversation to you, and I will thank you never to interfere with me. I presume I have a right to choose my own acquaintance, and, depend upon it, it will not be that of a leveller."

"All that is at your pleasure, Mr. Vigors," replied Jack; "you have a right to choose your own acquaintance, and so have I a right to choose my own friends, and further, to support them. That lad is my friend, Mr. Vigors."

"Then," replied Vigors, who could not help bullying even at the risk of another combat, which he probably intended to stand, "I shall take the liberty of giving your friend a thrashing;" and he suited the action to the word.

"Then I shall take the liberty to defend my friend," replied Jack; "and as you call me a leveller, I'll try if I may not deserve the name," whereupon Jack placed a blow so well under the ear, that Mr. Vigors dropped on the deck, and was not in condition to come to the scratch, even if he had been inclined.

"And now, youngster," said Jack, wresting the colt out of Vigors' hand, "do as I bid you—give him a good colting—if you don't I'll thrash you."

Gossett required no second threat;—the pleasure of thrashing his enemy, if only for once, was quite enough—and he laid well on, Jack with his fists doubled ready to protect him if there was a show of resistance. But Vigors was half stupefied with the blow under the ear, and quite cowed; he took his thrashing in the most pensive manner.

"That will do," said Jack; "and now do not be afraid, Gossett; the very first time he offers to strike you when I am

not present, I will pay him off for it as soon as you tell me. I won't be called Equality Jack for nothing."

When Jolliffe, who heard of this, met our hero alone, he said to him, "Take my advice, boy, and do not in future fight the battles of others, you'll find very soon that you will have enough to do to fight your own."

Whereupon Jack argued the point for half-an-hour, and then they separated. But Mr. Jolliffe was right. Jack began to find himself constantly in hot water, and the captain and first lieutenant, although they did not really withdraw their protection, thought it high time that Jack should find out that, on board a man-of-war, everybody and everything must find its level.

There was on board of his Majesty's sloop *Harpy* a man of the name of Easthupp, who did the duty of purser's steward; this was the second ship that he had served in—in the former he had been sent with a draft of men from the tender lying off the Tower. How he had come into the service was not known in the present ship; but the fact was, that he had been one of the swell mob—and had been sent on board the tender with a letter of recommendation from the magistrates to Captain Crouch. He was a cockney by birth, for he had been left at the workhouse of St. Mary Axe, where he had been taught to read and write, and had afterwards made his escape. He joined the juvenile thieves of the metropolis, had been sent to Bridewell, obtained his liberty, and by degrees had risen from petty thieving of goods exposed outside of the shops and market-stalls, to the higher class of gentlemen pickpockets. His appearance was somewhat genteel, with a bullying sort of an impudent air, which is mistaken for fashion by those who know no better. A remarkably neat dresser, for that was part of his profession; a very plausible manner and address; a great fluency of language, although he clipped the king's English; and, as he had suffered more than once by the law, it is not to be wondered at, that he was, as he called himself, a hout-and-hout Radical. During the latter part of his service, in his last ship he had been employed under the purser's steward, and having offered himself in this capacity to the purser of H.M. sloop *Harpy*, with one or two forged certificates, he had been accepted.

Now, when Mr Easthupp heard of Jack's opinion, he wished to cultivate his acquaintance, and with a bow and a flourish in-

troduced himself before they arrived at Gibraltar; but our hero took an immediate dislike to this fellow from his excessive and impertinent familiarity.

Jack knew a gentleman when he met one, and did not choose to be a companion to a man beneath him in every way, but who, upon the strength of Jack's liberal opinions, presumed to be his equal. Jack's equality did not go so far as that; in theory it was all very well, but in practice it was only when it suited his own purpose.

But the purser's steward was not to be checked—a man who has belonged to the swell mob is not easily repulsed; and although Jack would plainly show him that his company was not agreeable, Easthupp would constantly accost him familiarly on the forecastle and lower deck, with his arms folded, and with an air almost amounting to familiarity. At last Jack told him to go about his business, and not presume to talk to him; whereupon Easthupp rejoined, and after an exchange of hard words, it ended by Jack kicking Mr. Easthupp, as he called himself, down the after-lower-deck hatchway. This was but a sorry specimen of Jack's equality—and Mr. Easthupp, who considered that his honour had been compromised, went up to the captain on the quarter-deck and lodged his complaint—whereupon Captain Wilson desired that Mr. Easy might be summoned.

As soon as Jack made his appearance, Captain Wilson called to Easthupp. "Now, purser's steward, what is this you have to say?"

"If you please, Captain Vilson, I am wery sorry to be obliged to make hany complaint of hany hofficer, but this Mr. Heasy thought proper to make use of language quite hunbecoming of a gentleman, and then to kick me as I vent down the atchvay."

"Well, Mr. Easy, is this true?"

"Yes, sir," replied Jack; "I have several times told the fellow not to address himself to me, and he will. I did tell him he was a Radical blackguard, and I did kick him down the hatchway."

"You told him he was a Radical blackguard, Mr. Easy?"

"Yes, sir; he comes bothering me about his republic, and asserting that we have no want of a king and aristocracy."

Captain Wilson looked significantly at Mr Sawbridge.

"I certainly did hoffer my political opinions, Captain Vilson; but you must be avare that ve hall ave an hequal stake in the country—and it's a Hinglishman's birthright."

"I'm not aware what your stake in the country may be, Mr. Easthupp," observed Captain Wilson, "but I think that, if you used such expressions, Mr. Easy was fully warranted in telling you his opinion."

"I ham villing, Captain Vilson, to make hany hallowance for the 'eat of political discussion—but that is not hall that I ave to complain hof. Mr. Heasy thought proper to say that I was a swindler and a liar."

"Did you make use of those expressions, Mr. Easy?"

"Yes, sir, he did," continued the steward; "and, moreover, told me not to cheat the men, and not to cheat my master, the purser. Now, Captain Vilson, is it not true that I am in a wery hostensible sitevation? but I flatter myself that I ave been vell edecated, and vos wonce moving in a wery different society—misfortains vill appen to us hall, and I feel my character has been severely injured by such impertations;" whereupon Mr. Easthupp took out his handkerchief, flourished, and blew his nose. "I told Mr. Heasy that I considered myself quite as much of a gentleman as himself, and at hall hewents did not keep company with a black feller (Mr. Heasy will understand the insinevation); vereupon Mr. Heasy, as I before said, your vorship, I mean you, Captain Vilson, thought proper to kick me down the atchvay."

"Very well, steward, I have heard your complaint, and now you may go."

Mr. Easthupp took his hat off with an air, made his bow, and went down the main ladder.

"Mr. Easy," said Captain Wilson, "you must be aware that by the regulations of the service by which we are all equally bound, it is not permitted that any officer shall take the law into his own hands. Now, although I do not consider it necessary to make any remark as to your calling the man a Radical blackguard, for I consider his impertinent intrusion of his opinions deserved it, still you have no right to attack any man's character without grounds—and as that man is in an office of trust, you were not at all warranted in asserting that he was a cheat. Will you explain to me why you made use of such language?"

Now our hero had no proofs against the man; he had nothing to offer in extenuation, until he recollected, all at once, the reason assigned by the captain for the language used by Mr. Sawbridge. Jack had the wit to perceive that it would hit home, so he replied, very quietly and respectfully—

"If you please, Captain Wilson, that was all zeal."

"Zeal, Mr. Easy? I think it but a bad excuse. But pray, then, why did you kick the man down the hatchway?—you must have known that that was contrary to the rules of the service."

"Yes, sir," replied Jack demurely; "but that was all zeal, too."

"Then allow me to say," replied Captain Wilson, biting his lips, "that I think that your zeal has in this instance been very much misplaced, and I trust you will not show so much again."

"And yet, sir," replied Jack, aware that he was giving the captain a hard hit, and therefore looking proportionally humble, "we should do nothing in the service without it—and I trust one day, as you told me, to become a very zealous officer."

"I trust so too, Mr. Easy," replied the captain. "There, you may go now, and let me hear no more of kicking people down the hatchway. That sort of zeal is misplaced."

"More than my foot was, at all events," muttered Jack, as he walked off.

Captain Wilson, as soon as our hero disappeared, laughed heartily, and told Mr. Sawbridge he had ascribed *his* language to our hero as all zeal. "He has very cleverly given me it all back again; and really, Sawbridge, as it proves how weak was my defence of you, you may gain from this lesson."

Sawbridge thought so too—but both agreed that Jack's rights of man were in considerable danger.

The day before the ship sailed the captain and Mr. Asper dined with the governor; and as there was little more to do, Mr. Sawbridge, who had not quitted the ship since she had been in port, and had some few purchases to make, left her in the afternoon in the charge of Mr. Smallsole, the master. Now, as we have observed, he was Jack's inveterate enemy—indeed, Jack had already made three, Mr. Smallsole, Mr. Biggs, the boatswain, and Easthupp, the purser's steward. Mr. Smallsole was glad to be left in command, as he hoped

to have an opportunity of punishing our hero, who certainly laid himself not a little open to it.

Like all those who are seldom in command, the master was proportionally tyrannical and abusive—he swore at the men, made them do the duty twice and thrice over, on the pretence that it was not smartly done, and found fault with every officer remaining on board.

"Mr. Biggs—by God, sir, you seem to be all asleep forward. I suppose you think that you are to do nothing now the first lieutenant is out of the ship? How long will it be, sir, before you are ready to sway away?"

"By de holy poker, I tink he sway away finely, Massy Easy," observed Mesty, who was in converse with our hero on the forecastle.

Mr. Smallsole's violence made Mr. Biggs violent, which made the boatswain's mate violent—and the captain of the forecastle violent also; all which is practically exemplified by philosophy in the laws of motion, communicated from one body to another, and as Mr. Smallsole swore, so did the boatswain swear. Also the boatswain's mate, the captain of the forecastle, and all the men—showing the force of example.

Mr. Smallsole came forward.

"Damnation, Mr. Biggs, what the devil are you about? Can't you move here?"

"As much as we can, sir," replied the boatswain, "lumbered as the forecastle is with idlers." And here Mr. Biggs looked at our hero and Mesty, who were standing against the bulwark.

"What are you doing here, sir?" cried Mr. Smallsole to our hero.

"Nothing at all, sir," replied Jack.

"Then I'll give you something to do, sir. Go up to the mast-head, and wait there till I call you down. Come, sir, I'll show you the way," continued the master, walking aft. Jack followed till they were on the quarter-deck.

"Now, sir, up to the main-top gallant mast-head; perch yourself upon the cross-trees—up with you."

"What am I to go up there for, sir?" inquired Jack.

"For punishment, sir," replied the master.

"What have I done, sir?"

"No reply, sir—up with you."

"If you please, sir," replied Jack, "I should wish to argue this point a little."

"Argue the point!" roared Mr. Smallsole. "By Jove, I'll teach you to argue the point—away with you, sir."

"If you please, sir," continued Jack, "the captain told me that the articles of war were the rules and regulations by which every one in the service was to be guided. Now, sir," said Jack, "I have read them over till I know them by heart, and there is not one word of mast-heading in the whole of them." Here Jack took the articles out of his pocket, and unfolded them.

"Will you go to the mast-head, sir, or will you not?" said Mr. Smallsole.

"Will you show me the mast-head in the articles of war, sir?" replied Jack; "here they are."

"I tell you, sir, to go to the mast-head; if not, I'll be d—d if I don't hoist you up in a bread-bag."

"There's nothing about bread-bags in the articles of war, sir," replied Jack; "but I'll tell you what there is, sir," and Jack commenced reading—

"All flag-officers, and all persons in or belonging to his Majesty's ships or vessels of war, being guilty of profane oaths, execrations, drunkenness, uncleanness, or other scandalous actions, in derogation of God's honour and corruption of good manners, shall incur such punishment as——"

"Damnation," cried the master, who was mad with rage, hearing that the whole ship's company were laughing.

"No, sir, not damnation," replied Jack, "that's when he's tried above;—but according to the nature and degree of the offence."

"Will you go to the mast-head, sir, or will you not?"

"If you please," replied Jack, "I'd rather not."

"Then, sir, consider yourself under an arrest—I'll try you by a court-martial, by God. Go down below, sir."

"With the greatest pleasure, sir," replied Jack, "that's all right and according to the articles of war, which are to guide us all." Jack folded up his articles of war, put them into his pocket, and went down into the berth.

Soon after Jack had gone down, Jolliffe, who had heard the whole of the altercation, followed him: "My lad," said Jolliffe, "I'm sorry for all this; you should have gone to the mast-head."

"I should like to argue that point a little," replied Jack.

"Yes, so would everybody; but if that were permitted the service would be at a stand-still—that would not do;—you must obey an order first, and then complain afterwards, if the order is unjust."

"It is not so in the articles of war."

"But it is so in the service."

"The captain told me that the articles of war were the guides of the service, and we were all equally bound to obey them."

"Well, but allowing that, I do not think your articles of war will bear you out. You observe, they say any officer, mariner, &c., guilty of disobedience to any lawful command. Now, are you not guilty under that article?"

"That remains to be argued still," replied Jack. "A lawful command means an order established by law; now where is that law?—besides, the captain told me, when I kicked that blackguard down the hatchway, that there was only the captain who could punish, and that officers could not take the law into their own hands; why then has the master?"

"His doing wrong as superior officer is no reason why you as an inferior should disobey him. If that were permitted—if every order were to be cavilled at, and argued upon as just or unjust, there would be an end of all discipline. Besides, recollect that in the service there is custom, which is the same as law."

"That admits of a little argument," replied Jack.

"The service will admit of none, my dear boy; recollect that, even on shore, we have two laws, that which is written, and the *lex non scripta*, which is custom; of course we have it in the service, for the articles of war cannot provide for everything."

"They provide a court-martial for everything though," replied Jack.

"Yes, with death or dismissal from the service—neither of which would be very agreeable. You have got yourself into a scrape, and although the captain is evidently your friend, he cannot overlook it; fortunately it is with the master, which is of less consequence than with the other officers; but still you will have to submit, for the captain cannot overlook it."

"I'll tell you what, Jolliffe," replied Jack, "my eyes now begin to be opened to a great many things. The captain tells

me, when I am astonished at bad language, that it is all zeal, and then I found out that what is all zeal in a superior to an inferior, is insolence when reversed. He tells me, that the articles of war are made to equally guide us all—the master breaks what is positively mentioned in the second article twenty times over, and goes scot free, while I am to be punished because I do not comply with what the articles do not mention. How was I to know that I ought to go to the masthead for punishment?—particularly when the captain tells me that he alone is to punish in the ship. If I obey an order in opposition to the captain's order, is not that as bad as disobeying the captain? I think that I have made out a very strong case, and my arguments are not to be confuted."

"I am afraid that the master will make out a very strong case, and that your arguments will never be heard."

"That will be contrary to all the rules of justice."

"But according to all the rules of service."

"I do believe that I am a great fool," observed Jack, after a pause. "What do you imagine made me come to sea, Jolliffe?"

"Because you did not know when you were well off," replied the mate drily.

"That's true enough; but my reason was, because I thought I should find that equality here that I could not find on shore."

Jolliffe stared.

"My dear boy, I heard you say that you obtained those opinions from your father; I mean no disrespect to him, but he must be either mad or foolish, if at his age he has not discovered that there is no such thing in existence."

"I begin to think so," replied Jack; "but that does not prove that there ought not to be."

"I beg your pardon; the very non-existence proves that it ought not to be—'whatever is, is right'—you might as well expect to find perfect happiness or perfection in the individual. Your father must be a visionary."

"The best thing that I can do is to go home again."

"No, my dear Easy, the best thing that you can do is to stay in the service, for it will soon put an end to all such nonsensical ideas; and it will make you a clever, sensible fellow. The service is a rough, but a good school, where everybody finds his level—not the level of equality, but the level which

his natural talent and acquirements will rise or sink him to, in proportion as they are plus or minus. It is a noble service, but has its imperfections, as everything in this world must have. I have little reason to speak in its favour, as far as I am concerned, for it has been hard bread to me; but there must be exceptions in every rule. Do not think of quitting the service until you have given it a fair trial. I am aware that you are an only son, and your father is a man of property, and therefore, in the common parlance of the world, you are independent; but, believe me, no man, however rich, is independent, unless he has a profession, and you will find no better than this, notwithstanding——"

"What?"

"That you will be, most certainly, sent to the mast-head to-morrow."

"We'll argue that point," replied Jack; "at all events, I will go and turn in to-night."

CHAPTER XIII

In which our hero begins to act and think for himself.

WHATEVER may have been Jack's thoughts, at all events they did not spoil his rest. He possessed in himself all the materials of a true philosopher, but there was a great deal of weeding still required. Jolliffe's arguments, sensible as they were, had very little effect upon him; for, strange to say, it is much less easy to shake a man's opinions when he is wrong, than when he is right, proving that we are all of a very perverse nature. "Well," thought Jack, "if I am to go to the mast-head, I am, that's all; but it does not prove that my arguments are not good, only that they will not be listened to;" and then Jack shut his eyes, and in a few minutes was fast asleep.

The master had reported to the first lieutenant, and the first lieutenant to the captain, when he came on board the next morning, the conduct of Mr. Easy, who was sent for in the cabin, to hear if he had anything to offer in extenuation of his offence. Jack made an oration, which lasted more than half-an-hour, in which all the arguments he had brought forward to

Jolliffe in the preceding chapter were entered fully into. Mr. Jolliffe was then examined, and also Mr. Smallsole was interrogated; after which the captain and the first lieutenant were left alone.

"Sawbridge," said Captain Wilson, "how true it is that any deviation from what is right invariably leads us into a scrape. I have done wrong; wishing to get this boy out of his father's hands, and fearful that he would not join the ship, and imagining him to be by no means the shrewd fellow that he is in reality, I represented the service in a much more favourable light than I should have done; all that he says I told him I did tell him, and it is I who really led the boy into error. Mr. Smallsole has behaved tyrannically and unjustly, he punished the lad for no crime; so that between the master and me, I am now on the horns of a dilemma. If I punish the boy, I feel that I am punishing him more for my own fault and the fault of others, than his own. If I do not punish him, I allow a flagrant and open violation of discipline to pass uncensured, which will be injurious to the service."

"He must be punished, sir," replied Sawbridge.

"Send for him," said the captain.

Jack made his appearance, with a very polite bow.

"Mr. Easy, as you suppose that the articles of war contained all the rules and regulations of the service, I take it for granted that you have erred through ignorance. But recollect, that although you have erred through ignorance, such a violation of discipline, if passed unnoticed, will have a very injurious effect with the men, whose obedience is enforced by the example shown to them by the officers. I feel so convinced of your zeal, which you showed the other day in the case of Easthupp, that I am sure you will see the propriety of my proving to the men, by punishing you, that discipline must be enforced, and I shall therefore send for you on the quarter-deck, and order you to go to the mast-head in presence of the ship's company, as it was in the presence of the ship's company that you refused."

"With the greatest pleasure, Captain Wilson," replied Jack.

"And in future, Mr. Easy, although I shall ever set my face against it, recollect that if any officer punishes you, and you imagine that you are unfairly treated, you will submit to the punishment, and then apply to me for redress."