

#### MR. MIDSHIPMAN EASY

It was, however, necessary that they should soon proceed to business, for they had but their allowance of bread and grog for one day, and in the vessel they found nothing except a few heads of garlic, for the Spaniards coasting down shore had purchased their provisions as they required them. There were only three prisoners on board, and they had been put down in the hold among the beans; a bag of which had been roused on deck, and a part put into the kettle to make soup. Jack did not much admire the fare of the first day—it was bean-soup for breakfast, bean-soup for dinner, and if you felt hungry during the intervals it was still bean-soup and nothing else.

One of the men could speak a little *lingua franca*, and the prisoners were interrogated as to the vessels to windward. The ship was stated to be valuable, and also one of the brigs. The ship carried guns, and that was all that they knew about them. As the sun went down the vessels dropped their anchors off the battery. The breeze continued light, and the vessel which contained Jack and his fortunes was about four miles to leeward. As for the *Harpy*, they had long lost sight of her, and it was now time to proceed to some arrangement. As soon as it was dark Jack turned his hands up and made a very long speech. He pointed out to the men that his zeal had induced him not to return to the ship until he had brought something with him worth having—that they had had nothing but beans to eat during the whole day, which was anything but agreeable, and that, therefore, it was absolutely necessary that they should better their condition; that there was a large ship not four miles off, and that he intended to take her; and as soon as he had taken her he intended to take some more; that he trusted to their zeal to support him on this occasion, and that he expected to do a great deal during the cruise. He pointed out to them, that they must consider themselves as on board of a man-of-war, and be guided by the articles of war, which were written for them all—and that in case they forgot them, he had a copy in his pocket, which he would read to them to-morrow morning, as soon as they were comfortably settled on board of the ship. He then appointed Mesty as first lieutenant; the marine as sergeant; the coxswain as boatswain; two men as midshipmen to keep watch; two others as boatswain's mates, leaving two more for the ship's company, who were divided into the larboard and starboard watch. The cutter's crew were

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perfectly content with Jack's speech, and their brevet rank, and after that, they commenced a more important topic, which was, how they were to take the ship. After some discussion, Mesty's advice was approved of; which was, that they should anchor not far ahead of the ship, and wait till about two o'clock in the morning, when they would drop silently down upon her in the cutter, and take possession.

About nine o'clock the vessel was anchored as they proposed, and Jack was a little astonished to find that the ship was much larger than he had any idea of; for, although polacca-rigged, she was nearly the same tonnage as the *Harpy*. The Spanish prisoners were first tied hand and foot and laid upon the beans, that they might give no alarm, the sails were furled, and all was kept quiet.

On board of the ship, on the contrary, there was noise and revelry, and about half-past ten a boat was seen to leave her and pull for the shore; after which the noise gradually ceased, the lights one by one disappeared, and then all was silent.

"What do you think, Mesty?" said Jack; "do you think we shall take her?"

"It is take her you mane; sure enough we'll take her; stop a bit—wait till um all fast asleep."

About twelve o'clock there came on a mizzling heavy rain, which was very favourable for our hero's operations. But as it promised soon to clear up, by Mesty's advice they did not delay any longer. They crept softly into the boat, and with two oars to steer her dropped under the bows of the vessel, climbed up the forechains, and found the deck empty. "Take care not fire pistol," said Mesty to the men, as they came up, putting his finger to their lips to impress them with the necessity of silence, for Mesty had been an African warrior, and knew the advantage of surprise. All the men being on deck, and the boat made fast, Jack and Mesty led the way aft—not a soul was to be seen; indeed, it was too dark to see anybody unless they were walking the deck. The companion-hatch was secured, and the gratings laid on the after-hatchways, and then they went aft to the binnacle again, where there was a light burning. Mesty ordered two of the men to go forward to secure the hatches, and then to remain there on guard—and then the rest of the men and our hero consulted at the wheel.

"By the power, we ab the ship!" said Mesty; "but must



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manage plenty yet. I tink der some d—n lazy rascal sleep 'tween the guns. A lilly while it no rain, and den we see better. Now keep all quiet."

"There must be a great many men in this ship," replied our hero; "she is very large, and has twelve or fourteen guns—how shall we manage to secure them?"

"All right," replied Mesty, "manage all dat by-and-by. Don't care how soon daylight come."

"It has left off raining already," observed Easy; "there is a candle in the binnacle—suppose we light it, and look round the decks."

"Yes," replied Mesty, "one man sentry over cabin-hatch, and another over after-hatch. Now den we light candle, and all the rest go round the deck. Mind you leave all your pistols on capstern."

Jack lighted the candle, and they proceeded round the decks; they had not walked far, when between two of the guns they discovered a heap covered with gregos. "There de watch," whispered Mesty; "all fast—not ready for dem yet."

Mesty blew out the candle, and they all retreated to the binnacle, where Mesty took out a coil of the ropes about the mizen-mast, and cutting it into lengths gave them to the other men to unlay. In a few minutes they had prepared a great many seizings to tie the men with.

"Now den we light candle again, and make sure of them lazy hounds," said Mesty; "very much oblige to dem all de same, they let us take de ship—mind now, wake one at a time, and shut him mouth."

"But suppose they get their mouths free and cry out?" replied Jack.

"Den, Mr. Easy," replied Mesty, changing his countenance to an expression almost demoniacal; "there no help for it," and Mesty showed his knife which he held in his right hand.

"Oh no! do not let us murder them."

"No, massa—suppose can help it; but suppose they get upper hand—what become of us? Spaniards hab knives, and use dem too, by de power!"

The observation of Mesty was correct, and the expression of his countenance when he showed his knife proved what a relentless enemy he could be, if his blood was once roused; but Mesty had figured in the Ashantee wars in former days, and

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after that the reader need not be surprised. They proceeded cautiously to where the Spaniards lay. The arrangements of Mesty were very good. There were two men to gag them while the others were to tie their limbs. Mesty and Easy were to kneel by them with the candle, with raised knives to awe them into silence, or to strike home, if their own safety required it.

The gregos were removed off the first man, who opened his eyes at the sight of the candle, but the coxswain's hand was on his mouth—he was secured in silence. The other two men were awakened, and threw off their coverings, but they were also secured without there being occasion to resort to bloodshed.

"What shall we do now, Mesty?"

"Now, sar," said Mesty, "open the after-hatch and watch—suppose more men come up, we make them fast; suppose no more come up, we wait till daylight—and see what take place."

Mesty then went forward to see if the men were watchful on the forecastle; and having again gone round the whole of the deck to see if there were any more men on it, he blew out the candle, and took his station with the others at the after-hatchway.

It was just at break of day that the Spaniards who had to keep the morning watch having woke up, as people generally do at that hour at which they expect to be called, dressed themselves and came on deck, imagining, and very truly, that those of the middle watch had fallen asleep, but little imagining that the deck was in possession of Englishmen. Mesty and the others retreated, to allow them all to come up before they could perceive them, and fortunately this was accomplished. Four men came on the deck, looked round them, and tried to make out in the dark where their shipmates might be. The grating was slapped on again by Jack, and before they could well gain their eyesight, they were seized and secured, not however without a scuffle and some noise.

By the time that these men were secured and laid between the guns it was daylight, and they now perceived what a fine vessel they had fairly taken possession of—but there was much to be done yet. There was, of course, a number of men in the ship, and moreover they were not a mile from a battery of ten guns. Mesty, who was foremost in everything, left four men abaft, and went forward on the forecastle, examined the cable,



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which was "coir" rope, and therefore easily divided, and then directed the two men forward to coil a hawser upon the fore-grating, the weight of which would make all safe in that quarter, and afterwards to join them on the quarter-deck.

"Now, Mr. Easy, the great ting will be to get hold of captain; we must get him on deck. Open cabin-hatch now, and keep the after-hatch fast. Two men stay there, the others all come aft."

"Yes," replied Jack, "it will be a great point to secure the captain—but how are we to get him up?"

"You no know how to get captain up? By de holy, I know very well."

And Mesty took up the coils of rope about the mizen-mast, and threw them upon deck, one after another, making all the noise possible. In a short time there was a violent pull of a bell at the cabin door, and in a minute afterwards a man in his shirt came up the cabin hatchway, who was immediately secured.

"Dis de captain's servant," said Mesty, "he come say no make such d—d noise. Stop a little—captain get in passion, and come up himself."

And Mesty renewed the noise with the ropes over the cabin. Mesty was right; in a few minutes the captain himself came up, boiling with indignation. At the sound of the cabin door opening, the seamen and our hero concealed themselves behind the companion-hatch, which was very high, so as to give the captain time to get fairly on deck. The men already secured had been covered over with the gregos. The captain was a most powerful man, and it was with difficulty that he was pinioned, and then not without his giving the alarm, had there been any one to assist him; but as yet no one had turned out of his hammock.

"Now we all right," said Mesty, "and soon ab de ship; but I must make him 'fraid."

The captain was seated down on the deck against one of the guns, and Mesty, putting on the look of a demon, extended above him his long nervous arm, with the sharp knife clutched, as if ready every instant to strike it into his heart. The Spanish captain felt his situation anything but pleasant. He was then interrogated as to the number of men in the ship, officers, &c., to all which questions he answered truly; he cast his eyes at

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the firm and relentless countenance of Mesty, who appeared but to wait the signal.

"I tink all pretty safe now," said Mesty. "Mr. Easy, we now go down below and beat all men into the hold."

Our hero approved of this suggestion. Taking their pistols from the capstern, they rushed down with their cutlasses, and leaving two men to guard the cabin-door, they were soon among the crew, who were all naked in their hammocks: the resistance, although the numbers were more than double of the English, was of course trifling. In a few minutes, the Spaniards were all thrown down into the hold of the vessel, and the hatches placed over them. Every part of the ship was now in their possession, except the cabin, and to that they all repaired. Our hero tried the door, and found it fast; they beat it open, and were received with loud screams from one side of the cabin, and the discharge of two pistols from the other, fortunately without injury: those who had fired the pistols were an elderly man and a lad about the age of our hero. They were thrown down and secured; the cabin was searched, and nobody else found in it but three women; one old and shrivelled, the other two, although with their countenances distorted with terror, were lovely as houris. So thought Jack, as he took off his hat, and made them a very low bow with his usual politeness, as they crouched, half dressed, in a corner. He told them in English that they had nothing to fear, and begged that they would attend to their toilettes. The ladies made no reply, because, in the first place, they did not know what Jack said, and, in the next, they could not speak English.

Mesty interrupted Jack in his attentions, by pointing out that they must all go upon deck—so Jack again took off his hat and bowed, and then followed his men, who led away the two prisoners taken in the cabin. It was now five o'clock in the morning, and there was movement on board of the other vessels, which laid not far from the ship.

"Now then," said Jack, "what shall we do with the prisoners?—could we not send the boat and bring our own vessel alongside, and put them all in; tied as they are? We should then get rid of them."

"Massa Easy, you be one very fine officer one of these days. Dat d—n good idea, anyhow;—but suppose we send our own boat, what they tink on board of de oder vessel? Lower



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down lilly boat from stern, put in four men, and drop vessel 'longside—dat it."

This was done; the cutter was on the seaward side of the ship, and, as the ship was the outermost vessel, was concealed from the view of the Spaniards on board of the other vessels, and in the battery on shore. As soon as the lateen vessel was alongside, the men who had already been secured on deck, amounting to seven, were lowered into her, and laid upon the beans in the hold; all except the captain, the two cabin-prisoners, and the captain's servant. They then went down below, took off one part of the hatches, and ordered the Spaniards up from the hold: as they came on deck they were made fast and treated in the same manner. Mesty and the men went down to examine if there were any left concealed, and finding that they were all out, returned on deck. The men who had been beaten down into the hold were twenty-two in number, making the whole complement of thirty. As soon as they had all been put into the xebeque, she was again hauled off and anchored outside, and Jack found himself in possession of a fine ship of fourteen guns, with three prisoners male and three prisoners female.

When the men returned in the boat from the vessel in which the prisoners had been confined (the hatches having been secured over them, by way of further precaution), by the advice of Mesty they put on the jackets and caps of the Spanish seamen, of which there was a plentiful supply below.

"Now, what's to be done, Mesty?" inquired Jack.

"Now, sar, we send some of the men aloft to get sails all ready, and while they do that I cast loose this fellow," pointing to the captain's servant, "and make him get some breakfast, for he know where to find it."

"Capital idea of yours, Mesty, for I'm tired of bean soup already, and I will go down and pay my respects to the ladies."

Mesty looked over the counter.

"Yes, and be quick too, Massa Easy; d—m the women, they toss their handkerchief in the air to people in the battery—quick, Massa Easy."

Mesty was right—the Spanish girls were waving their handkerchiefs for assistance; it was all that they could do, poor things. Jack hastened into the cabin, laid hold of the two young ladies, very politely pulled them out of the quarter

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gallery, and begged that they would not give themselves so much trouble. The young ladies looked very much confused, and as they could no longer wave their handkerchiefs, they put them up to their eyes and began to weep, while the elderly lady went on her knees, and held her hands up for mercy. Jack raised her up, and very politely handed her to one of the cabin lockers.

In the meantime Mesty, with his gleaming knife and expressive look, had done wonders with the captain's steward, for such the man was: and a breakfast of chocolate, salt meat, ham and sausages, white biscuit and red wine, had been spread on the quarter-deck. The men had come from aloft, and Jack was summoned on deck. Jack offered his hand to the two young ladies, and beckoned the old one to follow: the old lady did not think it advisable to refuse his courtesy, so they accompanied him.

As soon as the females came on deck, and found the two cabin prisoners bound, they ran to them and embraced them with tears. Jack's heart melted, and as there was now no fear, he asked Mesty for his knife, and cut loose the two Spaniards, pointing to the breakfast, and requesting that they would join them. The Spaniards made a bow, and the ladies thanked Jack with a sweet smile; and the captain of the vessel, who still lay pinioned against the gun, looked, as much as to say, Why the devil don't you ask me? but the fact was, they had had such trouble to secure him, that Jack did not much like the idea of letting him loose again. Jack and the seamen commenced their breakfast, and as the ladies and prisoners did not appear inclined to eat, they ate their share and their own too; during which, the elderly man inquired of Jack if he could speak French.

Jack, with his mouth full of sausage, replied that he could; and then commenced a conversation, from which Jack learnt as follows:—

The elderly gentleman was a passenger with the young man, who was his son, and the ladies, who were his wife and his two daughters, and they were proceeding to Tarragona. Whereupon Jack made a bow and thanked him; and then the gentleman, whose name was Don Cordova de Rimarosa, wished to know what Jack intended to do with them, hoping, as a gentleman, he would put them on shore with their effects, as



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they were non-combatants. Jack explained all this to Mesty and the men, and then finished his sausage. The men, who were a little elevated with the wine which they had been drinking, proposed that they should take the ladies a cruise, and Jack at first did not dislike the idea, but he said nothing. Mesty, however, opposed this, saying that ladies only made a row in a ship, and the coxswain sided with him, saying, that they should all be at daggers drawn. Whereupon Jack pulled out the "articles of war," and informed the men that there was no provision in them for women, and therefore the thing was impossible.

The next question was, as to the propriety of allowing them to take their effects; and it was agreed, at last, that they might take them. Jack desired the steward to feed his master the captain, and then told the Spanish Don the result of the consultation, further informing him, that as soon as it was dark, he intended to put them all on board the small vessel, when they could cast loose the men and do as they pleased. The Don and the ladies returned thanks, and went down to pack up their baggage; Mesty ordering two men to help them, but with a caution, that they were not to encumber themselves with any of the money, if there should happen to be any on board.

The crew were busy during the day making preparations for sailing. The coxswain had examined the provender in the ship, and found that there was enough for at least three months, of water, wine, and provisions, independent of luxuries for the cabin. All thoughts of taking any more of the vessels were abandoned, for their crew was but weak to manage the one which they had possession of. A fine breeze sprang up, and they dropped their fore-topsails, just as a boat was shoving off from the shore; but seeing the fore-topsails loosed, it put back again. This was fortunate, or all would have been discovered. The other vessels also loosed their sails, and the crews were heard weighing the anchors.

But the *Nostra Senora del Carmen*, which was Jack's prize, did not move. At last the sun went down, the baggage was placed in the cutter, the ladies and passengers went into the boat, thanking Jack for his kindness, who put his hand to his heart, and bowed to the deck; and the captain was lowered down after them. Four men well armed pulled them alongside of the xebecque, put them and their trunks on deck, and

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returned to the ship. The cutter was then hoisted up, and as the anchor was too heavy to weigh, they cut the cable, and made sail. The other vessels followed their example. Mesty and the seamen cast longing eyes upon them, but it was of no use; so they sailed in company for about an hour, and then Jack hauled his wind for a cruise.

#### CHAPTER XIV

*In which our hero finds that disagreeable occurrences will take place on a cruise.*

AS soon as the ship had been hauled to the wind, Jack's ship's company seemed to think that there was nothing to do except to make merry; so they brought up some earthen jars full of wine, and emptied them so fast that they were soon fast asleep on the deck, with the exception of the man at the helm, who, instead of thirty-two, could clearly make out sixty-four points in the compass, and of course was able to steer to a much greater nicety. Fortunately, the weather was fine, for when the man at the helm had steered till he could see no more, and requested to be released, he found that his shipmates were so overpowered with fatigue, that it was impossible to wake them. He kicked them one by one most unmercifully in the ribs, but it was of no use. Under these circumstances, he did as they did, that is, lay down with them, and in ten minutes it would have taken as much kicking to awake him as he gave his shipmates.

In the meantime the ship had it all her own way, and not knowing where she was to go, she went round and round the compass during the best part of the night. Mesty had arranged the watches, Jack had made a speech, and the men had promised everything, but the wine had got into their heads, and memory had taken that opportunity to take a stroll. Mesty had been down with Jack, examining the cabin, and in the captain's state-room they had found fourteen thousand dollars in bags. Of this they determined not to tell the men, but locked up the money and everything else of value, and took out the key. They then sat down at the cabin table, and