

### MR. MIDSHIPMAN EASY

the Spaniard, which was hardly necessary, Mesty locked the cabin door—but Mesty never forgot anything.

Jack slept little that night—had melancholy forebodings which he could not shake off; indeed, Jack had reflected so much since he had left the ship, he had had his eyes so much opened, and had felt what a responsibility he had taken by indulging himself in a whim of the moment, that it might be almost said, that in the course of one fortnight he had at once from a boy sprung up into a man. He was mortified and angry, but he was chiefly so with himself.

Mesty was up at daylight, and Jack soon followed him: they watched the party on shore, who had not yet left the tent. At last, just as Jack had finished his breakfast, one or two made their appearance; the men looked about them as if they were searching for something, and then walked down to the beach, to where the boat had been made fast. Jack looked at Mesty, who grinned, and answered with the words so often repeated—

“Stop a little.”

The men then walked along the rocks until they were abreast of the ship.

“Ship ahoy!”

“Halloo,” replied Mesty.

“Bring the boat ashore directly, with a beaker of water.”

“I knew dat,” cried Mesty, rubbing his hands with delight.

“Massa Easy, you must tell them No.”

“But why should I not give them water, Mesty?”

“Because, sar, den they take boat.”

“Very true,” replied Easy.

“Do you hear on board?” cried the coxswain, who was the man who hailed—“send the boat immediately, or we’ll cut the throats of every mother’s son of you, by God!”

“I shall not send the boat,” replied Jack, who now thought Mesty was right.

“You won’t—won’t you?—then your doom’s sealed,” replied the man, walking up to the tent with the other. In a short time all the seamen turned out of the tent, bringing with them four muskets, which they had taken on shore with them.

“Good heavens! they are not, surely, going to fire at us, Mesty.”

“Stop a little.”

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coxswain again hailed, and asked if they would bring the boat on shore.

"You must say, No, sar," replied Mesty.

"I feel I must," replied Jack; and then he answered the coxswain, "No."

The plan of the mutineers had been foreseen by the wily negro—it was to swim off to the boats which were riding astern, and to fire at him or Jack, if they attempted to haul them up alongside and defend them. To get into the boats, especially the smaller one, from out of the water was easy enough. Some of the men examined their priming and held the muskets at their hips all ready, with the muzzles towards the ship, while the coxswain and two men were throwing off their clothes.

"Stop, for God's sake, stop!" cried Jack. "The harbour is full of ground sharks,—it is, upon my soul!"

"Do you think to frighten us with ground sharks?" replied the coxswain; "keep under cover, my lad; Jack, give him a shot to prove we are in earnest, and every time he or that nigger show their heads, give them another, my lads."

"For God's sake, don't attempt to swim," said Jack, in an agony; "I will try some means to give you water."

"Too late now—you're doomed;" and the coxswain sprang off the rock into the sea, and was followed by two other men: at the same moment a musket was discharged, and the bullet whistled close to our hero's ear.

Mesty dragged Jack from the gangway, who was nearly fainting from agonising feelings. He sank on the deck for a moment, and then sprang up and ran to the port to look at the men in the water. He was just in time to see the coxswain raise himself with a loud yell out of the sea, and then disappear in a vortex, which was crimsoned with his blood.

Mesty threw down his musket in his hand, of which he had several already loaded, in case the men should have gained the boats.

"By the powers, dat no use now!"

Jack had covered his face with his hands. But the tragedy was not complete: the other men, who were in the water, had immediately turned and made for the shore; but before they could reach it, two more of these voracious monsters, attracted by the blood of the coxswain, had flown to the spot, and there was a contention for the fragments of their bodies.



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Mesty, who had seen this catastrophe, turned towards our hero, who still hid his face.

"I'm glad he no see dat, anyhow," muttered Mesty.

"See what?" exclaimed Jack.

"Shark eat em all."

"Oh, horrid! horrid!" groaned our hero.

"Yes, sar, very horrid," replied Mesty, "and dat bullet at your head very horrid. Suppose the sharks no take them, what then? They kill us and the sharks have our body. I think that more horrid still."

"Mesty," replied Jack, seizing the negro convulsively by the arm, "it was not the sharks—it was I,—I who have murdered these men."

Mesty looked at Jack with surprise.

"How dat possible?"

"If I had not disobeyed orders," replied our hero, panting for breath, "if I had not shown them the example of disobedience, this would not have happened. How could I expect submission from them? It's all my fault—I see it now—and, O God! when will the sight be blotted from my memory!"

"Massa Easy, I not understand that," replied Mesty; "I think you talk foolish—might as well say, suppose Ashantee men not make war, this not happen; for suppose Ashantee not make war, I not slave, I not run away,—I not come board *Harpy*—I not go in boat with you—I not hinder men from getting drunk—and dat why they make mutiny—and the mutiny why the shark take um!"

Jack made no reply, but he felt some consolation from the counter-argument of the negro.

The dreadful death of the three mutineers appeared to have had a sensible effect upon their companions, who walked away from the beach with their heads down and with measured steps. They were now seen to be perambulating the island, probably in search of that water which they required. At noon, they returned to their tent, and soon afterwards were in a state of intoxication, hallooing and shouting as the day before. Towards the evening they came down to the beach abreast of the ship, each with a vessel in their hands, and perceiving that they had attracted the notice of our hero and Mesty, tossed the contents of the vessels up in the air to show that they had found water, and hooting and deriding, went back, dancing, leaping, and

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kicking up their heels, to renew their orgies, which continued till after midnight, when they were all stupefied as before.

The next day Jack had recovered from the first shock which the catastrophe had given him, and he called Mesty into the cabin to hold a consultation.

"Mesty, how is this to end?"

"How you mean, sar?—end here, or end on board of the *Harpy*?"

"The *Harpy*,—there appears little chance of our seeing her again—we are on a desolate island, or what is the same thing; but we will hope that it will be so; but how is this mutiny to end?"

"Massa Easy, suppose I please, I make it end very soon, but I not in a hurry."

"How do you mean, Mesty, not in a hurry?"

"Look, Massa Easy; you wish take a cruise, and I wish the same ting: now because mutiny you want to go back—but by all de powers, you tink that I, a prince in my own country, feel wish to go back and boil kettle for de young gentlemen. No, Massa Easy, gib me mutiny—gib me anyting—but—once I was prince," replied Mesty, lowering his voice at the last few emphatic words.

"You must one of these days tell me your history," replied Jack; "but just now let us argue the point in question. How could you put an end to this mutiny?"

"By putting an end to all wine. Suppose I go shore after they all drunk, I spile the casks in three or four places, and in the morning all wine gone—den dey ab get sober, and beg pardon—we take dem on board, put away all arms, 'cept yours and mine, and I like to see the mutiny after dat. Blood and ounds—but I settle um, anyhow."

"The idea is very good, Mesty,—why should we not do so?"

"Because I not like run de risk to go ashore—all for what? to go back, boil de kettle for all gentlemans—I very happy here, massa," replied Mesty carelessly.

"And I am very miserable," replied Jack; "but, however, I am completely in your power, Mesty, and I must, I suppose, submit."

"What you say, Massa Easy—submit to me?—no, sar, when you are on board *Harpy* as officer, you talk with me as friend, and not treat me as negro servant. Massa Easy, I feel—I feel



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what I am," continued Mesty, striking his bosom, "I feel it here—for all first time since I leave my country, I feel that I am something: but, Massa Easy, I love my friend as much as I hate my enemy—and you neber submit to me—I too proud to allow dat, 'cause, Massa Easy—I am a man—and once, I was a prince."

Although Mesty did not perhaps explain by words half so well as he did by his countenance the full tide of feeling which was overflowing in his heart, Jack fully understood and felt it. He extended his hand to Mesty, and said—

"Mesty,—that you have been a prince, I care little about, although I doubt it not, because you are incapable of a lie; but you are a man, and I respect you, nay, I love you as a friend—and with my will we never part again."

Mesty took the hand offered by Jack. It was the first peace-offering ever extended to him since he had been torn away from his native land—the first compliment, the first tribute, the first acknowledgment, perhaps, that he was not an inferior being; he pressed it in silence, for he could not speak; but could the feelings which were suffocating the negro but have been laid before sceptics, they must have acknowledged that at that moment they were all and only such as could do honour, not only to the prince, but even to the Christian. So much was Mesty affected with what had happened, that when he dropped the hand of our hero, he went down into the cabin, finding it impossible to continue the conversation, which was not renewed until the next morning.

"What is your opinion, Mesty? Tell me, and I will be governed by it."

"Den, sar, I tell you I tink it right that they first come and ask to come on board before you take them—and, sar, I tink it also right, as we are but two and they are five, dat dey first eat all their provisions. Let 'em starve plenty, and den dey come on board tame enough."

"At all events," replied Jack, "the first overtures of some kind or another must come from them. I wish I had something to do—I do not much like this cooping up on board ship."

"Massa, why you no talk with Pedro?"

"Because I cannot speak Spanish."

"I know dat, and dat why I ask de question. You very

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sorry when you meet the two pretty women in the ship, you not able to talk with them, I guess that."

"I was very sorry, I grant," replied Jack.

"Well, Massa Easy, by-and-by we see more Spanish girl. Why not talk all day with Pedro, and den you able to talk with dem."

"Upon my word, Mesty, I never had an idea of your value. I will learn all the Spanish that I can," replied Jack, who was glad to have employment found for him, and was quite disgusted with the articles of war.

As for the men on shore, they continued the same course, if not as before, one day succeeded another, and without variety. It was, however, to be observed that the fire was now seldomer lighted, which proved their fuel scarce, and the weather was not so warm as it had been, for it was now October. Jack learnt Spanish from Pedro for a month, during which there was no appearance of submission on the part of the mutineers, who for the first fortnight, when intoxicated, used to come down and fire at Jack or Mesty when they made their appearance. Fortunately drunken men are not good marksmen; but latterly this had been discontinued, because they had expended their ammunition, and they appeared to have almost forgotten that the ship was there, for they took no notice of her whatever.

On the other hand, Jack had decided that if he waited there a year the overtures should come from them who had mutinied; and now, having an occupation, he passed his time very quietly, and the days flew so fast that two months had actually been run off the calendar before he had an idea of it.

One evening as they were down in the cabin, for the evenings had now become very cold, Jack asked Mesty whether he had any objection to give him a history of his life. Mesty replied that if he wished he was ready to talk, and at a nod from our hero Mesty commenced as follows.