

MR. MIDSHIPMAN EASY

The vessel was the *Franklin*, a French privateer of ten guns and sixty-five men, of which eight men were away in prizes. The loss on the part of the vessel was forty-six killed and wounded. On that of the *Harpy*, it was five drowned in the cutter, and eighteen blown up belonging to the pinnace, out of which total of twenty-three, they had only Mr. Jolliffe and five seamen alive.

"The *Harpy* is standing in with a breeze from the offing," said Gascoigne to Easy.

"So much the better, for I am sick of this, Ned; there is something so horrible in it, and I wish I was on board again. I have just been to Jolliffe; he can speak a little; I think he will recover. I hope so, poor fellow; he will then obtain his promotion, for he is the commanding officer of all us who are left."

"And if he does," replied Gascoigne, "he can swear that it was having been blown up which spoilt his beauty—but here comes the *Harpy*. I have been looking for an English ensign to hoist over the French, but cannot find one; so I hoist a wheft over it,—that will do."

The *Harpy* was soon hove-to close to the brig, and Jack went on board in the cutter to report what had taken place. Captain Wilson was much vexed and grieved at the loss of so many men: fresh hands were put in the cutter to man the pinnace, and he and Sawbridge both went on board to witness the horrible effects of the explosion as described by our hero.

Jolliffe and the wounded men were taken on board, and all of them recovered. We have before stated how disfigured the countenance of poor Mr. Jolliffe had been by the small-pox—so severely was it burned that the whole of the countenance came off in three weeks like a mask, and every one declared that, seamed as it still was, Mr. Jolliffe was better looking than he was before. It may be as well here to state that Mr. Jolliffe not only obtained his promotion, but a pension for his wounds, and retired from the service. He was still very plain, but as it was known that he had been blown up, the loss of his eye as well as the scars on his face were all put down to the same accident, and he excited interest as a gallant and maimed officer. He married, and lived contented and happy to a good old age.

The *Harpy* proceeded with her prize to Mahon. Jack, as

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usual, obtained a great deal of credit; whether he deserved it, or whether, as Gascoigne observed, he always fell upon his feet, the reader may decide from our narrative; perhaps there was a little of both. The seamen of the *Harpy*, if summoned in a hurry, used very often to reply, "Stop a minute, I've got a bite;" as for Jack, he often said to himself, "I have a famous good yarn for the governor."

CHAPTER XXIII

Jack goes on another cruise—Love and diplomacy—Jack proves himself too clever for three, and upsets all the arrangements of the high contracting powers.

A FEW days after the arrival of the *Harpy* at Port Mahon a cutter came in with despatches from the admiral. Captain Wilson found that he was posted into the *Aurora* frigate, in which a vacancy had been made by the result of our hero's transgressions.

Mr. Sawbridge was raised to the rank of commander, and appointed to the command of the *Harpy*. The admiral informed Captain Wilson that he must detain the *Aurora* until the arrival of another frigate, hourly expected, and then she would be sent down to Mahon for him to take the command of her. Further, he intimated that a supply of live bullocks would be very agreeable, and begged that he would send to Tetuan immediately.

Captain Wilson had lost so many officers that he knew not whom to send; indeed, now he was no longer in command of the *Harpy*, and there was but one lieutenant and no master or master's mate. Gascoigne and Jack were the only two serviceable midshipmen, and he was afraid to trust them on any expedition in which expedition was required.

"What shall we do, Sawbridge? Shall we send Easy or Gascoigne, or both, or neither?—for if the bullocks are not forthcoming, the admiral will not let them off as we do."

"We must send somebody, Wilson," replied Captain Sawbridge, "and it is the custom to send two officers, as one receives the bullocks on board, while the other attends to the embarkation."

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"Well, then send both, Sawbridge, but lecture them well first."

"I don't think they can get into any mischief there," replied Sawbridge; "and it's such a hole that they will be glad to get away from it."

Easy and Gascoigne were summoned, listened very respectfully to all Captain Sawbridge said, promised to conduct themselves with the utmost propriety, received a letter to the vice-consul, and were sent with their hammocks and chests in the cabin on board the *Mary Ann*, brig, of two hundred and sixteen tons, chartered by Government, the master and crew of which were all busy forward heaving up their anchors.

The master of the transport came aft to receive them; he was a short, red-haired young man, with hands as broad as the flappers of a turtle; he was broad-faced, broad-shouldered, well freckled, and pug-nosed; but if not very handsome he was remarkably good-humoured. As soon as the chests and hammocks were on deck, he told them that when he could get the anchor up and make sail, he would give them some bottled porter. Jack proposed that he should get the porter up, and they would drink it while he got the anchor up, as it would save time.

"It may save time, mayhap, but it won't save porter," replied the master; "however, you shall have it."

He called the boy, ordered him to bring up the porter, and then went forward. Jack made the boy bring up two chairs, put the porter on the companion hatch, and he and Gascoigne sat down. The anchor was weighed, and the transport ran out under her foretopsail, as they were light-handed, and had to secure the anchor. The transport passed within ten yards of the *Harpy*, and Captain Sawbridge, when he perceived the two midshipmen taking it so very easy, sitting in their chairs with their legs crossed, arms folded, and their porter before them, had a very great mind to order the transport to heave-to, but he could spare no other officer, so he walked away, saying to himself, "There'll be another yarn for the governor, or I'm mistaken."

As soon as sail was made on the transport, the master, whose name was Hogg, came up to our hero, and asked him how he found the porter. Jack declared that he never could venture an opinion upon the first bottle—"So, Captain Hogg,

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we'll trouble you for a second"—after which they troubled him for a third—begged for a fourth—must drink his health in a fifth—and finally pointed out the propriety of making up the half-dozen. By this time they found themselves rather light-headed; so, desiring Captain Hogg to keep a sharp look-out, and not to call them on any account whatever, they retired to their hammocks.

The next morning they awoke late; the breeze was fresh and fair. They requested Captain Hogg not to consider the expense, as they would pay for all they ate and drank, and all he did into the bargain, and promised him a fit-out when they got to Tetuan.

What with this promise and calling him captain, our hero and Gascoigne won the master's heart, and being a very good-tempered fellow, they did what they pleased. Jack also tossed a doubloon to the men for them to drink on their arrival, and all the men of the transport were in a transport at Jack's coming to "reign over them." It must be acknowledged that Jack's reign was, for the most part of it, "happy and glorious." At last they arrived at Tetuan, and our Pylades and Orestes went on shore to call upon the vice-consul, accompanied by Captain Hogg. They produced their credentials, and demanded bullocks. The vice-consul was a very young man, short and thin, and light-haired; his father had held the situation before him, and he had been appointed his successor because nobody else had thought the situation worth applying for. Nevertheless, Mr. Hicks was impressed with the immense responsibility of his office. It was, however, a place of some little emolument at this moment, and Mr. Hicks had plenty on his hands besides his sister, who, being the only English lady there, set the fashion of the place, and usurped all the attention of the gentlemen mariners who occasionally came for bullocks. But Miss Hicks knew her own importance, and had successively refused three midshipmen, one master's mate, and an acting purser. African bullocks were plentiful at Tetuan, but English ladies were scarce; moreover, she had a pretty little fortune of her own, to wit, three hundred dollars in a canvas bag, left her by her father, and entirely at her own disposal. Miss Hicks was very like her brother, except that she was more dumpling in her figure, with flaxen hair; her features were rather pretty and her skin very fair. As soon as the preliminaries had been entered

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into, and arrangements made in a small room with bare walls, which Mr. Hicks denominated his office, they were asked to walk into the parlour to be introduced to the vice-consul's sister. Miss Hicks tossed her head at the two midshipmen, but smiled most graciously at Captain Hogg. She knew the relative ranks of midshipman and captain. After a short time she requested the honour of Captain Hogg's company to dinner, and begged that he would bring his midshipmen with him, at which Jack and Gascoigne looked at each other and burst out in a laugh, and Miss Hicks was very near rescinding the latter part of her invitation. As soon as they were out of the house, they told the captain to go on board and get all ready whilst they walked round the town. Having peeped into every part of it, and stared at Arabs, Moors, and Jews till they were tired, they proceeded to the landing-place, where they met the captain, who informed them that he had done nothing, because the men were all drunk with Jack's doubloon. Jack replied that a doubloon would not last for ever, and that the sooner they drank it out the better. They then returned to the vice-consul's, whom they requested to procure for them fifty dozen of fowls, twentysheep, and a great many other articles which might be obtained at the place; for, as Jack said, they would live well going up to Toulon, and if there were any of the stock left they would give them to the admiral, for Jack had taken the precaution to put his father's philosophy once more to the proof before he quitted Mahon. As Jack gave such a liberal order, and the vice-consul cheated him out of at least one-third of what he paid, Mr. Hicks thought he could do no less than offer beds to our midshipmen as well as to Captain Hogg; so, as soon as dinner was over, they ordered Captain Hogg to go on board and bring their things on shore, which he did. As the time usual for transports remaining at Tetuan before they could be completed with bullocks was three weeks, our midshipmen decided upon staying at least so long if they could find anything to do; or if they could not, doing nothing was infinitely preferable to doing duty. So they took up their quarters at the vice-consul's, sending for porter and other things which were not to be had but from the transport; and Jack, to prove that he was not a swindler as Captain Tartar had called him, gave Captain Hogg a hundred dollars on account, for Captain Hogg had a large stock of porter and English luxuries, which he had

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brought out as a venture, and of which he had still a considerable portion left. As, therefore, our midshipmen not only were cheated by the vice-consul, but they also supplied his table, Mr. Hicks was very hospitable, and everything was at their service except Miss Julia, who turned up her nose at a midshipman, even upon full pay; but she made great advances to the captain, who, on his part, was desperately in love: so the mate and the men made all ready for the bullocks, Jack and Gascoigne made themselves comfortable, and Captain Hogg made love, and thus passed the first week.

The chamber of Easy and Gascoigne was at the top of the house, and finding it excessively warm, Gascoigne had forced his way up to the flat roof above (for the houses are all built in that way in most Mahomedan countries, to enable the occupants to enjoy the cool of the evening, and sometimes to sleep there). Those roofs, where houses are built next to each other, are divided by a wall of several feet, to insure that privacy which the Mahomedan customs demand.

Gascoigne had not been long up there before he heard the voice of a female, singing a plaintive air in a low tone, on the other side of the wall. Gascoigne sang well himself, and having a very fine ear, he was pleased with the correctness of the notes, although he had never heard the air before. He leant against the wall, smoked his cigar, and listened. It was repeated again and again at intervals; Gascoigne soon caught the notes, which sounded so clear and pure in the silence of the night.

At last they ceased, and having waited another half-hour in vain, our midshipman returned to his bed, humming the air which had so pleased his ear. It haunted him during his sleep, and rang in his ears when he awoke, as it is well known any new air that pleases us will do. Before breakfast was ready, Gascoigne had put English words to it, and sang them over and over again. He inquired of the vice-consul who lived in the next house, and was answered that it was an old Moor, who was reported to be wealthy, and to have a daughter, whom many of the people had asked in marriage, but whether for her wealth or for her beauty he could not tell; he had, however, heard that she was very handsome. Gascoigne made no further inquiries, but went out with Jack and Captain Hogg, and on board to see the water got in for the bullocks.

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"Where did you pick up that air, Gascoigne? It is very pretty, but I never heard you sing it before."

Gascoigne told him, and also what he had heard from Mr. Hicks.

"I am determined, Jack, to see that girl if I can. Hicks can talk Arabic fast enough; just ask him the Arabic for these words—'Don't be afraid—I love you—I cannot speak your tongue,'—and put them down on paper as they are pronounced."

Jack rallied Gascoigne upon his fancy, which could end in nothing.

"Perhaps not," replied Gascoigne; "and I should have cared nothing about it, if she had not sung so well. I really believe the way to my heart is through my ear; however, I shall try to-night, and soon find if she has the feeling which I think she has. Now let us go back; I'm tired of looking at women in garments up to their eyes, and men in dirt up to their foreheads."

As they entered the house they heard an altercation between Mr. and Miss Hicks.

"I shall never give my consent, Julia; one of those midshipmen you turn your nose up at is worth a dozen Hogs."

"Now, if we only knew the price of a hog in this country," observed Easy, "we should be able to calculate our exact value, Ned."

"A hog, being an unclean animal, is not——"

"Hush," said Jack.

"Mr. Hicks," replied Miss Julia, "I am mistress of myself and my fortune, and I shall do as I please."

"Depend upon it, you shall not, Julia. I consider it my duty to prevent you from making an improper match; and, as his Majesty's representative here, I cannot allow you to marry this young man."

"Mercy on us!" said Gascoigne, "his Majesty's representative!"

"I shall not ask your consent," replied the lady.

"Yes, but you shall not marry without my consent. I have, as you know, Julia, from my situation here, as one of his Majesty's 'corps diplomatique,' great power, and I shall forbid the banns; in fact, it is only I who can marry you."

"Then I'll marry elsewhere."

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"And what will you do on board of the transport until you are able to be married?"

"I shall do as I think proper," replied the lady; "and I'll thank you for none of your indelicate insinuations." So saying, the lady bounced out of the room into her own, and our midshipmen then made a noise in the passage to intimate that they had come in. They found Mr. Hicks looking very red and vice-consular indeed, but he recovered himself; and Captain Hogg making his appearance, they went to dinner; but Miss Julia would not make her appearance, and Mr. Hicks was barely civil to the captain, but he was soon afterwards called out, and our midshipmen went into the office to enable the two lovers to meet. They were heard then talking together, and after a time they said less, and their language was more tender.

"Let us see what's going on, Jack," said Gascoigne; and they walked softly, so as to perceive the two lovers, who were too busy to be on the look-out.

Captain Hogg was requesting a lock of his mistress's hair. The plump Julia could deny him nothing: she let fall her flaxen tresses, and taking out the scissors cut off a thick bunch from her hair behind, which she presented to the captain; it was at least a foot and a half long, and an inch in circumference. The captain took it in his immense hand, and thrust it into his coat-pocket behind, but one thrust down to the bottom would not get it in, so he thrust again and again until it was all coiled away like a cable in a tier.

"That's a liberal girl," whispered Jack, "she gives by wholesale what it will take some time to retail. But here comes Mr. Hicks, let's give them warning. I like Hogg, and as she fancies pork, she shall have it, if I can contrive to help them."

That night Gascoigne went again on the roof, and after waiting some time heard the same air repeated; he waited until it was concluded, and then, in a very low tone, sung it himself to the words he had arranged for it. For some time all was silent, and then the singing recommenced, but it was not to the same air. Gascoigne waited until the new air had been repeated several times, and then, giving full scope to his fine tenor voice, sang the first air again. It echoed through the silence of the night air, and then he waited, but in vain; the soft voice of the female was heard no more, and Gascoigne retired to rest.