

An aerial photograph of a rugged coastline. The left side shows dark, layered rock formations with vertical fissures. The right side shows turquoise water with white foam from breaking waves. The text is overlaid on black rounded rectangles at the top and bottom.

***JOHN ARTHUR
BARRY***

***A SON
OF THE SEA***

John Arthur Barry

A Son of the Sea

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Contact: DigiCat@okpublishing.info



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CHAPTER I

WHY TORRE LEIGH WENT TO SEA

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"HIT him again, Torre! harder, oh harder, ever so much! Mind! he's got a stone! Oh, the great coward!"

Thus shrilled a little girl as she danced, wild with excitement, around two boys, one considerably the stouter and heavier, who were doggedly pummelling each other in a secluded spot of garden hidden from the house by a thick grove of laurels.

As she spoke, the bigger of the combatants paused a minute to shake his fist at her, and his opponent, a much slighter and younger lad, seizing his opportunity, rushed in and planted such a shrewd fist on the other's nose that the blood began to flow pretty freely. Wild with the pain of the blow, he ran close up to the other boy, and, when only a foot or so away, with all his strength hurled a piece of rock he had picked up from a miniature mountain fernery close at hand. As luck would have it his opponent moved his head slightly, and the jagged stone, in place of hitting fairly, and probably killing him, only cut a shallow groove across his forehead. But in a second his face was streaming with blood. The little girl screamed with fright and ran away as the lad, wiping his eyes clear, sprang like a wild cat at the other's throat, got one arm around it, and bending his head down into chancery punched it with such hearty goodwill that it was soon of the same colour as his own, whilst the loud bellowing of the sufferer could be heard all over the garden.

At this critical moment there appeared on the scene a stout, bald-headed, elderly gentleman, dragged along rapidly by the little girl already mentioned. The pair paused as they took in the aspect of the fight, and the newcomer remarked placidly, as he put up his *pince-nez*, "Why, Edie, I thought you told me that Torre was getting killed! Now, as well as I can make out, I think my stepson seems in most danger, eh?"

"Yes, pa, it's all right now," assented Edie, cheerfully. "Look, Torre's punching him real good an' cumfable. That'll learn him to throw cowardly stones again—and tie crackers to my cat's tail."

"Well," replied her father, "I really think, my dear, that I must put a stop to it now, before your mother comes. Laban's roarings are enough to wake the dead."

But even as he spoke a voice was heard above the din of battle that made the pair draw back hurriedly, whilst on to the scene marched a tall, thin, hard-faced woman, who, catching up a garden rake that lay handy, commenced at once to belabour the smaller of the boys.

"Oh, you wicked villain," she screamed, "do you want to murder my poor Labie! Take that (whack) and that! (whack). Off you go for good, this time. Uncle or no uncle, Torre Leigh, I've done with you. Go and find a home for yourself where you like. But stay here to knock poor Laban about in this way you shall not!" (whack, whack).

Up till now the boy addressed had hung on to his prey like a bull-dog. But the round of a rake handle, with a furious woman at the other end to ply it, must take effect in time, so the lad let go his hold of the enemy, who at once sought

protection under his mother's wing, sobbing and blubbering, and with nose, eyes, and mouth showing the effects of heavy punishment. Meanwhile Torre backed away towards his coat lying on the grass behind him—a slim, active figure of a fifteen years old lad, with dark curly hair, brown eyes, oval face, and alert, upright carriage, an undeniably handsome youngster, showing something of blood and breeding, too, in the style of him.

His late opponent, now seated beside his mother, who, as she wiped his damaged face, paused every now and then to abuse Torre, was fully a couple of years the elder, stout, broad-chested, and of so light a complexion that even eyelashes and brows looked quite white, whilst the eyes themselves, of a pale milk-and-water blue, were shifty, narrow, and too close together.

"Torre," whispered a voice from the other side of the laurel bushes, and the boy, pushing through them, found a pair of soft young arms round his neck, whilst kisses rained on his discoloured face.

Edith Bovey was only fourteen, but tall for her age, and in appearance not unlike her cousin, Torre Leigh, possessing the same rich dark complexion, deep brown eyes, and slim figure. Indeed, they might have passed for brother and sister anywhere.

"I'm ashamed of you, Torre," said his uncle in a matter-of-fact sort of way, belied, however, by a kindly smile. "You're always in mischief, and always rowing with Laban. What your aunt will do this time I really don't know."

"Well, uncle," replied Torre, as the three walked away, "I can't help it. You see, he tied a bunch of crackers to Mab's

tail and set them alight, and nearly drove the poor thing mad. Then, when I tried to take 'em off he hit me. So, and so —why, you see, there was nothing else for it. And, I say, uncle, you know I've been wanting this long time to leave school and get away to sea. There's no peace here for me."

"Umph," said Mr Bovey, irresolutely, "I'd like you to have another year or two's schooling. Still, it's very evident you and Laban will never hit it."

"No, uncle," replied Torre, with a laugh, "we hit each other. He's always had the best of it, too, till to-day, when I got a few in that he won't forget in a hurry, I'll bet."

And the others, although they said nothing, seemed to derive satisfaction from the idea.

Mr Bovey, after many years spent in business as a wholesale grocer in Exeter, had retired with a fair competence to a pleasant house in the village of Newton Pomeroy, on the coast of South Devon. At that time he was a widower with one child, Edith. Then, in an unfortunate moment, he married the present Mrs Bovey, a widow named Freeman, possessing, besides a snug little income derived from money carefully invested in Consols, a boy by her first husband.

Mr Bovey's sister, Jane, had married and survived a young army officer of good family, and when she died she left a legacy to her brother in the shape of Torre and £100 in trust for him.

Open war had always raged between little Edie Bovey and Laban Freeman, but on Torre's appearance in the household, very much against Mrs Bovey's wish, matters became worse. At first Laban bullied the pair unmercifully,

making their young lives a burden to them, and supported ever by Mrs Bovey, of whom her husband stood in awe, both as regarded her tongue and her person, the first of which was sharp and tireless, the latter powerful to masculinity.

As time went on the condition of affairs at "Laurustinus Lodge" resolved itself into one of unequal but acknowledged hostility between Mrs Bovey and her son on one side, and Torre and Edith on the other, with Mr Bovey as a passive well-wisher to the weaker party, and an ineffective court of appeal to both. Until to-day the opposition had always scored. Therefore, now, Torre and Edie felt a qualified delight; nor was the former in any hurry to remove the stains of battle, albeit the rake-handle so vigorously applied to the small of his back made him walk with a shortened strut that seemed triumphant, but was emphatically not so.

"I suppose she'll be sending for us presently," remarked Mr Bovey after a while. And these few words sensibly diminished the quiet elation of his young companions, who looked at each other forebodingly as, with a deep sigh, his uncle continued, affecting a faintly jocular manner, "Better go to your room, Torre, and have a wash and a bit of a brush up before the court opens. It'll be a big trial this time, I expect."

But, to the surprise of all three, there was no enquiry held as was usually the case. Only, at dinner, Mrs Bovey's stern features seemed even harsher and grimmer than ever as she sat next to her son, whose swelled nose and discoloured eyes presented a notable contrast to Torre's handsome face, untouched except for a broad band of diachylon across the forehead where the treacherously flung

stone had left its mark. It was a silent meal, and an uncomfortable one, made more so from the ill-advised attempts of Mr Bovey to appear quite at his ease by casting inane little remarks on the deceptive calm that prevailed. Then, as it suddenly dawned upon him that perhaps this time he alone was to be the victim, and the coming night and its inevitable *lit de justice* cast its shadow over his soul, he all at once subsided. Towards the close, however, things livened up a little. Laban Freeman, made bold by his mother's presence, stretching out under the table, kicked Torre hard and heavily upon the shin, an attention that the latter promptly acknowledged by dashing a cup full of hot tea in the other's face.

"Torre!" exclaimed Mr Bovey in a tone of horror.

"Look what the coward did, uncle," replied the boy, pulling up his trousers and showing a nasty red mark on the leg. "Why can't he fight fairly, or else leave me alone?"

"Even so, sir," replied Mr Bovey as severely as he could, "the table is no place to settle your quarrels at. You had better go to your room." Torre had risen to leave. But Mrs Bovey, with an awful smile, remarked, as she got up and signed to her son, who was roaring with pain and rage, to follow her: "No, if anybody leaves it must be me and my poor tortured child. Pray do not disturb your nephew on my account, Mr Bovey. Let him turn your dining-room into a pigstye, if he likes. Perhaps he will throw something at me presently. Come along, Labie, dear."

"I'm sorry, uncle," said Torre, "but it wasn't my fault. And I'd better go away. You can see it's no use my trying to live

here. It's hard to leave you and Edie, though. I'll go to sea, uncle, whenever you're ready."

Torre spoke bravely; but, presently, what with the pain of the kick and the thought of leaving his uncle and Edie, both of whom he dearly loved, his lip trembled and the tears rolled down his face. Then the girl, putting her arms round his neck and her soft cheek to his, began to cry too, whilst old Bovey scratched his bald head in perplexity. He was fond of his nephew, and wished much to keep the lad with him. This, however, he soon saw was a manifest impossibility. Before next morning he had realised the fact more strongly than ever.

No one ever knew what he went through during the quiet night watches, but when he came down to breakfast he looked a ten years' older man than he had done the day before.

"Have you really made up your mind to go to sea, Torre?" he asked of the boy later on.

"Yes, uncle," replied Torre, looking up from "Midshipman Easy," and certain from the tone of the old man's voice that his time at Laurustinus Lodge was getting short.

"Yes, uncle. I think I should make a good sailor, and it seems to be a fine free and easy life, with lots of adventures and things in it."

"Umph!" replied old Bovey, doubtfully. "I don't know much about it. But I should say it was a pretty hard life myself, with more kicks than ha'pence. Think it over, Torre, my lad. I can get you a good place in a grocer's business in Plymouth. There won't be any adventures and stuff of that

sort. Still, it's a good, steady, paying concern. I made money at it. And then, too, you'll be near me and Edie."

But the lad's soul revolted at the thought of serving out sugar and plums, clad perhaps in a white apron, as he had seen the assistants doing in the very place he knew his uncle had in mind.

Although he was inland bred, having lived at Wellington under the shadow of Shropshire's Wrekin, he was not inland born, but, on the contrary, a son of the sea itself, born on the voyage home from India, and a love of the sea, although dormant, was instinctive in him, and needed only opportunity to become a ruling passion.

Yet the two years he had passed within sound of the sea had not given him any more practical familiarity with the life he was so eager to follow than if he had seen it for the first time.

Newton Pomeroy boasted a harbour, certainly, but it was a small one, and strictly in accord with the little coasting trade carried on there—a few schooners, slate-laden from Welsh quarries, or a grimy old brig or two with Cardiff coals, being all there was to represent the magic and mystery of men's doings in the great deep. But to Torre, sitting at times on the pier-head, and watching one of the old tubs transformed by the magic of the moon into a thing of beauty, her patched sails looking as if they were hollowed out of great pearls, her rusty sides, chafed rigging, and buckled spars etherealised by the soft effulgence as she swam slowly along in a sea of liquid silver, the scene appealed very forcibly, playing on the natural bent of the boy's mind, filled as it was by a long course of

indiscriminate reading, with a too ready appreciation of the romantic side of things. And with the romance of the sea Torre was saturated; dreaming dreams of a wild roving life; of hidden treasures in lonely wrecks; of "Summer isles of Eden" peopled by brown men and women, flower-crowned, where tall palms swayed to the spicy breeze, and the long moan of the breakers on the circling reef fell faintly on the ear.

But old Bovey only shook his head as Torre enthusiastically recited whole chapters of Michael Scott and Marryat and Hermann Melville.

"Yes," he would reply, "it sounds pretty and fine. But I doubt there's another side of the story, if somebody'd only tell it. To my notion, and from the bit I've heard, there's precious little romance left about a sailor's life, and as for those tropic smells your writers rave of, why, you'd find it hard to beat the inside of a big grocer's shop. But there, my boy," concluded the old man, "I see you're bent on it, so you shall have a try anyhow. I've been having a talk with Mr James, whose son is a sailor. He says the young man served his time in the D. D. and S. Line; and he also very kindly gave me a note to one of the owners. So, to-morrow, we'll go up to town and see if we can make arrangements. According to James, though, it seems a rather expensive sort of business, this going to sea, what with a premium and outfit."

Now that Mrs Bovey and her son had gained the day, the former treated Torre with the calm toleration of the victor. But Laban, like the ill-conditioned cub he was, became so profuse in his taunts, and so triumphant in his rejoicing,

that, but for Torre's wish to avoid making trouble for his uncle, there would assuredly have been more fights between the pair. As for Edie, she was inconsolable at the prospect of losing her playmate and protector, hanging about him and weeping incessantly, until her father said that she too might come to London and see the last of him.

CHAPTER II

"D. D. AND S."

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THE office of the Line was in Cornhill, and as Mr Bovey and Torre entered the long room, many clerks looked up from their books and grinned comprehendingly whilst the pair were shown into an inner sanctum where sat one of the partners of the big ship-owning firm of Messrs Derrick, Deadeye, and Scupper.

The last-named, who received them, was a white-haired, rubicund, jolly old gentleman, who treated the whole affair as if it were one of the finest jokes imaginable—this going to sea.

"Aha," said he, rubbing his hands together and beaming on them, "you are just in time. Another week and you'd have been too late. Now, I can put our young friend into one of our finest ships at once. And the captain! Well, sir, there are very few captains like him. He's actually a father to our young gentlemen. I do assure you that when a vacancy occurs with him, and it becomes known, we're simply pestered with applications. That's the vessel, Mr—ah—Bovey. What do you think of her, sir?" And he pointed to a large framed oleograph—one of a dozen that hung upon the wall—representing a noble vessel tearing along over an intensely blue and white sea, whilst a green lighthouse forked up over her port bow and a yellow headland over the other. "That, sir," continued Mr Scupper, impressively, "is our A1 clipper ship, the *Andromeda*, Captain M'Cutcheon,

just entering the harbour of Port Jackson, in New South Wales."

"Ah," replied Mr Bovey, who, with his glasses on, was scrutinising the picture, "dear me! You don't say so? Yes, very pretty, I'm sure. She runs the water like a thing of—er—um. Yes, exactly. And then, with a reminiscence of ships seen at Plymouth long ago, carrying a somewhat similar row of ports, the old gentleman startled Mr Scupper by demanding abruptly, "How many guns?"

"None, sir, none," replied the latter, gravely. "Those painted squares are only for ornament. We're peaceful traders, you know. And, as the poet says, 'Peace has her victories as well as war.' Yes; it's a noble profession. That's our House-flag you see waving from the masthead—blue ground with two red D's and an S in it, standing, of course, for Derrick, Deadeye and Scupper." Which, by the way, was not the meaning assigned to those capitals by the 'young gentlemen' of the line.

It presently appeared that the premium to be paid for the privilege of sailing as an apprentice—a word avoided as much as possible by Mr Scupper, with whom it was all "young gentlemen" or "midshipmen"—was £80 for a term of four years, out of which sum 5s. per annum was to be repaid to cover cost of washing. For the £80 the firm contracted to teach the "young gentleman" his profession, feed and lodge him, doctor him, and in fact do everything they possibly could except wash for him. Therefore the return of the five shillings.

Mr Scupper was commendably frank.

"There are," he said, "firms that charge more than twice as much per annum, and there are some who charge nothing at all. But, in the case of the former, their young gentlemen are let do pretty well as they please, and at the end of their time hardly know one end of the ship from the other, whilst in the latter they are allowed to go to the opposite extreme, and, by consorting with the crew, become quite the reverse of what we strive to make our—ah—midshipmen, that is, officers and gentlemen."

This was well delivered. Torre was impressed; so was Mr Bovey. And the latter, thinking that he could do no better for his nephew, presently found himself signing an Indenture, and then drawing a cheque for eighty pounds.

"Nice boy," said Mr Scupper, paternally pinching Torre's ear, as the business was concluded. "Shouldn't wonder if he turns out an honour to the Line. Tell you what I'll do. I'll give him a note to M'Cutcheon. He lives at Bow. The captain will advise him about his outfit, and tell him when to be on board."

This was kind; and when Torre and his uncle left the office they both felt as if they had made a friend; whilst Deadeye, presently entering, remarked to his partner, whose exclusive province the interviewing was: "Another hard bargain? More trouble than they're worth."

"Never believe it," replied Mr Scupper, earnestly. "They save a man's place. And £80 takes a lot of eating under the Merchant Shipping Act."

"Maybe," said the other, "but fifty per cent, of 'em never make sailors."

"This one will," replied Mr Scupper, with conviction. "I've sent him to M'Cutcheon in the *Andromeda*. A good captain and a good ship."

"Bah!" returned the other, "he'd do just as well in a Geordie brig, and better as an O.S.¹ in any fok'sle afloat. However, it's your fad. And I suppose, as everybody does it, we must. But I never cared for the business."

¹ Ordinary Seaman

Deadeye had himself been to sea in the days of his youth.

Torre found Captain M'Cutcheon and his family living in a small house at Bow, and, presenting his credentials, was looked upon, he thought, with some curiosity by the Captain and his wife. The former was a stout, red-cheeked, fair-bearded Scot of about fifty; the latter, a tall, thin young Englishwoman who nursed a baby, and seemed delicate.

"Ay, ay," remarked M'Cutcheon, as he read Scupper's note and glanced sharply at Torre's handsome face, "ye'll be comin' wi' me in the *Andromeda*. That'll make four o' ye in the omnibus this trip. I've got a son an' a nephew there too. But they're auld hands now—third voyagers.

Outfeet—ay—o' course ye'll be needin' one. Best go to Brown an' Sons in the Minorities. They'll tell ye a' that's necessary. Be aboard by Monday. There's plenty wants doin'; an' there's nae mair cats than there's mice to catch. Gude e'en till ye."

As Torre took his leave and went out into the narrow little passage, he thought he heard a feminine laugh, and some reference that he did not quite catch, to "young gentlemen-sylors."

Messrs Brown & Sons Torre and his uncle found particularly obliging people. There was, it appeared, a stereotyped outfit for (it was curious how the term would insist on cropping up) "young gentlemen about to embrace a sea-life." This was composed of three suits of uniform—working suits, suits for cold weather and suits for hot, white and coloured shirts by the dozen, caps without number, a revolver in case, with all accompaniments, a dressing case, toilet soaps, and other articles "too numerous to mention," but which filled a big iron-clamped chest, and were specified by the polite salesman as being absolutely necessary for all young gentlemen's comfort on board ship.

Mr Bovey looked astounded as he read the long list and saw the huge total of the bill.

"But," he objected, "the boy has plenty of clothes. Surely some of them would be available at sea?"

"Not unless they're specially made, sir," replied the shopman. "The other young gents'd only laugh at 'im if he had what they call long-shore togs on, sir. All midshipmen, sir, take one of our outfits. They've got a great name with seamen, sir."

Which was quite true, although hardly in the sense the affable counter-jumper imagined.

One other protest only Mr Bovey made. Seeing an item of "One dozen best white drill waistcoats, pearl buttons," he remarked, "Surely these things are unnecessary for a lad on board ship?"

"Yes, sir," was the reply, "quite so. But then they're not for sea use, sir. Often the young gentlemen on these crack

clippers get invited out, sir, abroad, to swell 'ouses, an' a white vest looks real nice on an 'ot tropick night."

This was the old gentleman's last stand. Wishful that Torre should not be stinted in anything, or be unlike other boys in his belongings, he submitted to what so many parents and guardians often submit in the useless and unnecessary spending of scores of pounds where less than a quarter of the sum would be ample; and in Torre's case this was the more to be regretted because, by arrangements at his uncle's second marriage, barring a provision for Edie at his death, all the old man's fortune went to Mrs Bovey. At that time the Shrophire Leighs were in flourishing circumstances, and old Bovey had never imagined any necessity could arise by which he might wish to provide for his widowed sister and her boy. More than ever did he feel how foolish those settlements had been when he saw Torre's few pounds melting away so rapidly, and knew that without many of the bitter scenes which he dreaded, he was powerless to make good the shrinkage, as he would willingly have done, out of his own pocket.

Of course Torre, boy-like, was delighted, especially when his smart suit of navy-blue cloth with its shining anchor-buttons came home; and as for Edie, his appearance in uniform for a time, almost reconciled her to losing him. Neither she nor Torre were aware that one of the articles of the treaty insisted upon by Mrs Bovey, and weakly agreed to by her husband, was that Torre should come to Laurustinus Lodge no more, but stay at London lodgings between his voyages. This, however, as subsequent events proved, mattered nothing at all. There was nearly a week for the

embryo sailor to air his new clothes in. And during that time—the happiest perhaps of his life, so far—his uncle took the two children about to every place of amusement he could think of, despite impatient letters from Mrs Bovey.

But at last the day came on which Torre had been ordered to report himself on board, and the three made their way to the South-West India Docks, where the *Andromeda* was lying.

After not a little trouble they found her, looking as much as possible unlike her picture in the Cornhill office. To a sailor's eye she would have seemed a pretty enough little clipper, although with promise of proving a wet one. But to their untrained vision she appeared small and dirty beyond belief, as she lay there, her decks littered with stores, cargo, and lumber of every description. Fowls tied in pairs waiting to be cooped and cackling shrilly, pigs grunting in their sty, masses of vegetables blocking the gangway, and through all, the angry rattle of a donkey-engine and the shouts of the lumpers as they received and stowed away cargo, made up a rather bewildering scene to the visitors.

"Dear me, my boy," remarked old Bovey, "I hardly think this can be the ship. Certainly there's the name on her back. But she's not a bit like the one Mr Scupper showed us. Probably there are two *Andromedas*, eh?"

"Now, sir," said a sharp-spoken, red-whiskered, but pleasant-faced man in a suit of faded serge, coming up to the party where they stood on the poop, having made their way on board, "can I do anything for you—passengers, I suppose?"

"No, my man," replied old Bovey, "but I should like to see the captain, who would doubtless tell us if this is *our Andromeda*, and, if so, show us where my nephew's room is?"

Turning, the man saw Torre's cap with its glittering new band, and the house-flag worked in silk and gold. Evidently repressing a strong inclination to laugh, he replied, "Oh, I see, this must be the new apprentice the captain told me of. I'm the mate. That's the omnibus, down there on the main deck, where the youngsters live. And now, my lad," he continued, "the sooner you get those togs off and a working suit on, the sooner I'll give you something to do. I expect you'll find your donkey in the omnibus." And the mate rushed away to the hatches, leaving his hearers quite bewildered.

"Most extraordinary!" exclaimed old Bovey, staring around. "A donkey and an omnibus! Torre, do you know anything about the matter? Or is the man mad?"

"I think the omnibus is where I am to live, uncle," replied Torre, leading the way towards the little house on the main deck that the mate had pointed out, "but the donkey's a puzzler."

Looking in at the door of the house, Torre caught sight of his own chest, bulking big in all its bravery of varnish and the bright black paint of its owner's name, in strong contrast to three other low-set, rope-handled, bruised and battered, but workmanlike boxes. Stepping over the tall door-sill, the three entered, and the place seemed crowded. Mr Bovey glanced about him in dismay. Altogether there were six bunks, two on each side, one above the other. Two

cupboards and a door took up the fourth side. In the bunks lay rolled-up mattresses, new and crackling, also bright tin quart-pots and pannikins.

"What a hole!" exclaimed Mr Bovey.

"Oh, Torre," said Edie, "there must be some mistake, it's only a very little bigger than Carlo's kennel at home."

As she spoke a big square-set youngster dressed in a suit of dirty dungaree and a glengarry cap bundled in amongst them. As his eye fell on Torre's uniform, he sniffed and grinned, whilst saying with a strong Scotch accent, "If ye're the new apprentice, the mate says ye're to start packin' they onions an' carrots awa' under the boats on the skids. Ye'd better open yer donkey an' pit some worrkin' claes on."

"This is the—ah—room, then?" queried Mr Bovey, incredulously.

"Ay, this is the 'rume,' sure enough," replied the other, grinning more than ever, "where Drive, Distress an' Starve stows their hard bargains. Dinna ye see the kists—donkeys they ca' 'em at sea? An' here," punching one of the beds, "is the donkeys' breakfasts. *He,*" nodding at Torre, " 'll be one o' Brown an' Sons saxty-five pund outfits. *His* matteras 'll be hair—ay, I thocht so. Shavins is just as gude, an' mair economical by a long way. Ay, ay, sir!" And the speaker, with a yell that made Edie jump, was off like a shot.

"What a coarse-looking boy," said Mr Bovey, as Torre, having unlocked his chest, began to hurriedly turn over its contents, tossing out uniforms, white shirts and dress-neckties in the search for something fitted to the business in hand. The nearest he could find, however, to "worrkin' claes," just then, was an Oxford shirt, at seven and

sixpence, "as *per* account," and a pair of fine drill trousers with straps at the bottom for riding, "our own make at fourteen shillings."

"I expect I must get into these, uncle," said he, doubtfully. "I don't see any blue things like the other fellow had on. And I suppose you and Edie had better go. It's no use your staying now. But I'll come up to the hotel to-night, if I can get away. We sail to-morrow, you know."

Whilst Mr Bovey and his daughter made their way ashore again, the old gentleman shook his head more doubtfully than ever as he said, "Well, Edie, it may be all right. But I must say it's hardly what I should have expected for the money. I'm afraid, my dear, that Torre's about to buy his experience too dearly. I ought to have got somebody who knew to look after him, and enquire into matters for me. However, I suppose they'll make a sailor of him—that's one comfort. But it's an expensive business."

Besides the lad Torre had already seen, and who, it seemed, was the captain's son by a first wife, two others, both Scotch, turned up at dinner-time. One, Campbell, was about seventeen, the other, Munro, of nearly the same age; M'Cutcheon was a couple of years older. And Torre, as they sat and eyed him, passing remarks on his attire, and grinning at the evident difficulty he found in eating with his plate on his knees, felt that probably he was booked for a pretty rough time of it.

Of course there was no table. Torre, on being told that as a "first voyager" it was his duty, had gone to fetch the dinner from the galley. There the cook had flung a lump of lean fresh roast beef and a dozen or so of potatoes,

unpeeled, into a small wooden tub known as a kid. Carrying this to the omnibus, he had returned for three hook pots, which the cook filled with a dark, milkless, greasy-looking compound called tea. This, with a loaf of bread, formed the dinner. Not a very tempting meal perhaps, but the hearty young appetites left very little remaining for supper.

Rather to his surprise, Torre was now ordered to wash up the plates, forks and knives, and to put them carefully away in the locker or cupboard. He was, it seemed to him, at once installed as servant to the other three.

Nor that night, when he asked permission of the mate, was he allowed leave ashore. The *Andromeda*, too, he learned, was to go out on the top of the morning's tide, therefore it was quite possible he would not see his uncle and Edie again.

CHAPTER III

A YOUNG GENTLEMAN-MIDSHIPMAN

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TORRE'S last job was to sweep the decks fore and aft. It was dark when he finished, and he had then to run sharp for the supper whilst the other three sat on their chests and looked at him sourly. So far his day had been a round of ceaseless drudgery. Had he known how many similar ones were before him he would, likely enough, have walked ashore and steered due west to the "Tavistock," where his uncle was stopping.

At dinner-time he had used a piece of canvas for wiping the plates with. That had disappeared, and he was at a loss. "Take one o' yer fine white sarks," said Campbell, with a laugh. "It's all the use ye'll ever hae for them."

In the end Torre was obliged to use a clean new handkerchief, "best Irish linen at 2s. 6d."

The three now opened their chests and prepared themselves for going ashore, there being, apparently, no objection to their doing so. And Torre was astonished to see the difference in their outfits and his. Plain suits of blue pilot cloth with bone buttons, knitted guernseys, and socks and sea-boot stockings, for heavy weather wear—dungaree for fine—flat Scotch caps, and rough flannel shirts, everything for use, and nothing for ornament. Perhaps some ten or twelve pounds' worth altogether.

Tired, and feeling dirtier than he had ever done in his life, Torre made his bed, after a fashion, noticing, as he did so, that he was the only one who indulged in the luxury of

sheets and pillow-slips. Then, turning in, he blew out the double-spouted oil lamp that hung from the ceiling, and, whilst feeling very much inclined to cry, fell asleep and never awoke till a rough hand shook him, and a rough voice bade him rouse out and go to the force-pump.

The dawn was just breaking, and already the *Andromeda* with a tug ahead of her, was slipping down the river. A chill, cheerless scene it was, and a cold wind shrilled through the bare rigging with a hollow harsh note that struck strangely on the lad's ear as he worked away at the pump-brakes with Munro, whilst the second mate and some of the men washed the decks.

At Gravesend, he heard some one say, they were to make fast to the buoys and take powder on board. There, too, the captain and his passengers would join the *Andromeda*.

After the decks had been washed down and the usual breakfast-fetching and scullery business got through, the second mate, whose name was Phillips, a rough, sulky sort of fellow, evidently at some time promoted from the fore-castle, roared out to Torre: "Hi, boy, lie aft now, and polish this brasswork-binnacle, skylight-gratin's, everythin'. Come, sling your long carcass about, or you'll get shifted!"

Pounded bath-brick and oil were supplied to him by the steward, a pale, unwholesome-looking man with a pasty fat face, out of which a great carbuncle of a nose fairly glowed. He spoke with a vile Glasgow accent, and utterly refused to give Torre any cloths.

"Nae, nae," said he, "the shep doesna find ye in ony sic looxurees. Ye maun jist bang about for rags o' yer ain. Brawn

an' Co., nae doot, hae providit ye wi' lots o' stuff that's nae use for aught else ava. Awa' wi' ye noo!" And Torre, seeing no help for it, tore up one of his shirts to make "polishers" of. Munro was steering, and the other two were aloft, busy about something.

As Torre rubbed away at the brass band and boss of the wheel, Munro asked, "Did ye pay a premium to come to sea, youngster?"

"Eighty pounds," replied Torre rather dolefully, as he looked at his grimy hands and clothes.

"Good Lord!" said the other. "What fools some folk are, to be sure? Eighty punds for the privilege of bein' loblolly boy to the sailors!"

"But surely you paid, too?" asked Torre in amazement.

"Not one of us," said the other. "Mair sense an' less money than ye've got. We're the skipper's apprentices, a' three of us. First year we got nothin'. Now, this last one, we're gettin' a pund sterling a month. Pay to come to sea! Not much! Nobody'll teach ye anythin', here, if they think ye've money."

Lamp trimming was Torre's next occupation—side-lights, binnacles, riding-lights, the lamps out of the first and second mates' berth, and his own. And as he sat on the main-hatch surrounded with these articles, polishing them, cutting their wicks and filling them with fresh oil, his clothes and hands blacker and dirtier than ever, the ship arrived at Gravesend; and to his delight, amongst the first to step on board were his uncle and Edie, who stared in astonishment as they saw his occupation. Then, noticing the boy's flush of shame and embarrassment, the old man said kindly, "They're making

you useful, eh, Torre? Can't begin too soon, you know. I suppose this is only a bit of preliminary to see what you're made of."

But Edie was angry, and said, frankly, "Oh, Torre, dear, is this sailors' work? And look at your hands and face and clothes all smudgy! Father, won't you speak to the captain about it?"

"It's all right, Edie," said Torre, bravely, but with a gulp in his throat, "I expect it's what everybody's got to do when they first come to sea. It isn't nice, certainly. But, perhaps, it's as well to be able to know how to manage such matters."

Not for worlds would he have told them his real thoughts and feelings, or confessed how his soul loathed these first experiences, of which, too, something seemed to warn him he had not yet seen the worst.

The decks were crowded with people; there was no privacy anywhere. So, presently, Mr Bovey and Edie said good-bye, the latter kissing Torre heartily before all hands, despite lampblack and oil. "Good-bye, dear," she whispered, "I shall have no one to take my part now against Laban. Oh, Torre, I'll always think of you and love you. I'll write to Sydney, and—and—" But here poor Edie broke down, and was led away sobbing by her father, whilst Torre, in not very much better case, returned to his lamps.

When, or how, the ship eventually got off and down the river, Torre never knew. He was kept far too busy. All day long it was boy here and boy there, until his legs were almost too tired to carry him. He was called to get coals for the cook out of the forepeak; to help the steward to stow

stores away in the lazarette; to feed the pigs and fowls; in fact, do as much of the menial dirty work of the ship as one pair of hands could effect.

Off Dungeness the tug left them with a fair wind, and Torre saw sail made on a ship for the first time; and was taught that his duty consisted, on such occasions, of pulling and hauling at, and then coiling up, ropes. That night, on watches being chosen and set, he found himself in the second mate's—the starboard one—along with Munro, the captain's nephew. The other two lads were taken by the chief mate.

Munro felt it hard to have a new chum with him, and did not forget to tell Torre so, after coming down from furling the mizzen top-gallant sail, where our lad had not been of much use to him. It was his first journey aloft, and bewildered by the motion, the height, and the flapping and banging of the sail, he had found it took most of his time to hold on. Also he lost his cap. In fact, during the next few days he lost them all, and was obliged to swap a pair of new boots to Campbell for a glengarry which would not blow off. Of course this was an imposition, but, as Campbell remarked drily, "There's a big differ, ye ken, atween sea prices an' lan' prices."

So far his companions were not actually brutal towards the newcomer. But they were very far from kind. Nor did they even attempt to teach him anything. Indeed, rather the contrary, for if he asked a question, the probable answer was a jeer, and a scoff to the effect that gentlemen's sons had no business at sea. Certainly Torre was unlucky in that his lot should have been cast in company with specimens of

those lower middle-class Scotch boys with regard to whom it has been popularly said that they serve the same purpose in the same place as do good intentions. But he had no choice. He would, however, have done far better as an ordinary seaman in the fore-castle amongst the men, have learnt more, been treated better, have saved his money, and not been made altogether a scullion and a rouseabout of. The captain never by any chance deigned to speak to him. As for the passengers, of whom there were five, they probably thought it was part of the usual routine—as it really is, even in far more important lines than the D. D. and S.—for the youngest apprentice to scrub out the officers' berths, feed pigs, carry coal, trim lamps, be at the nod and beck of the men, and generally remain in a state of dirt and discomfort, watch in, watch out. So there was nothing really very unusual or personal to him, particularly in the menial duties that took up poor Torre's every minute on board the *Andromeda*. The other three had been through it, but without feeling it so keenly, not only because of constitutional indifference, but by reason of their having all commenced their sea career together, thus being enabled to divide the labour. The plain fact of the matter is, that in very many cases the apprenticing of a boy to the sea is an utter sham, except in vessels specially devoted to the training of them, and then the expense is generally prohibitive. And it is nearly time parents and guardians should know the real state of affairs, and how heavily they have to pay that their sons and wards may learn the correct way to clean out a pigstye, trim a lamp-wick, and use a broom and scrubbing-brush—all arts, it would seem,