

will not wish that these wretched adulterators were, themselves, doomed to chicory water (without sugar) for the term of their natural lives, lest the punishment should appear too great for their offence.

THE MARSH FOG AND THE SEA BREEZE.

IN TWO CHAPTERS—CHAPTER THE FIRST.

THE mere mention of French prisoners brings back, full and clear before my mind, the details of one of the most memorable days of my childhood. I never knew exactly how old I was. Nobody ever told me; and I do not remember that any one ever asked me: so that I never inquired; and I doubt whether my poor mother ever had such an idea in her head as the number or name of the year. She could count as far as twenty, because our fish were sometimes reckoned by scores; but I doubt whether she ever heard of hundreds of anything. So that if I had asked her, she would only have said that I was two years younger than my brother Jos, or five years older than the baby. At a guess, however, I should say that I was about six when the French prisoners were removed from the barracks on the moor. At that time, it seemed to me very long indeed—so far back as scarcely to be remembered—when my "Dad," as I have ever called him, used to put his hot, greasy hat over my head and face, so that I was frightened and cried, and stamped. One thing more he did, which made me hide myself behind the boat, or in the house. He pretended to be "Bony." I did not know what Bony was; but I knew it must be something very dreadful, by the faces that Dad made, and the roar that he gave, when he said he was Bony. One day, when he was not thinking of me, he told my mother that Bony was coming; and that there were to be great fires all along the coast when he came. In my agony at hearing this, I threw myself down in the sand, and rolled. I suppose that the sight softened my mother's heart, for she pulled my father by the sleeve, while she called me to her, and let me hide my face in her lap. When I looked up, my father was laughing; so I ventured to ask him what he would do if Bony came.

"What would I do?" said he, taking the cork out of his tin bottle, and lifting it to his lips. "Why, I would ask him to take a sup out of my can."

This was a great relief to me, for it gave me the notion that Bony was a man; a thing which I did not know before.

It must have been soon after this that the terrible night came when my Dad was carried away by the pressgang. I was less afraid of the pressgang than of Bony, because I knew something of what it was. A young man from our hamlet had been seized by them, and I saw them in the boat as they went

away, and thought they looked very much like other people in boats. But yet it was terrible when I woke from my sleep in the middle of the night, and heard the bustle. I often waked from my sleep, frightened or uncomfortable. I was sometimes very hot and stifled, and sometimes very cold: and I had bad dreams; and now and then, on winter nights, the sea would come roaring and dashing almost to the very door: and Dad would get up, or make my mother get up, and see how high the water was coming, or whether the tide had turned: and it frightened me to feel the wind rush in when she opened the door, or to see the foam dancing about in the dim light of the lantern, almost on the very threshold: but no fright had ever been like that of the night when Dad was carried away. There were growling voices outside; and one loud, and clear, and commanding; and my Dad swore more terribly than I had ever heard him before, though I believe he swore about something or other every day. My mother's crying was the worst. She cried aloud, so that it took my breath away. I do not think I cried at all; nor did Jos. He had been asleep beside me, under the folds of the hot, heavy old sail that was our bed. He was now sitting up in his ragged little blue shirt, with his eyes all bright, when nobody stood between him and the lantern, and his face all white and fixed. The pressgang did not stay very long; and when they were gone, my mother threw herself down on her face on her bed, and cried and moaned, without ever thinking of shutting the door; so that the wind blew in, and the door swung about; and then baby began to cry sharply. Jos and I wondered whether we dared get up and shut the door. At last, we slipped out from under the sail, and ran and did it together. Then we took up baby, and rocked him to sleep; and I suppose after that we went to sleep again ourselves; for I remember nothing more about that night.

I am ashamed now to think (and yet I do not see how we could help it) how pleasant the next morning was, and many more mornings. Jos and I played about, without being afraid of anything. Nobody gave us knocks on the head: nobody made faces and roared like Bony; nobody swore at us. It is true, we had not now the fearful pleasure of helping to push off the boat, that Dad might go to sea, and not come back the whole day. It was a fearful pleasure, because, when my mother sent us to help to push the boat off, it was a chance whether Dad did not kick us out of his way; but he sometimes was kind, and put his great hand over mine, to make believe that I did the pushing; and then, he always went away, further and further out to sea; and it would be many hours before he came back again. Now, it could no longer be so. Our boat lay upside down on the sand. Sometimes the sun shone hot upon it, so that

what paint there was left rose in blisters, and scaled off: and sometimes the rain poured down upon it, and we got under it,—Jos and I, and the baby. We liked to be there, snug on the dry sand, when the rain did not last too long. We liked to hear the rain pelt over our heads; and it was a better shelter than the cottage, because the thatch there was so bad that the rain was always coming through. The smell there was so bad, too! The thatch was worse than all others put together. It rotted, and dropped in pieces, sometimes in the house, and sometimes outside; and the bits that were not full of vermin were mouldy, and sickening to come near. So Jos and I liked the boat, and were glad it was now never stirred; though my mother cried sometimes when she looked at it, and said we were little fools to sit laughing there, when no bread came out of the boat any more.

After a time, the boat came to be used again; but never at hours when I could help to push it off. Jos and I used to find it wet in the morning; and my mother said it had been out trading. She did not bid us be secret about this trading; because we knew nobody except the children belonging to four or five other cottages, like our own; and the families who lived there traded too. I doubt whether the grown people knew that there was anything wrong about their way of trading; and I am sure the children did not. My mother took me to sleep with her, and put the goods under the sail, which was still Jos's bed. Jos's bed looked all the handsomer for being raised by the packages beneath it; but he did not like it so well; and when our hut was very full of goods, used to steal out, and sleep on the sand, under the boat.

It is best to speak plainly, I think, that there may be no secret about how some people live. The truth, then, is, that I was never, really never, in a state of bodily ease, owing to the dirt in which we lived. I did not know this at the time. I first became aware of it in after years, when those changes had occurred which caused me to become clean in my person. I am now quite sure that there never was an hour of my childhood in which my skin was not irritated so as to make me more or less cross, or restless, or low-spirited; and this was not the worst. If I had not headache, or some distinct pain somewhere within my body (which was very often the case), I was always suffering from a feeling of heaviness, or weakness, or of indistinct uneasiness of my whole frame—miserable feelings which I now know to belong to an unwholesome state of the skin. It seems to me now, that Jos and I were never really clean. We often dabbled in the sea-water, up to the knees and elbows; but this only made the salt stick upon the fish oil that had covered our skins first, and made its way into every pore. Our clothes were fishy; our hair was fishy, rough and tangled; our eyes smarted with the salt that seemed to

gather upon us from the air and the earth, as well as the water. My breath felt hot; my sleep was troubled; though sometimes grievously wanting food, I seldom relished what I ate; and it was seldom that I felt light and gay. I suppose it was because everybody about us felt the same, from living in the same way, that nobody complained. In our little hamlet, there was no cottage where the floor was clean, and the building wholesome; where the clothes were washed with soap, or people's skin knew the comfort of soft water, and of being made pure, and flexible, and comfortable, by its pores being open, and the circulation of the blood free and easy. If any one household had been in this happy natural state of health, others might have learned the lesson; and I have in my own mind no doubt that they might have enjoyed an amount of ease and good spirits, and cheerfulness of temper, which would have been of more consequence to their happiness than money, or any of the good luck that they complained of the want of. They used to sit on the half-putrid sands, the women as well as the men drinking spirits because they felt weak and low, and saying that there was no use in catching fish when there was nobody to buy it. That there was no market for their fish was, they felt, a hardship.

Almost the only customers we had had for fish, for a longer time than I could remember, were the French prisoners at the barracks on the moor. It was only the cheapest sorts of fish that they wanted; but they took enough to give Jos and me many a walk to the barracks. In the pilchard-season, my mother went with us sometimes; pilchards were so cheap, and the poor fellows wanted so many more than we children could carry. When we carried fresh mackarel, they used to be on the watch at the rails, and beckon, and call, and make signs so eagerly, that it was droll to see. They were very knowing, too, about whittings and haddocks; but the red herrings were the wonder to us. I never knew any people care so much for red herrings; and surely no other people in England made red herrings go so far. Instead of eating their allowance of bread as people usually do, they used to make it into soup. Or, if they could get a little pearl-barley or barley-meal, they would stew and stew it, till the water really looked as thick as soup; and then they would make balls or little dumplings of their bread, crumbled with some morsels of red herring, minced as fine as pins' heads; and when these were set swimming in the soup, the poor fellows used to look as satisfied as if a piece of roast beef was before them. Now and then I stood to see them eat their dinner, and I dare say there might be some wonder in my face, or perhaps I was munching a piece of dry bread, at the time; for they used to smile at me, and lay their hands on their stomachs with a pleased look, to make me understand that their soup had done them

good. Certainly it looked and smelled very good; and the biggest men seemed, after one basonful, to have had as much as they could eat; but when we told my mother about it, she used to give us each a bit of bread, and divide a herring between us, and say it was just the same thing which way we ate it, and she saw no use in the trouble of stewing. I did long to try sometimes, when I was almost as hungry as ever after dinner; and there was always a fire of driftwood burning on the sands, and I could have managed with our iron pot: but my mother said she would not have us go near the fire. We often did, however, when she was busy elsewhere. I have roasted a potato in that sly way many a time, though I never could be sure of time enough to try the experiment of stewing my bread.

One day, when Jos had been up the moor, he brought home two plovers' eggs; and we roasted them, and got behind the rock to eat them. I do not remember that we were at all ashamed of such sly doings, or that we ever had any shame about anything; but I do remember, heartily, the goodness of those eggs, and how I used to dream, almost every night, of finding plovers' eggs on the moor. We were often missing for hours, Jos and I, while out on this hunt; but we tried for so many months in vain, that we grew tired, and gave it up. We were so very ignorant as not to know that the eggs of wild birds are not to be found all the year round.

One day, the news spread that the French prisoners were going away. They were to be moved higher up the country; because it was thought that Bony was really coming at last, after having been talked of so long; and it was not safe to have any Frenchmen so near the coast as that he might let them out of prison, and have them for soldiers. We were all very sorry at first about their going. The grown people said there would be nobody now to buy any fish; and the children had liked the amusement of seeing them cook, and cut pretty toys with their knives out of common meat bones; and also, of hearing their talk to each other, which sounded a curious jabber to us. I cried desperately because my mother would not let me go to see them off. As I said at the beginning, the day of their departure was among the most remarkable of all my childhood. But my mother had some trading to do, and she wanted us to help. She had known for some time that soldiers were coming to the barracks, after which the secret trading—in plain words, smuggling,—would be difficult, if not impossible to manage. But few days more of comparative liberty remained, before the soldiers would be coming down to watch and defend the coast against the French; and of these few days, the most favourable was that when all eyes—even those of the Preventive Service men—would be fixed on the departure of the prisoners.

I well knew what my share of the day's

work would be;—a dull one enough. I happened to have remarkably good sight; a gift which is highly valued on the coast. If few or none of my other powers were trained, that one was. My father had had it when he was young; but I believe his spirit-drinking had spoiled it. He could neither see so far as I could with the natural sight, nor fix a glass steadily, for some time before he was carried away; and he used to put me between his knees, and make me count the sails out at sea, and find out when anybody was in the marsh, or coming down from the moor. Now I knew I should have to watch while the smuggling sloop was creeping in, under the shore, and while our boat was stealing out to meet her; and while the goods were landed. It was a favourable day for the business, but all the more dull for me, from its being a calm sea fog. As I sat on the rock which rose behind our cottage to the height of forty feet or so, I could see pretty clearly over the dark moor, and could just make out the barracks, with the crowd collected there: but I could see no sail on the water, and had lost sight of the bows of our own boat, while I could still see neighbour Glassford, who was steering her, sitting in the stern. I could hear the dipping of the oars, after he had disappeared; and when they were returning from the sloop, I knew it by the dipping of the oars again. I did not see the sloop at all; but I knew she must have been very near,—not only because the boat came back so soon, but because I am sure I heard the murmur of voices, careful as smugglers are to speak low while about their business.

After the second return of the boat, I could see through the fog the dim figures, moving like spectres, of my mother and Jos below the rock, carrying in the goods, no doubt. It was very dull on my perch, looking out upon nothing at all; so I thought I would go down and help. Before I had taken the first step down, I fancied I heard something very sweet—far, far away. Then I lost it; and then it came again,—some music, swelling gently on the still air. It was military music. In straining my sight, I saw something red on the dark moor, beyond the barracks. It was near noon now; and there was some break in the fog which allowed the sun to touch the furthest ridges; and in a minute or two, I saw a little flash. The soldiers, with their bayonets, were certainly coming to the barracks almost before the Frenchmen were gone. I skipped down the rock to tell my mother this. I hoped she would let me bustle about and help her, as the soldiers would so soon be down upon us; and she did let me carry in some large loaves, with a hard crust, which I knew well enough had little crumb within, but plenty of silk stockings. We ranged the brown loaves on the shelf; and then Jos and I hung a great net about a square package of silks, and doubled it over, so that anybody would have sworn that we had a pile of nets

in the corner. A small barrel was packed with ribbons, with a layer of cod sounds at the top. The tobacco went into holes under the floor, under a loose plank. My mother was puzzling her brain to find a place for the largest package of all,—a bale too big to go under her bed, or look like any article of furniture, when a faint gleam of sunshine touched the floor, through the dim pane of glass which was our only window.

“There, go, child!” said my mother, giving me a push to the door. “We shall be caught because you won’t mind your watch. Now, hold your tongue about the fog. ’Tis noon, and the fog is breaking away. If the boat does not come quick, the sea will be clear. There, go, and keep a look-out.”

She thrust a piece of bread and a lump of cheese into my hand, and put her gin-bottle to my mouth, giving me a sup which almost strangled me. I think she must have been paid for her services partly in the gin which came over with every batch of goods; for, however hungry and ragged we might be, there seemed to be always plenty of gin on the shelf. I ran up the rock, rather giddy, and sat down to sober myself with my bread and cheese. The music was playing again—sweet and lulling from so great a distance. The sun was coming out warm. Where the fog had flaked away, the calm sea was glittering. The sloop was bending away from the land, and the boat was fast making for the beach. I was very sleepy; and I should have been fast asleep in another minute but for the usual noonday plague,—the multitude of flies, which were one of the worries of my life. I know now that they were one of the punishments of our own dirt. I have seen many dirty places since swarming with flies; but I never saw anything to compare with the myriads that teased us, almost the whole year round. The ofal on the shore was covered with black clouds of them; and so was the cleanest looking sand; for the fact was, the sand itself was poisoned. As for ourselves, we let them cover us when we were awake and busy; but they would not let us go to sleep. I was now fighting with them, somewhat passionately, when I suddenly discovered that they had done us a very great service, by keeping me awake.

My heavy eyes were struck with the sight of two red coats in the marsh, where few coats of any colour were ever seen. This marsh was a long stretch of shore, into which the sea flowed twice a day, leaving it fit for no purposes, for either land or sea. It was possible, for those who knew it as well as Jos and I did, to cross it. We knew where the rock came up, here and there, to afford a foothold, and could skip through it in pretty good time, much as we saw the whinchat hop from stone to stone. But it was never with my mother’s good-will that we went into it. It was not only dangerous for young children, from being plashy and spongy, and with a

considerable depth of bog in some places, but few people went into it—at least in the warm months of the year—without being ill afterwards. This was the real reason why the townspeople at the inner end of it got no fish, while we got no custom. In that town of Dunridge there were (as I have since seen) whole courts and alleys full of poor people, who would have feasted cheaply on pilchards and mackerel in the season; and gentry, who were always wishing for cod, and soles, and whittings, but could never get any; while, on the other side of the marsh, we were burying whole cart-loads of fish, because we could not sell them while they were good. The gentry got such fish as they chose to have from more distant places, and the poor went without, and we had no sale—all on account of this foul tract of waste land. My mother used to say, that all the illness we ever had was caught there; and the doctors at Dunridge said nearly the same of the sickness in the town. If the wind blew into the town from the marsh side, the doctors were sure to be busy; and at last, as the bog grew deeper, and the salt made a thicker crust upon the stones, and the slime of rotting weeds was more offensive, and the osprey hovered more frequently in that part of the sky, showing that there was animal death below, people left off crossing the marsh altogether, for such an object as buying or selling fish. Jos and I could not always resist the temptation of going to play there. We liked to blow the thistle-down, and to pull out the marsh-cotton from its catkins; and to get bundles of rushes; and to look for gaping mussels and crawling crabs on the slime, while the sea-gulls were wheeling over our heads. We did not remember till the headache and sickness came, that they would be sure to come after that particular frolic. After this account, any one may understand how strange it was to me to see two soldiers in the marsh.

They were picking their way, striding or hopping from one bit of rock to another, but certainly tending towards me. I was wide awake in a moment, and saw that it would not do to let them come within sight of our smuggling transactions. I gave the childish sort of whoop which was our concerted signal. Jos popped up his head.

“Soldiers!” said I. “Make haste, Jos; I’ll go, and lead them out on the moor.”

When once children have tasted the pleasure of misleading grown people, they are, perhaps, more sly than their elders. I well remember the satisfaction with which I now set forth to mislead the soldiers. No peewit on the moor could more cleverly entice away the stranger from her nest of young, than I now set about diverting these red-coats from the place where my mother was in sore dread of visitors. I slipped down upon the marsh, and turned north, when the strangers went south-east. When they saw me stooping, and apparently busy gathering

the stiff stalks of the salt-lavender, they called, and for some time I pretended not to hear them. At last I turned, and then I hopped and skipped towards them readily enough. They asked me where I lived, and I pointed to the town. They asked me if I was not afraid that Bony would catch me, if I came so far from home. This frightened me very much; but I said I did not think Bony was anywhere here. They told me that if he was not here now, he would be very soon, and that they had come to prevent Bony catching little girls and boys. I asked how they were going to prevent it, and they told me that they were come to live at the barracks; that some of them would always be keeping watch on the rocks, or along the hills, and that they were to make great fires, that might be seen many miles off, whenever Bony should make his appearance. They wanted now to find a convenient place, the top of some rock, where such a fire might be made; and to see how a good path could be made along the shore, without interruption, that soldiers might always be walking and watching, and that the townspeople might feel safe. I promised to show them a very fine rock, where they might make a big fire, if they would follow me; and I turned towards the moor; but the strangers were so perverse that they would look along the coast first. They did not mind getting wet, I saw; they were so earnest in examining the place. They consulted together, and looked about, and went to the edge, where the wet part became a quicksand on the beach; and I gathered that they thought that by some means the swamp must be made passable. At last, my rock caught their attention; and nothing would serve them but they must go up it. I wanted now to slip away, and run round below to give warning; but they took me between them to show them the way, as they said, and amused themselves by swinging me over the muddy places, till in a few minutes we were all on the rock. The moment I obtained my release, I shot away homewards. It was a great relief to me to find my mother sitting before the door, mending a net, and Jos cleaning out the boat in a harmless sort of way; for the soldiers were peeping down upon us from above, and nothing could pass without their seeing it.

"Why, here is a village,—a fishing village!" we heard one of them say. When they came down, they asked me why I did not tell them there was a village here; to which I replied that they found they could see it for themselves. They shook their heads with great gravity; told my mother that I had pretended to come from the town, and that they were afraid I was in partnership with "Bony." They asked my mother if that was her husband's boat; and when they had heard the sad story about my father, they went up to Jos, who was still in the boat, and asked him if he had brought home anything.

"Here, look," cried my mother; "if you

want any lobsters, here are some now just out of the boat."

"Lobsters," said one of them. "Ah! that's good. Let's see your lobsters."

My mother produced some which she had, two days before, despaired of selling.

"Why, they are as red as we are!" cried the soldiers. "Do you think we don't know fresh lobsters from boiled?"

My mother coolly protested that the boat had not been back an hour, and that the lobsters were just out of it: two assertions which were literally true; for the lobsters had been offered for sale on board the smuggler, and not received. I heard the strangers say to each other that they had got among a parcel of cheats, and that they never had been fixed in such a neighbourhood. The town was full of beggars; the country was moor or swamp, and this filthy village seemed a good match for the rest.

By this time, the fishermen's wives began to show themselves from their respective houses; some bringing out fish for sale, and all carefully shutting their doors behind them. Most or all would willingly have cheated; but one or two had sense to perceive that the soldiers knew fresh fish from stale. They bought a little; examined the situation of the hamlet thoroughly, expressed their disgust at the dell which stretched back from the cottages, between the rocks, and disappeared at the further end of it. This dell might have been very pretty; and a stranger now and then, coming upon it from behind, pronounced that it was very pretty: but it would not bear a second look. Heaps of garbage lay there; and it was so overstrewn with the dirt of every sort that was thrown there by everybody, that only patches of the natural green of its really good soil showed themselves in places. Many a load of unsaleable fish was cast out there, to save the trouble of burying it in the sands.

In the evening, down came two officers from the barracks, evidently directed by our visitors of the morning. The lieutenant carried a glass; and long and careful was their survey of the points of the coast, and then, their gaze out to sea.

"There are four of them," said I; "and two more south-west."

"Four what?" asked the lieutenant, fixing his glass again.

"Four sail to the south-east," said I.

"There's only three," declared Bill Oulton, positively, coming up breathless, to obtain his share of the stranger's notice.

"There are four," I protested. "Two brigs . . ."

"To be sure," Bill put in; "two brigs and a schooner."

"And further out," I declared, "so that I can see only her topsails, there is a large ship."

I appealed to the lieutenant to know whether it was not so. He handed his glass to his companion, owning that he could not

see one. Neither could the ensign ; and this seemed to us very odd. We did not know that it requires practice to see all that the human eye may perceive out at sea. A neighbour, old Glassford, of long experience, was called ; and he declared me to be right, owning that he doubted whether any eyes in the place but mine would have found out the fourth sail, without being told where to look. The officers praised my eyesight, and said they must take me into the service ; and then, if I would tell them when Bonaparte was coming, they would fight him for me. I had never heard the name at full length before ; and while I was puzzling about it, Glassford ventured to correct the officers, telling them that he supposed they came from some way inland, but that we on the coast, who must know best about the enemy, called him Bony. The officers laughed, and hoped the wise men on the coast would fight him as well as the soldiers, whatever they called him. They asked me if I would have a little red coat, and enter the service ; to which I answered that I had something else to do than to go amongst people who could not see what was before their eyes.

“What have you to do? Do you catch fish?”

“To be sure I do.”

“Does she?” they asked of our neighbour.

“A little matter of shrimping, perhaps,” he said, with a patronising smile.

The officers asked me if I would get some shrimps for their breakfast the next morning. As the tide would serve, I readily promised to do so. They desired me to bring them to the barracks alive, because they did not want curious shrimps that were caught ready boiled. We might be very clever in catching red lobsters ; but they preferred the blue sort, and shrimps all alive. By this I knew that the soldiers had put them on their guard against us.

They afterwards examined every cottage on the outside, and asked some questions about the stones on the beach, and the rocks above. They borrowed a hammer, and knocked off some bits of the rock. They made faces at the dell behind, but asked for a spade, and, with their own hands, dug a spit here and there. They counted the men and boys in the place ; or, rather, they tried to do so, but could get no true answers—so afraid were we all that they were somehow connected with the pressgang. They were exceedingly surprised to find that we knew no more about Dunridge and its people than if the town had been a hundred miles off. They pitied the townspeople for having no fish, and ordered some for their own table. Their chief surprise, however, was to find that we had no vegetables, except when a cargo of potatoes now and then came by sea. As we had none ourselves, we could not help them to any. Certainly, their notions of things were very different from ours ; so much so, that as soon

as they were out of hearing, my mother and the neighbours agreed that they wished those might be real British soldiers, after all, and not some sort of pressgang, or people belonging to Bony. As for me, I felt as if something great was going to happen. I got my mother to mend our shrimping net, and tumbled into bed, with plenty of marsh slime between my toes, and a head somewhat troubled with wonder as to whether the officers would buy my shrimps, and let me come home again, or whether they would put on me a little red coat, and make me stand all day long on the rocks, to look out for sails, and tell when Bony was coming.

MR. BUBS ON PLANETARY DISTURBANCES.

ALTHOUGH Lord Rosse's telescope will never let us put a man in the moon again, yet we may fancy one in the sun, without much fear of the six feet reflector reaching him ; and, having got him there, all the telescopes in the world cannot prevent us from calling him Mr. Bubs, and making him an inquisitive, patient, pains-taking mortal, endowed with an odd fancy for always being able, when he opens his eyes, to look for anything he wishes to see in the exact place in which it is, whether it has moved since he went to sleep, or not.

The very first thing, then, that Mr. Bubs does, when fairly settled in his new home, is to look about him ; but, like many others, his wonder and attention are given entirely to things far distant ; he cares very little for any object, however curious, which is close at hand ; and cannot be made to see anything worth admiring in that with which he is familiar.

Instead, then, of examining the sun as he ought to do, and telling us something about it, he falls to wondering what all those lights are which are moving round him in the ring, a good way off.

Now, Mr. Bubs being a bold man at a theory, fancies these must be the Solar Policemen going their rounds ; that it is the bulls'-eyes of their lanterns which he sees, and that they are walking behind one another (though in rather a disorderly manner) on that which, in his earthly school-days he was taught to call “the ecliptic plane.” One light attracts his attention very much ; for it has a slight reddish tinge in it, and Mr. Bubs concludes, that although it is certainly not the biggest, yet the distinction in colour marks it as the Superintendent of the Solar Police with his lantern and bull's-eye. Singling him from the rest, he watches him going his rounds, and calls him Mars.

Mars appears to walk on with a steady pace in a circle round the sun ; and, after a moderate lapse of time, to return to the place where he first set out. Mr. Bubs, before composing himself for a nap after his long watch,

but I was told it all—in fact, the whole scene was described to me, and many such, by one of the policemen who attended the van, and was, no doubt, indignant at so much trouble, expense, and formality for so insignificant a result. He was a very large-made, powerful man—has since left ‘the force,’ and gone as porter on the Great Western Railway.”

“But, good heavens, Mr. Tweezer!” exclaimed I, “can a wise and paternal government devise no better machinery than all this for the prevention of juvenile and infant crime? Prevention do I say?—why there’s no attempt at prevention in this. It is simply a costly arrangement for inflicting small punishments, the effect of which may not, perhaps, be of much longer duration than the period of confinement—unless, indeed, it tends to harden and exasperate, and render the culprits more cunning for the future.”

“You are quite right,” replied my friend Tweezer, “as to the view you take of these trivial and numerous punishments of the infant thieves; but you are not doing justice to the arrangements of the Tothill Fields Bridewell, if you suppose they do no more than this. In this prison are hundreds of women of all ages, as well as hundreds of boys of all ages, from six to fifteen; many of these are ordered imprisonment for periods of two or three years; and when this is the case, they are each taught to read and write, and are instructed in some trade, according to the aptitude they evince. In many instances—for picking pockets, you know, my dear sir, requires an expert hand, especially when they contrive to take everything a gentleman has about him—in many instances, therefore, the prisoners became skilful workmen, so that on leaving the prison, they are able to earn an honest living. And this, at least fifty per cent. of them are found to do.”

“But, my dear sir,” said I; “excellent and comforting as all this is, which you tell me, it really seems like beginning at the wrong end. First, the paternal government allows its children to become thieves without a single effort at prevention; and then, when prevention is a work of very great difficulty, and requires a great expenditure of money and time, to produce a doubtful result—or only fifty per cent. of ultimate good—then, only, the idea of education, instruction, and training in moral and personal habits, seems to occur to the sagacious brains of our legislators. Look at the scurvy sum granted for what they dared to call ‘National Education!’—and look at the taxes I pay for all sorts of other things! Protection, forsooth! and taxes for the ‘Public Service!’ why are my contributions to the public service of so little good to me, in respect of the safety of my personal property, that I must needs pay, in addition, the sum total of a gold watch—a silver snuff-box—two handkerchiefs—a diamond shirt-pin—a pair of gold spectacles—a box of Tolu lozenges, and a handsomely bound

copy of Izaak Walton’s ‘Complete Angler,’—in order to be protected, in certain statistical ratios and degrees, from a similar occurrence in future, which may, nevertheless, happen to-morrow!”

THE MARSH FOG AND THE SEA BREEZE.

IN TWO CHAPTERS.—CHAPTER THE SECOND.

WHEN I went out to my shrimping, the next morning, I saw the last of the extreme quietness of our beach. Up to this time, it was no unusual thing for Jos and me to have the long range of shore entirely to ourselves; so lazy were the few people who lived there, and so rare was it for any stranger to come near us. After this morning, I never knew it so again. I slipped out of the house before anybody else was awake, carrying my net and basket. It must have been very early; for it was mackarel season then, when the days are long; and, when I looked back from the first headland, my shadow reached almost as far as the houses. I thought I would go over the headland, instead of stepping into the sea to go round it. It was rather further; but I liked the feel of the warm sand where the sea vetch and the slender crop of grass grew, up the steep. It was pleasant treading for bare feet. Two or three little lambs browsed there at this season; and shining green beetles now and then ran about in the sun: and perhaps a rabbit might cock up its white tail. I was soon at the top; and there I found one of the Preventive Service men. His back was towards the sea, and his eye and glass fixed upon the barracks, as I suppose they had been the day before when we were busy about our trading.

He would not answer me for some time, when I asked him what he saw; but at last he put down his glass, and told me that there were to be great doings immediately, which would make a vast alteration in the neighbourhood. He did not know what to think of it; but he supposed we had only to obey, as soldiers and sailors should. It was a new thing, as far as he knew, for soldiers to do building work, and the like; and we should see how they would manage it. A messmate who had strolled up to us here put in his word, saying that it was a regular part of a soldier’s business, to build up walls, and dig ditches, and do any work that was necessary for defence; and this was a time and place when such service was much wanted from soldiers who were sent to defend the coast. I asked what they were going to build; and I was told “a sea-wall:” and I was as wise as ever.

As I went on my way the shrimps were very kind, and came into my net in swarms. I soon filled my basket. It was so very heavy that I soon bethought me of throwing out all the very little shrimps, and returning them to the water. When I had done this,

the pools looked so tempting that I could not help going in again; and I got plenty more good-sized shrimps. When my shadow had shortened considerably, so that I thought it was time to be turning my face towards the barracks, I made haste back, round the point of the headland. I had heard a dull sound of knocking before; and now, when I turned the point, I saw several soldiers, in their gaiters and small-clothes, but without their red coats, very busy within sight. Some had pickaxes, and were hewing away at the rocks; a few had barrows, and were gathering stones from the beach. The lazy cottagers had turned out sooner than usual to see the sight; and some of the boys were helping to pick up stones.

My mother was looking out for me impatiently. She had obtained a quantity of mackarel from a boat just come in, and was going with me to the barracks, without having said a word of it to the neighbours. What a load she could carry on her back, in our largest creel! In addition, she and Jos took between them another heavy basket. I had enough to do to carry my shrimps. We left poor little Peter, with a great piece of bread in his hand, to take his chance on the beach. My mother locked her door, and carried away the key, and set Peter down on the sand, with a heap of gay pebbles about him, and a bit of rope to play with, and trusted he would come to no harm. She gave one look back as she left the beach, and said she thought that, with so many people about, he would be safe; and she would make all the haste she could back again.

We walked so fast that we were sadly hot and out of breath when we came upon the moor. My mother stopped to take a sup out of her bottle, and to give us a mouthful with our bread, which we ate as we walked. When we came near the barracks, there were no more the French prisoners, with their eager faces looking out through the rails, and their curious jabber. What we saw through the rails was a line of soldiers on parade; and what we heard was the loud voice of the officer in command, and the jingle of the muskets, as the men changed arms. We soon found that our market was greatly improved. We sold half our mackarel, as soon as the parade was over, and nearly all my shrimps. Another piece of luck befel us. The baker's cart was there, delivering bread; and the baker was willing, for the consideration of a couple of mackarel, to carry Jos and me and the rest of our fish to Dunridge, where we had no doubt of selling off everything. We heaped up the basket in the cart, and saw my mother set off homewards at a brisk trot, with her empty creel on her back, to see as soon as possible whether little Peter was safe. She had not forgotten to leave with Jos the fishy canvas bag into which we were to put our money. The baker told us we must take good care of it, for he had never known such

a place as Dunridge was for beggars and thieves. He was obliged, he said, to buy off some of them with a daily allowance of crusts and old bread, to prevent his door being infested by them; and they were growing so saucy now as to say that they did not like stale bread, and should soon make him give them new. His wife was afraid to sit alone in the shop, while he was away, even with the half-door bolted—the poor creatures were so abusive. He said the butcher over the way was under the same difficulty. It was unknown what he gave away every week in odd pieces of meat and bone: and yet the poor sickly wretches looked never the better for it.

Jos asked why the rich people did not take care of the poor, as they ought to do? and the baker answered that he believed the gentry did all they could. They had to pay dearer for their meat and bread, to repay the tradesmen for what was extorted from them; and they could not go ten yards from their own doors, without being beset by abusive beggars, and mobbed if they did not give. The ladies had almost left off taking walks; and even when they went to church, they were not free. The church bells brought out the pale-faced, ragged, desperate-looking beggars from their cellars, and close courts and alleys, to tread on the heels of the gentry as they went through the churchyard, and wait for them when they came out. Last Sunday, indeed, he had seen something which almost made him doubt his eyesight. Some young ladies were in a pew by themselves, and a ghastly-looking man leaned over the door, putting out his hand, and even touching the nearest lady on the shoulder, as she bent her head over her prayer book. The baker said that he had lost no time, after observing this, in finding the beadle; but before he could get to the pew, the ladies had given silver to the beggar, to get rid of him. The constables were afraid to do much, they were over-matched, and the magistracy were perplexed and timid. Nobody saw how the matter was to end; for Dunridge was a wretchedly poor town now. His own opinion was that the unhealthiness of the place was more to blame than the war. People had no strength or spirit to work, when they were having the fever and ague so often; and there was less and less of work and wages, every year, from the decay of the place. It hurt the baker so much to think of this, that he vented his vexation in giving a sharp cut to his horse, which made it spring forward, knocking Jos and me against the back of the cart, and spilling some of our slippery fish.

I was quite ready to cry before, so frightful was the prospect of going among the beggars and thieves; and now I roared, and said I would get out. I believe Jos was nearly as much frightened. The baker must have greatly needed to ease his mind, to pour out all this to two children. Perhaps it had done

him good, for he began to console us, said he had no doubt we should sell our fish well; and that we had only to get into the houses, when we could, so as not to show our money-bag in the streets; and he finished off with the consolatory declaration that we looked so like thieves or beggars ourselves, that he did not think any of that sort of people would hurt us.

When we alighted at the entrance of the town, it would have been a satisfaction to me to stand in the middle of the pavement, and roar, as my family well knew that I could; but I was too desperately alarmed to try. I only whimpered; and I believe this and our bare feet, and tattered clothes were powerful in obtaining for us the patronage of the cellars and small courts. The food we had to sell, really was cheap and excellent, and such as the poor of Dunridge would have been glad of an opportunity of obtaining often; but I think the novelty had something to do with the favour we met in the very first street. Haggard faces, and half-naked forms popped up from under the pavement, as it seemed, when Jos strengthened his heart to cry "fresh mackarel." One woman carried away two on half a plate; and another hoisted a boiler from below for two more. A child who could scarcely walk held out a farthing in one hand and stretched out the other for a fish. Two or three cook-maids appeared with dishes at back doors; and Jos then got behind the door to bag his half-pence unperceived. One gentleman whom we met, told us to follow him; and when we got to his house, we found he was a school-master; and he bought so many that he paid us in silver. When we had sold the last, the baker saw us from his door, and asked us if we did not want some bread, as it was such a long way to go home. He had no idea that we should attempt the short cut by the marsh, the townspeople had such a horror of that place. He said he should never see us again alive, if we went into that poisonous hole. This was not the sort of threat to frighten us.

What a pity it was that this marsh was in the way between us and the Dunridge people, who had shown themselves so eager to buy our fish! Jos's bag was so heavy with half-pence, that it tore his old jacket; and then we agreed that, if we came again, we would ask our friend, the baker, to give us silver for our copper: as for our coming again, we agreed that it should be very soon. Excited by our gains, we fancied we could bring a load of fish this way, by swinging a creel between us; wading where we knew the depth, and resting where a bit of rock afforded room. Yet it did not seem easy to me now to cross it without anything to carry but an empty basket. I lost my footing several times, and fell into the slime, so that Jos scolded me; but I could not help it. At first, he refused to lend me a hand, but when he found that I could not get upon the rock

where he stood, and when I said I was giddy, he became suddenly very kind, and helped me all he could. I think he remembered what the baker said, and thought I might have come once too often. I was beginning to feel very sick, when a whiff of air passed me, which I think of now as one of the pleasantest things that ever happened to me. The warm, sharp, penetrating, smell of burning tar came on the breeze, and it cured my sickness for the moment. I plunged and staggered on, revived now and then by another whiff, and then turning sick, and feeling strangely again. The last thing I remember is, that I heard some knocking near, and saw some people moving; that Jos pulled me by the arm with all his force to make me get up, while I seemed to be sinking in chilly water, and that I heard gruff voices over me, and Jos saying that it was Molly, and that she would not get up. It seems to me that there was some flickering of flame, but whether it was from my own intense head-ache, or real fire before my eyes, I cannot say. Some of the soldiers were beginning the sea-wall that day, driving piles, and sounding the quicksand, and making preparations for laying the broad foundation of stones, from which the embankments were to arise. They were burning tar, not only for their piles, but to lessen the danger of the bad air of the marsh. The working party saw Jos and me from a distance, and came to the rescue. One of them covered me with his coat, after wringing the water out of my old frock (which finished tearing it to pieces), and carried me home.

My mother's conclusion from the adventure, was that there was bad luck in dealing with the Dunridge people, and that she would never send fish there any more. Considering the weight of Jos's money-bag, and her pleased surprise in laying hold of it, this ought to be considered a remarkable proof of her affection. I knew nothing about that, however, nor about anything else for so long a time, that that summer has always remained a perplexing one to me. All I know is, that I lay in a miserable state, which seemed to me to be stretching on for ever and ever. I was almost too feeble to move under the rug; I could not lie still; I was too weak to cry aloud, and yet I was always crying. The fish that my mother kept under the bed smelled so, that it seemed to suffocate me; and when any body opened the door, my mother scolded if it was not shut again directly. I believe thus much was all real, and so was little Peter's crying, which went through and through my head. But there were worse things that were not real. For hours together, I thought I was going down and down in the sea, and could never get to the bottom; and then it seemed as if somebody pulled me by the hair, and tugged, and pulled, and could not get me up again. I saw terrible monsters, and they, too, seemed to pull at my head.

One day I was so scared that I tried to run away, and got to the door, and stood there a minute before I fell. My mother was coming when she saw me, and she and another woman took me for a ghost, as I stood on the door-step, and set up such a shriek that some of the officers, who were within hearing, turned to see what was the matter. One of them happened to be the surgeon from the barracks—a kind gentleman, as I had afterwards good reason to know. He came at a moment when my mother was so frightened that she let him do whatever he pleased, and frightened indeed she must have been to let him do such things as he did.

She must bring out a clean sheet. She had not such a thing as a sheet in the world; nor was there one among all the cottages. Presently a sheet was borrowed from the nearest Preventive Station. While the messenger was gone about this, the doctor had all the fish taken from under the bed, and the whole floor swept. My mother did this herself, at the first word, lest her smuggled goods should be found out. When the fish was all cleared out of the house, there was still the thatch. The doctor shook his head as he looked up at it, and said he could not answer for anybody's life under such a roof as that. All they could do was to stretch a sail above the bed, as near the roof as they could fasten it. This prevented insects and bits of mouldy thatch from falling upon me as I lay; but it could not cure the smell. To my mother's great surprise (considering the season of the year), the doctor said, I should have a better chance with no roof over me at all, than with such a thatch.

I really think she believed that the doctor meant outright murder when he put me into a tub and poured cold water over me. Still I got better; and one day, after a long sleep, when I woke, I knew quite clearly who they ail were, and what they were saying; and I did not fancy that the sea was in the house, or that I was in the sea; or that there were any monsters about the bed. I heard my mother say that I had been bewitched, and that the doctor had washed out the spell: and then the neighbours said, that, after he had once done it himself, anybody else could do it; and that she must not let the evil imp get a hold again; but, as soon as I began to toss and look wild, she must wash out the spell again. She must also let the door stand wide, that, if the imp got in again, there might be plenty of room for him to flee, when the water began to dash. For their part, they promised to leave a free passage, by staying away from the door.

The days grew shorter and shorter, and still I could not walk at all. My mother used to set me down, like a baby, on the door-steps, in the sunny autumn mornings; but the evenings were long and rather dreary, with the firelight flickering on the rafters, and I with nothing to do but to lie on the bed and

watch it; and doze, and wake again, till my mother came to bed. One evening, when I was in a pretty deep doze, I heard such a shriek as I shall never forget. It made me shriek before I knew what I was about. Then came a terrible clamour;—men's voices shouting, and children screaming, and the women crying aloud for the Lord to have mercy upon them. Then there was a blaze of light all abroad, which shone in at the window; and this convinced me that "Bony" was come at last. I fixed my eyes on the door, to see him come in. But I could not bear this long. Even if I met him by the way, I must go where every body else was. So I slipped off the bed, all trembling as I was, and held fast by the barrel and the chest that stood against the wall, and got to the door. What a sight it was! The great fire on the rock above our house was kindled; and it blazed away, so that every pebble and sprig of sea-weed on the beach could be seen as in broad day. The boys kept throwing on wood—and a good deal that had been tarred; and up shot the flame, each time, as if it was in spirits at being fed. Then a light appeared on a headland to the east, a great way off: and presently another, so far off that it looked like a flickering yellow star. And the same to the west. The whole coast was lighted up, to receive Bony, at last. I looked round for him; but I saw only faces that I knew. Well, as I knew them, they looked very terrible. My mother was quite wild. When the night breeze brought the clang of the church-bells from the town, where every bell was ringing the alarm, she put her hands to her ears. She sat down, and hid her face in her apron, and kept shaking her head in her own lap, so that I was afraid to speak to her; but, at last, I put my arms round her neck, and said, "Mother, where's Bony?"

She looked up with a dreadful face—all drawn with terror.

"Let's run away," she whispered in a hoarse voice, which I heard in my heart, through all the roar of the flame.

"I can't run," I whimpered, sinking on the sand.

She caught me up in her arms, gave Jos a box on the ear to attract his attention from the beacon-fire, ordered him to carry Peter and follow her, and made for the little dell, which led up into the country. Before we had fled half through it, another dismal yell from behind, and our own name shouted, made us look round. Some brands from the beacon had been blown upon the roof of our cottage, and the thatch had caught. That rotten thatch was doomed, and the whole dwelling with it! My mother put me down, and wrung her hands. Between the fear of Bony, and that of losing the smuggled goods, she was well nigh distracted. But the smuggled goods were not wholly, nor chiefly her own, while her life was: so she took me up again, and continued her flight. Jos, how-

ever, was of a different mind. He made little Peter take hold of my mother's apron, and ran back to save what he could of our goods. By the help of the neighbours, every thing was dragged out before the rafters fell in, and nothing was lost but the tobacco, which was poked in under the boards. When our neighbours and partners, Glassford and Oulton, perceived that Bony was not yet actually on the beach, they ventured to secure the goods in their own houses, and hide them cleverly before the officers should come down.

The officers were not long in coming. Amidst the other sounds of that awful night, were the gun fired at intervals from the Preventive Station, and the military music approaching from the barracks; and again (what seemed to me as terrific as anything), the jingling and crashing of the heavy waggons, that came down the lanes from the inland farmsteads, to carry away the women and children, and most valuable goods. My mother hailed two or three of these; but the drivers only inquired whereabouts the French had really landed, and whether we had seen them; and then told us that we must wait, and they would pick us up as they returned.

"Don't, mother, don't!" I said at last, when her loud crying became more than I could bear. "Don't cry so loud. Bony is not here."

She told me that I did not know that; and the words froze my very heart. I hid my face on her shoulder; and of the rest of the night I remember nothing.

The next was a brilliant autumn morning, and I saw the wide stretch of coast, and broad expanse of sea, for the first time for some months. We were brought down to our own beach again. When the heaving sea, with its glittering tract to the eastward, was seen without ship or boat upon it (for the boats were drawn up along the whole coast where the beacon fires had been visible), it was supposed that the French fleet of gun-boats had passed on to the westward: but by degrees it came out that the whole was a prodigious mistake. The soldiers, and the country people whom they had got to help them with the sea-wall, had been in the habit, all the summer, of burning tarred wood, as a safeguard against the stench of the marsh; and on concluding their work, some of the lads had fed the little fire into one so far visible from a distance as to be taken by the townspeople for the kindling of a beacon. Out rang their bells; forth went the news, gathering force and fulness at every step; and the consequence was the firing of the beacons all along the coast. It was a consolation dear to the hearts of many, to their dying day, that the Prime Minister was waked out of his sleep the next night, to hear about our town, and our beacon, and our headland; and that our doings were heard of by King George the Third himself, who was,

in fact, almost as much interested in Bony's landing as we were. We were a prouder set of people from that day.

Except that a heap of charred wood lay where our cottage had stood, the scene looked to everybody else just the same as usual. But to me, it was wonderfully changed. Since I had seen it last, the sea-wall had been built, and the whole marsh had quite changed in appearance. No more water had flowed in, and a vast deal had drained out. There were no glittering pools and little streams, and the land was almost as dark as the moor. Along its seaward edge was a broad, firm walk, on which sentries were now placed, and by which we could reach the hard sands to the west in a few minutes, without wetting the soles of our feet. I was told that the townspeople, and the boys of the whole neighbourhood, were so eager about the new work and pay, and so sorry when the sea-wall was finished, that it was thought that another work would answer; and a causeway to the town across the narrowest part of the marsh was planned. It was likely to pay well in time by a very small toll, and as the fishermen along the coast would traffic in the town every day of the week. The shops would have their custom; and the townspeople would be glad of a constant supply of fish. The doctors said the wall and causeway would be paid for presently, if toll was taken from the average number of persons that would have had the fever if the marsh had remained as it was. The mere money-saving from abolishing so much illness, though it was the least part of the good, was such as to justify a free expenditure on such improvements.

What the doctors said was confirmed by experience. From that time, the fever lessened, year by year, as the marsh dried up, till at last (and that was before I was in my teens) it became a matter of public information and serious inquiry when a case of fever occurred in the town. Before that time the marsh had changed its aspect again and again. It was very ugly while it was black, with brown water trickling through its drains, and rusting the sands at low water. Then it was covered by degrees with a woolly bluish grass; and in July we saw it dotted over with rushy ricks of meadow hay, such as cattle would not take if they could get anything better. Then we saw more and more beasts grazing there, and patches of it were manured upon trial. When once a turnip-crop was taken off one corner of it, the improvement went on rapidly. The rent that it yields is rather low still; but I have seen more loads of potatoes and turnips carried from it, than of manure carried to it: and in a few years there were thin crops of oats waving in the breeze. As the fish-carts pass to the town, along the clean sandy causeway, with hedges and green fields on either hand, it is difficult to believe how, within the remembrance of many residents of Dunridge, the

sea eagle hovered over the fishy morass, the only creature that gathered any other harvest there, than that of disease and death.

But I have got on a long way from the morning after the invasion, as the people used to call that panic.

How we who were burnt out were to be housed, was the first question. On a hint from the doctor, I was kindly received in the nearest Preventive Stationhouse. My mother and her other children found corners in the neighbours' houses for a time. In a week's time, I was quite able to take care of myself; and in another week, I was at play on the sands again, and even earning money, in a curious sort of way, on the sea wall. The station-house was as clean as a quaker's meeting; and in a fine air, of course. By day, I lay on the dry grass in the sun; and by night, I slept—and oh! so soundly—on a little mattress, in the corner of a white-washed room, where the floor was cleaner than our plates at home ever were, and where the window was open all day, and left a little open at the top, all night. The first time I walked down to the beach, I met the doctor and another of the officers; and I heard him say that he could never have brought me round entirely, if I had staid among fish garbage, and under rotten thatch; and that it was a good thing for me that we had been burnt out.

"This is the child that has such a sharp sight, you may remember," he said to the other officer.

"What! this little wretch?" asked the lieutenant. "I should not have believed that she was the same child."

"And yet she is plump, compared with what she was ten days since. And I dare say her eyes are as good as ever, by this time."

The gentlemen tried me, and found that at any rate my sea-sight was better than theirs, and that I could see more without the glass, than they could with it. After a few words of consultation, they bade me follow them to the sea-wall; and then the lieutenant promised me a farthing for every sail I could make the sentinel see; and a halfpenny for every sail that he could not see, but that I could bring two witnesses to avouch. This seemed to me strange at the time; a waste of money, though I was to get it; and to some it might seem strange now, after the many years of peace, during which we have been released from looking out for an enemy from the sea. But in those times a strange sail was the daily and nightly thought of all people on the coast, and especially of those who were charged with the defence of our beloved native shores. A good sea-sight was a qualification worth paying for in those times.

The soldiers had managed to make gardens of the bog that surrounded the barracks, and I longed that my mother would do as the

soldiers and the other fishwives did, that we might now and then taste fresh vegetables with our dry bread and salt fish. But she did not like the trouble. She sat down anywhere on the sands to clean her fish, and left the stuff all strewed about where she had sat.

We did not see why we should not have a garden of our own, where our sea-weed, ashes, and garbage might grow vegetables for us, without being carried so far as the barracks. I told Jos that if he could get anybody to go into partnership with him about a garden, I would try and get a place in Dunridge, where I might learn to make good soup, and to cook and manage so that we might have something better to eat than dry bread and salt fish.

Perhaps few children of our age would have thought of this, in other circumstances; but, to speak the truth, we were growing very unhappy about my mother's bottle; and we had lately been gathering up notions of comfort which were all the more striking, because they were new.

The notion was so cheering, that I ran over to Dunridge as fast as my feet would carry me; and at the same moment Jos was running as fast in the contrary direction, in an equal hurry about the other half of our scheme. He soon found a man in the Preventive Service who offered to go into partnership with him in his scheme of a garden.

The dell was the proper place; and there Jos and his friend soon fixed on a promising bit of ground, with a south-east aspect; and Butter, his partner, desired Jos to be collecting materials for a fence which would keep out the rabbits, while he obtained the owner's consent to begin to dig. He knew the gentleman well, from having had many a conversation with him about the smugglers and the defence of the coast; and he was sure there would be no difficulty. There was no difficulty. It was a new idea to the proprietor that any thing could be done with that corner of his land; and he was pleased that the experiment should be tried. The rent of the first quarter acre was the merest trifle; but not so since the neighbours have asked for gardens there too. From end to end of that well-tilled dell, now covered with heavy crops of garden produce, and smelling sweet with the beanflower and fragrant pot-herbs in their season, every yard of ground pays rent to the owner, whose father was wont, to the day of his death, to point out Jos to his visitors, when they came down to the coast, as the lad who made the first move towards turning a sink of corruption into a wholesome and fruitful garden.

I have said how eagerly I ran towards the town, with my head full of my new plan. My only idea was to apply to the baker. I had no success the first day; for, besides that the baker's wife did not want a little maid

who needed to be taught everything, no one would think of taking me while my feet were bare, and my clothes in rags, and my hair all tangled and rusted with the weather. My mother was not really poor, I knew; and I coaxed her into a bargain with the butcher's wife, by which a certain quantity of fish was to be delivered in consideration of a suit of clothes for me. My own history has nothing to do, from this time, with that of our hamlet, as I never lived there again. It is enough to say that I have found that "where there's a will there's a way;" that I learned not only to cook, but to read and write, and a good deal besides; and that, having been first a scholar, and then a teacher in the Sunday School of Dunridge, when Sunday schools were first heard of there, I married the best of the teachers, who became master of the Orphan Asylum.

I had not been married long when I had occasion to go to the hamlet, one fine August evening. It was a pleasant walk now by the causeway. There was a low blossomy hedge on either hand, over which one looked upon clover and turnip fields, with the sea beyond, now all golden and glittering with the sunset. On the other side, the reapers were busy, cutting wheat—about the first, I should think, that had been grown where the marsh had been. Where the grain had been carried, the children were driving flocks of geese from the moor into the stubbles, and dressing themselves up with poppies and blue corn-flowers. If they had ventured hither ten years before, they would have been smeared with slime, and sick with stench, and would have gathered nothing better than rushes. The change was striking enough to me, though I had watched its progress: much more so was it to another, who came suddenly upon it.

I was sitting with my mother on the shingle, just as the pale moon came up over the headland, and Peter, now a stout lad, was helping Jos to draw up the boat, after a successful trip, when, chancing to turn my head, I saw a sailor, with a bundle over his shoulder, looking down into the dell from the further end. He came along, staring about him like one bewildered; and he stood still and listened when he heard the creak and jingle of the harvest waggon.

It was my father; and I think we knew him before he was sure that he knew us. He was much aged, but not nearly so much as my mother, who was, indeed, taken by strangers for our grandmother. I saw that my father was shocked. With his children he was strangely shy at first. He could not order us about, and knock us about as he used to do; and I think he was awkward as to how to speak to us.

I left him sitting beside my mother, and looking about him in great amazement, and asking many questions of the lads, while I cooked his supper. He liked his supper well, and when he heard that I was going to

Dunridge on foot that night, he was more puzzled than ever. We told him there was a short and pleasant way now; he would go part of the way with me to see it. He was in the midst of telling me that, during all his wanderings and adventures, he had never once set eyes on Bony, when we came in sight of the harvest fields; as he looked over the hedge, I gathered him a wild rose, and he put it in his hat, saying, it was the last thing he had ever thought of to have a posy from that place. After we had said good night and parted, as the town appeared before us in the moonlight, I heard his whistle so long, that I am sure he must have gone home much more slowly than I did. I saw him twice again before he had to go afloat. He told me that he had not brought home much money, but that he had left what he had with Jos (as Jos was clearly a steady young man), desiring that it might go to make my mother comfortable, for he had a strong belief that he should never see her again. He never did see her again, for she died the next year. He returned to us after a few years. He had wounds, and was too far broken to be a fisherman again, though he went out with his sons, now and then, in warm weather. His chief pleasure was to sit in an arbour in Jos's garden, smoking his pipe and looking at the sea. He knew that Jos's tidy wife did not like that any one should drink spirits in the house, so he sat chiefly in the arbour, except in very cold weather. He said he should like no better than to die among the honeysuckles there; but he died in his bed, as kindly waited upon by Jos's wife, as if she had not disliked some of his ways.

As for our town, whether it is that the schools have made a great difference in the course of a generation, or that the peace did us more good than we knew of at the time, or whether it really is that the improvement in the general health has renewed the place, I cannot say with certainty; but it certainly is not like the same town that it was when I was a child. It is a quiet place still, with no great wealth, or stir of any kind: but nobody now lives in cellars; and it is a rare thing to see a beggar. My husband and I think it is a comfortable and pleasant place to live in—between the fruitfulness of the land, and the beauty of the sea. And this is exactly what Jos says of our old hamlet, and of his own home in the midst of it.

A MYSTERIOUS CITY.

In a Dominican convent near the city of Santa Cruz del Quiché, happened one of the "Incidents of Travel in Central America," which Stephens has so pleasantly recorded. He there met with an eccentric friar, from whom he obtained some curious information respecting the surrounding country. Nothing roused his curiosity so keenly as the Padre's assertion, that, four days' journey on the road