

THE BOY PATRIOT

Written in 1863

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(Aunt Friendly)

Chapter 1 Fairport

Were you ever on the coast of Maine? If so, you know how the rocky shores stretch out now and then clear into the ocean, and fret the salt waves till they are all in a foam. Old Ocean is not to be so set at defiance and have his rightful territory wrung from him, without taking his revenge after his own fashion. Far up into the land he sends his arms, and crooks and bends and makes his way amid the rocks, and finally falls asleep in some quiet harbor, where the tall pines stand by the shore to sing him a lullaby.

In just such a spot as this, the town we shall call Fairport was built. Axe in one hand and Bible in the other, stern settlers here found a home. Strong hard-featured sons, and fair rosy-cheeked daughters made glad the rude cabins that were soon scattered along the shore. The axe was plied in the woods, and the needle by the fireside, and yet grim Poverty was ever shaking her fist in the very faces of the settlers, and whispering sad things of what the uncertain future might have in store for them.

Cheerily they bore the hardships of the present hour, and a deaf ear they turned to all such whispers. Yet those settlers were sensible, matter-of-fact men, and it was soon plain to them, that healthful as were the breezes that made so rosy the cheeks of their daughters, Fairport was not the very best site in the world for a settlement—at least if its people were to depend on the thin and rocky soil won from the forest, which scarcely produced the bare necessities of life.

Was Fairport given up in despair? No, no. Her settlers were not the men to be so daunted and foiled. If the land was unkindly, they could take to the water—and so they did, to a man. Some were off to the Newfoundland Banks, tossing about the codfish, and piling them up into stacks that were more profitable than any hay of their own raising. Some were on board swift vessels, doing a good share of the carrying trade between the West Indies and the New England cities. Some were seeking the whale far in the northern seas. While others, less enterprising, were content to fish nearer home for all sorts of eatable dwellers in the sea, from halibut to herring.

Now a new day had begun for Fairport. The original cabins began to tower in the air or encroach on the submissive gardens, as building after building was added by the prosperous owners. Miniature villas, with a wealth of useless piazzas, appeared in the neighborhood of the town, and substantial wharves bordered one side of the quiet harbor, and gave a welcome to the shipping that seemed to grow and cluster there like the trees of a forest.

Fairport had passed the struggles of its early youth when our story begins, though there were gray-haired citizens yet within its borders who could tell how the bears had once looked in at their cabin windows, and the pine-trees had stood thick in what was now the main street of the rising town.

Chapter 2 The Young Orator

The boys of Fairport were an amphibious set, who could live on land truly, but were happiest when in or near the water. To fish and swim, row, trim the sail, and guide the rudder, were accomplishments they all could boast. A bold, hardy, merry set they were, and but for the schoolmaster's rod and the teaching of their pious mothers, might have been as ignorant as oysters and merciless as the sharks. Master Penrose had whipped into most of them the elements of a plain English education, and gentle mothers had power to soften and rule these rough boys, when perhaps a stronger hand would have failed.

Master Penrose always gave a full holiday on Saturday. Then the wharves were sure to swarm with the mischievous little chaps, all eager to carry out some favorite plan for amusement, in which old Ocean was sure to be engaged as a play-fellow. Poor indeed was the lad who had not a fish-hook and line with which to try his skill. The very youngest had his tiny boat to be launched, while his elders were planning sailing parties, or jumping and leaping in the water like so many dolphins.

Boys like to have a leader, someone they look up to as superior to the rest, and capable of deciding knotty questions, and "going ahead" in all times of doubt and difficulty. Blair Robertson occupied this position among the youngsters of Fairport. He had lawfully won this place among his fellows and "achieved greatness," by being the best scholar at the academy, as well as the boldest swimmer, most skillful fisherman, and most experienced sailor among all the boys for miles along the coast.

It was Blair Robertson's boast that he belonged to the nineteenth century and grew old with it. It was doubtful whether the bold lad considered this age of progress as honored by his playing his part in its drama, or whether he claimed a reflected glory, as having been born at the very dawn of that century which promised so much for the thronging millions of our world.

Be that as it may, Joe Robertson the pilot and Margaret his wife rejoiced, in the year 1800, over their first and only child. Thirteen years had swept by, and the honest couple were now as proud of that brave, strong boy as they had been of their baby, and with better reason.

Troublous times had come upon their native land. War had been declared with England. All Fairport was ablaze at the idea of American seamen being forced to serve on English ships, and of decks whose timber grew in the free forests of Maine or North Carolina, being trodden by the unscrupulous feet of British officers with insolent search-warrants in their hands.

Blair Robertson had his own views on these subjects—views which we find him giving forth to his devoted followers one sunny Saturday afternoon.

Blair was mounted on a sugar hogshead which stood in front of one of the warehouses on the wharf. From this place of eminence, he looked down on a

constantly increasing crowd of youthful listeners. A half hour before, a row of little legs had been hanging over the side of the wharf, while their owners were intent upon certain corks and lines that danced or quivered amid the waves below. Now the lines were made fast to stone and log, while the small fishermen stood agape to listen to the fluent orator.

This was but the nucleus of the gathering crowd. Every boy who came near the eager circle must of course stop to find out what was going on, and it was with no little pride that Blair beheld the dozens of faces soon upturned to his.

Blair might have remembered that if there had been but a dead dog in the center of the group, there would have been an equal gathering and pushing to know the cause of the meeting, but he, like many an older speaker, was willing to attribute to his eloquence what might have had even a humbler cause.

“Our rights invaded—a man’s ship no longer his castle—the free American forced to forsake his stars and stripes! The foot of the Briton pollutes our decks. His tyrannical arm takes captive our fathers and dooms them to a servitude of which the world knows no equal. Shall we submit? We will not submit. We have protested. We have declared war to the death. Has Fairport a voice in this matter? Where are those whom we love best? Where but upon the wide sea, a prey to our remorseless enemy. Where is *your* father, and *yours*, and *yours*, and *mine*?” said Blair, making his appeal personal as he pointed to the sailors’ sons.

“This insolence must be checked. We must rebuke the proud Briton on the very scene of his abominations. We must triumph over him on the tossing ocean, and teach him that America, not Britannia, rules the waves. Would that we all stood on some staunch ship, to do battle with our young right arms. Then should Englishmen cringe before us, then would we doom to sudden destruction their boasted admirals and flimsy fleets. Down with the English! Down with the English!”

Blair stamped emphatically on his hollow throne, until it rang again.

“Down with the English!” echoed the crowd in a burst of enthusiasm.

At this moment, a short, stout lad came round a neighboring corner. On his arm he carried a large basket of clean linen, with which he now tried to elbow his way through the crowd.

“An English boy! Shame that he should show his face among us,” said Blair in his excitement.

“We’ll give him a taste of salt water,” said two or three of the oldest boys as they seized the stranger roughly by the shoulders. “We’ll teach him to mend his manners.”

“Stop, stop, boys! Give him fair play,” shouted Blair, but Blair was no longer the object of attention.

The English boy, in spite of his struggles, was hurried to the edge of the wharf, and pushed relentlessly over the brink.

A thorough ducking to him, and the scattering of his precious basket of clothes, was all that the young rascals intended. To their horror, the stranger sank like a heavy load—rose, and then sank again.

“He can’t swim! he can’t swim! He’ll be drowned!” burst from the lips of the spectators. All were paralyzed with fear.

Blair had forced his way through the crowd, and reached the edge of the wharf in time to see the pale, agonized face of the English boy, as he for the second time rose to the surface. In another moment Blair was diving where, far in the deep water, the pale face had vanished from sight.

There was a moment of breathless silence, then a deafening cheer, as Blair reappeared with the drowning boy in his arms.

There were hands enough outstretched to aid him in laying his burden on the shore. "Help me carry him, boys, straight to our house. Mother will know what to do for him," said Blair, speaking very quickly.

It was but a few steps down a neighboring street to Joe Robertson's pleasant home. Blair did not fear to take in the dripping boy and lay him on his mother's best bed. He knew that mother's joy was to minister to the distressed and succor the unfortunate.

The water was soon pouring from the mouth, nose, and ears of the unconscious lad. Then he was rubbed and wrapped round with hot flannels, while Mrs. Robertson's own hands forced his lungs to work, until they again took their natural movement. Not a word was asked as to how the accident had happened, until, out of danger, the rescued boy was in a sweet sleep.

The eager crowd who had followed Blair and his charge had vanished, and the mother sat alone with her son. Blair's dripping garments had been exchanged for another suit, but in the midst of the late confusion his mother's eye had silently and gratefully marked upon him the signs that to him the English boy owed his life.

"You saved him, my son. God be thanked. I may well be proud of my boy," said the mother earnestly and fondly.

A sudden flush of shame crimsoned the cheeks of Blair Robertson. "Oh, mother, it was all my fault," he exclaimed. "If he had died—Oh, if he had died, that pale struggling face would have haunted me to my grave. I had been making one of my speeches to the boys and it pleased me to see how I could rouse them. I had just shouted, 'Down with the English!' and made them join me, when poor Hal came round the corner. Nobody would have noticed him if I had gone right on, but I pointed him out, and angry as they were, I could not stop them before they had thrown him into the water. They thought he could swim, I dare say, but I knew he couldn't. Oh, mother, what I suffered, thinking he might drown before I could reach him. But he's safe now. You think he'll get well, don't you, mother?"

"Yes, my child," said Mrs. Robertson, trembling with deep feeling. "God's mercy has been great to you, my boy. May you learn this day a solemn lesson. You have a powerful influence over your companions. You know it, and I am afraid it has only fed your pride, not prompted you to usefulness. If it real love for your country that leads you to these speeches, or is it a desire to see how you can rouse the passions of your listeners, and force them to do your bidding? For every talent we must give an account, and surely for no one more strictly than the power to prompt men to good or evil. I believe you love your country, my boy. You love our dear country or I would blush to own you as my son. But I fear you have as yet but a poor idea what it is to be a true patriot."

"A true patriot, mother? I think I know what that means. One who loves his country and would cheerfully die for her," said Blair with enthusiasm.

"You might even love your country and die for her, and yet be no *true* patriot," said the mother. "You might be her disgrace, and the cause of her afflictions, while you shed for her your heart's blood."

"I don't understand you," said the boy thoughtfully.

"Perhaps Korah and his company thought themselves patriots when they rebelled against the power of Moses and Aaron. They doubtless moved the people by cunning speeches about their own short-lived honor, yet they brought destruction on themselves and a plague upon Israel. There is nothing more plain in the Bible than God's great regard to the righteousness or wickedness of *individual* men.

"Suppose that there had been found ten righteous men in Sodom, for whose sake that wicked city would have been spared its awful doom. Humble and obscure they might have been, but would not they, who brought such a blessing down on the neighborhood where they dwelt, be worthy of the name of patriots? My son, if you were willing to lay down your life for your country, and yet were guilty of the foul sin of swearing, and taught all around you to blaspheme, would you not be laying up wrath against your native land, though you fought with the bravery of an Alexander?

"These are times to think on these things, my boy, if we really love our country. No man liveth unto himself. His home, his state, his country is in a degree blessed or cursed for his sake. Dear Blair, you cannot be a true patriot without God's grace to help you rule your heart, guard your lips, and purify your life. May you this day begin, for your own sake as well as for that of your country, to serve the God of our fathers.

"He has mercifully spared you the bitter self-reproach to which you might have been doomed. Go in repentance to his footstool, and he will abundantly pardon. Resolve henceforward to walk humbly before Him, trusting in His grace, and striving to do His will, and you shall count this day the most blessed of your life."

Mrs. Robertson put her arm round the tall, strong boy at her side. He yielded to her touch, as if he had been a little child. Side by side they knelt, while the mother poured out such a prayer as can only flow from the lips of a Christian mother pleading for her only son.

Blair Robertson spent that long Saturday evening alone in his room. That was indeed to be the beginning of days to him. He was no longer to be a self-willed seeker of his own pleasure and honor. He was "bought with a price," and was henceforward to be a servant of the King of kings.

Chapter 3 The English Boy

No loving friends came to inquire after the fate of Hal Hutchings, the English boy. His efforts to save his basket of clean linen had been as vain as his struggles to free himself from the hands of his persecutors. The garments that had been starched and ironed with such scrupulous care were scattered along the wharf, and trampled under the feet of the thoughtless young mob.

The old washerwoman, on whose errand Hal had been sent forth, was too indignant at the destruction which had befallen her handiwork, to give one kindly thought to the poor boy who had so honorably striven to spare her the misfortune over which she lamented so dolorously. Her Sunday thoughts strayed far more frequently to the dingy, stained garments soaking in her back kitchen, than to Hal Hutchings, quietly lying in Mrs. Robertson's best bedroom.

"I wonder no one comes to inquire after him. Has he no friends, Blair?" said Mrs. Robertson as evening was drawing on.

"I dare say not, mother. I never saw him with anybody. He does errands round town, and has been sleeping at Mrs. McKinstry's, the washerwoman's. He didn't take his meals there, I know, for I've seen him eating bread and cheese in some corner just when other folks were sitting down to dinner. They call him, 'Hal the English boy,' but I guess nobody knows much about him."

"A stranger in a strange land," said Mrs. Robertson thoughtfully, and then she rose up and went into the room where Hal was still lying.

Blair took up his Bible. How precious that Bible seemed to him now—the light for his feet, the lamp for his path. With reverence, he turned the sacred pages until he found the fifty-first psalm, which he read with solemn earnestness, making its humble petitions truly his own.

While Blair was thus employed, Mrs. Robertson was talking in her own kindly way to the stranger.

"So you are an English boy, Hal," she said. "That will not keep me from loving you, for you know the Bible says we must 'love our enemies,' but I don't believe you are such a very dangerous enemy, after all." Her pleasant smile was like sunshine to the heart of the lonely boy and his reserve melted away before it.

"I'm Hinglish, because I was born in Hingland," said the boy. "I couldn't help that, and I couldn't blame my father and mother for it neither, for I never knowed them. I've been an orphan always. But I'm an American, because I chose this for my country, and I worked my passage over here, and I haven't begged from anybody."

"I'm glad you want to be an American," said Mrs. Robertson gently, "it is a great privilege. But there is something more to do for every boy who wants to be an American citizen, than just landing in this country, and earning his own living, and then by and by voting for our rulers."

Hal opened his large pale blue eyes in confused expectation and was silent.

Mrs. Robertson was not easily discouraged and she went on. "You would think it very rude, Hal, if I were to invite a poor stranger to my house to dinner, and he should jump and laugh while I was asking God's blessing before eating, and then toss the plates about, breaking my dishes and scattering the food over my clean floor. You would think the least he could do would be to be civil and keep the rules of my house while he was in it."

"Such a chap as that ought to have the door showed him right straight," said Hal warmly.

"Well, my boy, this is what I mean. When we welcome strangers to our free country, which our fathers fought for and gave their blood to win, we expect those

strangers to fall in with our ways, and not disturb the peace and order of the pleasant home they have come to. Is not that right?"

"Yes, ma'am, and I haven't disturbed anybody's peace nor order," said Hal with another blank look of the blue eyes.

"No, and I do not believe you ever will, but I have not done yet. A free people, to be a safe people, must be a Christian people. Are you a Christian boy, Hal?" The question was asked with deep seriousness.

"I a'n't a heathen," said Hal in surprise.

"No, you don't bow down to a wooden idol, or worship snakes and bulls, as some heathen people do. But are you trying to serve God in all you think and do and say? Have you asked Him to forgive you all your sins, for the sake of His dear Son, and do you believe He has forgiven you, and taken you to be His own dear child?"

"I never had anybody talk to me so before," said Hal with a confused look, "but I take it, I a'n't what you call a Christian."

"I dare say you do not understand me very well," said Mrs. Robertson. "God can make these things plain to you. Close your eyes, and I will kneel down here and ask him to teach you to know and love His holy will."

Hal had been at church many times in his life, and looked curiously on at the whole proceeding, as at a "show." Now for the first time he heard prayer made for him, for poor Hal Hutchings, to the great God of heaven. He gathered but little of the burden of the prayer, yet his first remark after Mrs. Robertson resumed her seat beside him was a proof that he appreciated the sincerity of her interest in him.

"You are very kind, ma'am," he said. "I'd like to be such an American as you. I take it you are the best sort, not like them boys on the wharf."

"Those boys are very sorry for their mischief by this time," said Mrs. Robertson. "My own son would gladly do anything for you. He says he never shall forget what he suffered when he thought you might be drowned in consequence of his folly. But I think he has learned a lesson he will never forget. He has seen how far wrong he might go if he followed his own foolish ways. I trust he will hereafter be a faithful, humble child of God."

"He pulled me out of the water," said Hal warmly. "He's true grit. I'd go to the death for him."

"He will be very glad to have you for a faithful friend," said Mrs. Robertson, "but look, you must not teach him anything bad or tempt him to do wrong. He is my only child, and my dearest wish is to see him a noble, pure, Christian man."

"I wont teach him any 'arm as I knows to be 'arm," said Hal, putting out his hand to ratify the bargain.

It was a rough, hard hand, but Mrs. Robertson took it kindly as she answered, "God help you to keep your promise, Hal," and so their interview closed.

When Monday morning came, Hal Hutchings was up and dressed almost as early as Mrs. Robertson herself. Into the kitchen he walked, hearing the good lady's voice in that direction. "I'm going now," he said, "and I just looked into bid you good-by."

"Stop and take breakfast with us, wont you, Hal? You shall not go away hungry."

Some crisp cakes of codfish and potatoes were getting the last coat of brown in a frying-pan over the fire, and a huge loaf of Boston "brown bread" was on the table near at hand.

"I wouldn't mind a slive of that bread and one of them cakes, if you would let me sit down here and eat'em," said Hal.

Mrs. Robertson understood the boy's unwillingness to take a meal with strangers who had been raised in habits of greater refinement than his own. She kindly made a place for him where he was, and he soon rendered it evident that bashfulness had not taken away his appetite. "I don't want you to leave us," said Mrs. Robertson. "I should like to have you stay here until we can find something for you to do. I want to teach you to be a good Christian boy, the right kind of an American."

"I don't want to be beholden to anybody," said Hal with decision. "I worked my way over and I haven't begged a penny since I came. I don't mean to, unless I'm starving. Mrs. McKinstry has let me her little room. I've paid for it for this month, and I don't mean to lose my money. But I like your teaching, ma'am. It takes hold of me different from anything I ever heard before."

"Come in on Sunday evenings then, Hal. I am always at home then, and I should love dearly to teach you, and help you to be a good boy. Will you come?" said Mrs. Robertson.

"I will, ma'am, I will," said Hal, and making a rude attempt at a bow, he took his leave.

Chapter 4 The Patriot's Work

Mrs. Robertson and her son were sitting at their pleasant breakfast-table together.

"Blair," said the mother, "you want to be a patriot. Here is some work for you to do for your country. We must try to make a good American citizen out of Hal and a good Christian at the same time. The poor fellow is deeply grateful to you and you will have a powerful influence over him."

"I can't bear the English," said Blair warmly. "I don't like any foreigners, for that matter. It don't seem to me they are the right stuff to make American citizens out of. Give me the native born Yankee, free and independent from his cradle upwards. That's my way of thinking."

Blair stood up as he spoke and waved his knife in a manner more emphatic than elegant. A speech, one of his favorite speeches, seemed imminent. Blair did love to hear himself talk.

"My son, our question in life is not what we *like*, but what is *duty*. I think the laws of the kingdom of heaven should be the guide to every lover of his country. The voice of our Savior is, 'Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' 'The Spirit and the bride say, *Come*; and let him that heareth say, *Come*.' Every true Christian echoes the saying of St. Paul, 'I would to God that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.' So it should be with every favored citizen of our happy land. We should welcome the oppressed of every clime, and strive to make them worthy

partakers of the blessings we enjoy. I do not like to hear you say you hate any nation. We are all of one blood, made in God's image."

"Dear mother," said Blair, "you are right. You are always right. How thankful I ought to be to have such a guide and such a help in keeping my new resolutions. I want to do my duty even when it is hard for me. You shall see what a friend I will be to Hal. I mean to go out as soon as I have done breakfast, and see if I can look him up some steady work. I heard Old Jock say on Saturday he wanted a strong boy to help him handle his nets. I'll try to get the place for Hal."

Blair was as prompt to act as to plan. A half hour after breakfast was over he was standing by the cottage of an old fisherman and knocking for admittance.

It took all Blair's powers of persuasion to induce Jock to have anything to do with what he called a "furriner." The case seemed well-nigh lost, when Blair mounted on a chair, and made a small speech in his best style for the benefit of his single auditor. Whether won over by its logic or through a sense of the honor thus conferred upon him, Jock agreed to Blair's proposition.

"The first speech I ever made to any purpose," thought Blair, as he walked rapidly along the shore, wending his way to Mrs. McKinstry's dwelling.

Hal had locked himself into his "castle," as the only way in which he could escape the merciless scolding of his voluble hostess. She seemed to consider every stain on the injured garments a blot on the shield of the English boy which no apologies could excuse or efface. Hal fairly fled before the enemy, and once safe in his own room, whistled so lustily as to drown all sound of the railing from without.

It was an unusually busy day with Mrs. McKinstry, or it is doubtful whether she would have allowed even this close to the skirmish, for she had a taste for such encounters. Blair however heard the dripping and swashing of water in the rear of the house as he went up the narrow stairway. The wide cap-border of Mrs. McKinstry was fanning backwards and forwards, as she bent with a regular motion over the tub in which her red arms were immersed. She gave one look at Blair as he went up to her lodger's room, but did not condescend even to exchange watchwords with him.

In answer to Blair's knock was returned a resolute, "Who's there?"

The reply set Hal's mind at ease and the visitor was promptly admitted. Blair stated his business at once, but to his surprise he met with a blank refusal from Hal. He would not fall in with such a plan, not he. He would keep out of the water while there was any land left to stand on. He had had enough of plumping to the bottom, and coming up, ears singing, throat choking, and soul almost scared out of him. Better a crumb of bread and a morsel of cheese, than fatness and plenty earned in such a way.

It was hard for Blair to understand the nervous fear of drowning which had taken possession of poor Hal. Fairport boys could swim almost as soon as they could walk. They knew nothing of the helpless feeling of one who has the great deep under him and is powerless to struggle in its waves.

But a few short days before, Blair would have pronounced Hal a coward, and left him in disdain. Now he stood silent for a moment, baffled and puzzled. "I'll teach you to swim, Hal," he said at length. "We'll try in shallow water first, where you couldn't drown, unless you wish to drown yourself. It is easy—just as easy as anything, if you

only know how. I'll come for you after school this evening, and we'll go up the creek, where the boys won't be about. I shouldn't wonder if you were to take to it like a fish."

The English boy looked into Blair's frank pleasant face, and the dogged expression passed from his own. He took Blair's hand as he said, "I'll try. You shall see what you can make out of me."

Before many weeks were over, Hal Hutchings was as good a swimmer as half the boys in Fairport. Old Jock no longer waded into the deep water to set his nets or push his boat ashore. He declared that Hal had scared the rheumatism out of his bones, and it was not likely to make bold to come back, if things went on as they seemed to promise.

Chapter 5 Blair's Company

Blair Robertson had long had a famous military company of his own, called the Fairport Guard. A guard *against what* had never been publicly stated, and as they had no written constitution for their association, posterity must ever remain in ignorance on this point. Up and down the streets of Fairport it was their delight to parade on a Saturday afternoon, to the infinite amusement of the small girls who ate molasses candy and looked at the imposing array.

The breaking out of the war infused a new military spirit into all the youngsters on the Atlantic coast, and the Fairport Guard came in for their share of this growing enthusiasm. Cocks' tail feathers and broomsticks were suddenly in great requisition for the increasing rank and file, and the officers bore themselves with added dignity, and gave out their orders with an earnestness which proved that they appreciated the work they were imitating.

When it was rumored that Blair Robertson had become a communicant in the church to which his mother belonged, there was a general groan among his old followers and adherents. Here was an end, in their minds, to the Fairport Guard, and every other species of fun in which Blair had been so long a leader and abettor.

Blair was at first inclined to shrink from his old companions, but as the right spirit grew and strengthened within him, he mingled among them more freely, actuated by the desire to win new citizens for the kingdom of heaven, and to guide his wild associates into such paths as would make them blessing to their native land.

Blair's heart had been like rich ground, in which his mother had been sowing, sowing, sowing good seed, prayerfully waiting until it should spring up and take root to his own salvation and the glory of God. That happy time had come. All the words of counsel, all the pure teaching that had been stored in his mind, seemed now warmed into life, and ever rising up to prompt him to good and guard him from evil. Happy are the boys who have such a mother.

A series of rainy Saturdays had postponed the question as to whether the Fairport Guard should parade as usual under the command of their long-honored captain. A bright sunny holiday came at last, and Blair's decision on this point must now be declared. Long and prayerfully the boy had considered the subject, and his conclusion was fixed and unalterable.

The change in Blair's principles and feelings had not alienated him from his former companions. Each one of them had now for him a new value. They were to him wandering children of his heavenly Father, whom he longed to bring back to that Father's house. The wildest and most erring among them called forth his most tender interest, as farthest from the kingdom of heaven and in the most danger of utter destruction.

Blair's love of his country too had been but deepened and increased by his late realization of the allegiance he himself owed to the King of kings. His native land was now to him a dear portion of the great vineyard on which he desired the especial blessing of God. He more deeply appreciated the fact that every true Christian man is indeed an element of wholesome life and prosperity to the neighborhood and land in which he dwells.

The boys of the present day were soon to be the men on whom the state must rely for power and permanency. With a true patriot's zeal, Blair resolved to do all in his power to bring the boys of Fairport to be such Christian men as would be a blessing in their day and generation. These thoughts had gone far to fix his decision with reference to the Fairport Guard.

It was with a burst of enthusiastic applause that the little company saw Blair appear upon the public square in his well-known uniform. His three-cornered hat of black pasteboard was surmounted by a long black feather, and fastened under his chin by a fine leather strap, the strap being bordered by a ferocious pair of whiskers, to afford which the "black sheep" of some neighboring flock had evidently suffered. His grandfather's coat, which had been worn at Bunker Hill, enveloped his slender form, and increased the imposing effect of his tall figure upon the minds of his subordinates.

"Three cheers for Captain Robertson! Three cheers for Blair!" shouted the boys as their leader approached.

The cheers rung out on the air somewhat feebly, though that was owing to the weakness of the throats that raised them, rather than to any want of goodwill, and so Blair understood it.

"Now give us a speech before we fall into rank," called out one of the company.

"That is just what I mean to do, if you will all listen to me," said the captain in his most dignified manner.

The stump of a fallen tree served to elevate our speaker on this occasion, as it has many an older orator in circumstances no more interesting to his hearers than were the present to the eager group of listeners.

Blair had another purpose now than to hear himself talk. The short pause which preceded his opening sentence was not merely for effect. In those few seconds Blair was asking aid from his heavenly Father so to speak that he might have power to move his hearers and guide them aright.

"Boys," he began, "boys, I want to be your captain. I don't want to give up the Fairport Guard. We have had many a good time together, and I love you all, yes, every one. Our marching and drilling has hitherto been play, but now we ought to be in earnest. We should prepare to be really a guard to our native town. At any moment, the British may land on our shores and threaten the lives of those who are

dearest to us. We must be able to protect our mothers and sisters if the evil day comes. We must learn the use of fire arms. This musket did duty at Bunker Hill. Every young patriot here must learn to use it well. In due time, we must each have our musket, and make it carry true, if need be, to the heart of the enemy.

“But, boys, if we are to be real defenders of our native land, we must be worthy of such an honor. I am willing, I want to be your captain, but hear the rules I propose for our company: We are to be a temperance band—no drop of the cup that intoxicates must pass our lips. No profane word must sully our tongues. The name of the God of our fathers must be honored among us. Any member of this company who shall be found guilty of a lie, a theft or bullying the weak and defenseless, shall be cast out by common vote.

“We will strive to be a credit to our beloved home—true American citizens, who may dare to ask God to bless them in all their undertakings and prosper all they do. Boys, do you agree to these regulations? If so, I shall rejoice to be your captain. If not, I must sadly bid adieu to the Fairport Guard, and with this time-honored musket in my hand, stand alone on the threshold of my home in the hour of danger, trusting in God and in the strength of this single right-arm.”

As Blair concluded, he grounded his musket, and stood silently awaiting the reply of his companions.

There was a moment of hesitation; then one of the older boys, the first-lieutenant, stepped forward and silently placed himself at the side of his young commander. In true martial style, the whole company followed, arraying themselves around their leader.

“We agree! We agree! We agree to everything!” shouted one and all.

“May God help us to keep to our compact,” said Blair. Then, after a short pause, he added, “Let me propose to you a new member for our company—my friend Hal Hutchings, who, born on English soil, is yet a true American at heart. Let all in favor of his admission say Aye.”

Hal had been striving to give himself a military air by appearing in his red flannel shirt and trousers, while Old Jock’s red night-cap was perched above the yellow curls of the boy. As his name was mentioned, he raised to his shoulder a borrowed crutch which served him for a musket, as if to signify his readiness for martial duty.

“The English boy! Admit the English boy!” said several voices, but a hearty “Aye, aye” from two or three prominent members of the company decided the question in Hal’s favor, and he was admitted at once by general consent.

Forming now in regular ranks, the Fairport Guard went through their usual drill, and then set off in a creditable march, to let the citizens have a view of their doughty defenders.

Chapter 6 A Pilot

It is strange that the moon generally has all the blame for fickleness, when the sun quite as often hides his face without sufficient warning. The Fairport Guard had hardly made the circuit of the town, before the late smiling sky was overcast by dark

hurrying clouds, and the weatherwise began to predict a coming storm, which was to be “no joke on sea or land.”

Luckless members of the Fairport Guard who had not had the precaution to tie on their head-gear, might be seen breaking rank and running indecorously in various directions in pursuit of hat or cap, while the skirts of the captain’s time-honored coat flapped in the wind, like the signal of a ship in distress.

It was in the endeavor to complete their usual tour, by passing along the wharf, that this military body was subjected to this attack from old Boreas. Worse confusion, however, soon broke up all order among them. A group of men on the wharf had been for some time looking at a ship nearing the harbor. They could not make her out, they said. She was a stranger in those waters, and yet bore the American flag. She seemed a man-of-war and was evidently signaling for a pilot.

Fairport harbor, smooth and safe as it was, cradled among the overhanging cliffs, had a guard at its entrance which no stranger might defy. Its deep narrow channel went winding among hidden rocks, and woe betide the keel that ventured a dozen yards from its appointed path.

For thirty years, Joe Robertson had been the pilot of Fairport, and was as well-known to the frequenters of that harbor as was the tall spire which was the pride of the town. The sound of war had, however, roused within him the spirit of his father of Revolutionary memory. He declared he would not have it said that Joe Robertson was content to play door-keeper to the harbor of Fairport, while brave men were shedding their blood for the country, as dear to him as to them. Joe’s enthusiasm was contagious. It spread through all Fairport, and there was hardly a man who could bear arms on sea or land who was not off at his country’s bidding.

Old Jock, who had had one leg bitten off by a shark, men who had been crippled by a fall from mainmast or yard, and sickly sailors, worn out by the fevers of southern ports, were left at home to keep company with the few true landsmen, the shopmen of the town.

Old Jock had been content to serve as pilot since the departure of Joe, and well he knew the channel, but he seemed to have grown lazy, or particularly careful of himself, since Hal had come under his roof. Now he positively refused to go to the vessel in the offing. He plainly expressed his doubts as to what kind of a craft she was, and moreover declared that such a squall as was coming up was “not to be risked by any man in his senses, even if that old ship went to the bottom with every soul in her.”

Blair listened intently to this conversation. Too many times had he been to and fro with his father in his pilot’s duty not to know well the dangerous channel. Every crook and turn in it was as familiar to him as the windings of the little path in his mother’s flower-garden. The boy stood erect with growing determination as the speakers went on.

“She makes for the shore. She’ll surely run on the rocks if a pilot don’t go to her. If Joe Robertson were only here. What business had a man of his age going off to the war, instead of staying to look after the harbor of his own town?”

“He has left his son to take his place,” said Blair quickly. “I know the channel. I am not afraid. I will just speak to my mother, and then I’m off.”

In a few hurried words the son told his design to the mother who understood him so well. "May I go?" he added, "I know you will not refuse."

The mother's eyes filled with tears as she spoke. "I will not keep you, my noble boy. God bless and watch over you. The true Christian, like his Master, takes his life in his hand, and goes forth at the call of duty. The true patriot will risk all for his dear countrymen. Go. My prayers shall be around you like a guard."

When Blair returned to the wharf it was with his mother at his side. The little pilot-boat had been made ready. As he jumped into it, another figure quickly followed him. It was Hal Hutchings. "I must go with you," he said with determination. "I can manage a boat. I sha'n't be in the way. I couldn't stand it to wait on the shore. Maybe two of us will be needed."

Blair gave Hal one cordial grasp of the hand, then hoisted his bit of a sail, and soon over the wild waves the two boys took their course together.

"God help that Blair Robertson. He has the making of the right kind of a man in him," exclaimed a bystander.

"He's *our captain*, Blair is," said one of the youngest members of the Fairport Guard.

"Who would have thought of Hal's making such a venture?" said Old Jock. "He's a little skeary about water yet. But I believe he'd die for Blair Robertson. Whatever takes hold of that Hal Hutchings takes him strong."

The mother's eye followed the little boat as it went dancing over the waves, but her heart was uplifted in silent prayer.

Chapter 7 No!

The pilot-boat was nearing the strange vessel, when Blair suddenly exclaimed, "I see British uniforms on board. We have been tricked by that flag falsely displayed. It is an English man-of-war. Put about. We'll pilot no such vessel into Fairport."

Quick as thought the little boat had turned its head and was making towards the shore. The movement was not unperceived on board the man-of-war and its cause was at once understood. A boat, manned by a dozen strong rowers, had been made ready for such an emergency. They were quickly in pursuit of the retreating pilot. They gained rapidly upon the boys, and were soon alongside, commanding Blair to surrender, while half a dozen muskets were aimed at the brave lads.

"Fire! Do your worst! I am not afraid to die!" sprang to the lips of Blair Robertson, but he thought of his mother, and was silent. He had no right so to throw away the life of her only son.

"Surrender or we shall fire," was again repeated.

"A couple of unarmed boys, decoyed within your reach, would be a worthy mark for your treacherous British muskets," said Blair boldly. "I would dare you to fire, but there are those at home who would miss us too much. Do what you will with us—we are your prisoners."

The British tars handled their captives without ceremony, and hurried them at once on board the man-of-war and presented them before its impatient commander.

Not a little surprised at the grotesque appearance of the prisoners, he exclaimed in astonishment, "Who and what are you?"

"I am a Yankee boy, the captain of the Fairport Guard," said Blair frankly. "We had been parading, when your signal for a pilot called me too suddenly away for me to have time to lay aside this dress, *this coat* which my grandfather wore at **Bunker Hill**."

A strong emphasis was laid on the last word of the sentence.

"You young rascal!" exclaimed the commander. "And who is this Tom-fool of a companion?"

"It is my friend and one of our company. He would not see me risking my life on the water while he stood on the shore. Would that we had many such 'Tom-fools,' with brave, strong hearts like his."

As Blair spoke, he took off his official cap and left his noble young head bare. With another movement the precious coat was thrown over his arm, and the stripling stood in his school-boy dress before the English commander, who exclaimed, "A pretty pilot, you. Who sent you on this mad errand?"

"My father has been for thirty years the pilot of Fairport. He is now absent fighting for his country against her oppressors. I know the channel well. No one of our few remaining men would venture his life in such a sea for an unknown vessel, and so I came. I knew it would be certain death for you to try to enter that harbor without a pilot."

"Then do your duty, young malapert. There is no time to be lost. We'll run up the British flag and go into port under fair colors."

The commander gave the necessary orders to have the last suggestion carried out and the sailors were prompt to do his bidding.

Blair stood perfectly still, while a look of stern determination sat on his young face. "I will never pilot enemies to the shores of our land. You can shoot me, but you cannot force me to act the traitor."

The boy spoke resolutely. The English commander eyed him for a moment and then said quickly, "Shooting is too good for you, young dare-devil. That is quick work, soon over. There are other means of bringing you to terms."

The commander held in his hand a thick pamphlet in which he had been reading. He made it into a firm scroll and placed it upon the edge of the railing near which he was standing. Then turning to one of the sailors, he said, "Here, let me see you cut that through with your knife. Be quick."

The man drew the long knife from his belt, and with one sweeping stroke severed the thick scroll. One part went fluttering through the air and dropped in the angry waters, while the other was firmly held by the commander.

"Put young master's right-hand in the same place and we will see it food for fishes. Or will he choose to do his duty, and keep his precious five fingers for future use?"

The words had hardly passed from the lips of the British officer, when Blair laid his hand calmly on the railing, and exclaimed, "Now, God helping me, you may tear me limb from limb, and I will be true to my country and my home."

“It’s no use. He’ll keep his word. You can’t force’im,” shouted Hal Hutchings, the tears coursing down his cheeks.

The wild winds swept through the rigging and the storm came on with sudden violence.

This was no time for contention with such a spirit as Blair had displayed, and the captain at once gave orders to make for the open sea, where he might the more safely abide the approaching tempest. The Fairport channel had been strewn with too many wrecks to be ventured without a careful pilot, and of that the English captain had been fully warned.

Blair and Hal were hastily thrust below, while rapid preparations were made to meet the coming hour of danger.

Chapter 8 The Storm

The place in which Blair and his companion found themselves was a small strongly built closet, used as a “lock-up” for refractory sailors. A single bull’s eye admitted a mere glimmer of light for a while, but that soon died away in utter darkness as the night came rapidly on. It was well for the boys that they knew something of ocean’s rough rocking. A land-lubber would have had all the miseries of sea-sickness added to the horrors of that dreary dungeon.

A new exaltation of spirit had come over Blair. Difficulties and dangers seemed as nothing to him while in the path of duty. He feared neither the raging elements nor the power of angry enemies. He had the promise that those who trust in God shall never be moved and in this strong refuge he was safe.

Not so with poor Hal. The dread of death had seized him and absorbed all other thoughts. He could not but think of the horrors into which he should be plunged if he suddenly found a watery grave. Prayer seemed impossible for him, as in a kind of agonized waiting he met every plunge and reel of the storm tossed ship.

Ah, the time of peril is not the best time to make one’s peace with God. When heart and flesh fail, the soul shrinks in dismay before its coming doom. Even the wild prayers for deliverance which may burst from the affrighted soul, what will they avail at the judgment? Are they the cries of the contrite heart mourning for its sins against a holy, loving, and beneficent heavenly Father?

Are they not rather but as the shrieks of the criminal who sees no escape from his merited retribution? Alas for him who postpones his day of repentance till face to face with the king of terrors. It is he only who is strong in his great Deliverer who can see that icy beckoning hand, and amid the shrinking of human nature find himself calm in the strength which only God supplies. If the agonies or the stupor of the sick-bed unfit the soul to seek peace with God in the dying hour, even so does the anguish of such fear as now bowed poor Hal to the earth.

As the English lad crouched in his terror, Blair knelt at his side and prayed earnestly for him to that God who seemed to the young Christian but the more surely at hand, for the tokens of his power that made that mighty ship quiver like a leaf in the autumn wind.

Worn out with the excess of his own strong emotion, Hal at length sank into a deep slumber, and rolled and tossed with the vessel like a lifeless thing. Blair feared the poor boy had actually died of terror, but he soon convinced himself that there was yet motion in that heart which had throbbed so truly for him.

There was no sleep for Blair during that long wild night. In the intensity of his excitement, his thoughts flew through his mind with a vividness and a swiftness that made him almost feel that he was tasting a new and higher kind of existence. Spiritual things were as real to him as his own identity, and the God in whom he trusted seemed at his side as a familiar friend.

Of his mother too he could think without a tear. He was sure that if left childless, she would be comforted and sustained and gently led along her lonely pathway. Had he not been fulfilling her oft-repeated counsel, to fear nothing but sin? Had he not vindicated that love of his native land, which she had taught him should be next to his allegiance to God? She might never know his fate. Yet she would mourn for him as for one who died in his effort to fulfil the duties of his absent father, and risked his own life to save the human freight of a ship from wreck and sure destruction.

Daylight brought but a feeble glimmer to Blair's dark prison-house, yet he welcomed it as the assurance of dawn—dawn which is ever welcome to the watcher, though it may usher in a day of double danger.

Chapter 9 A Reward

Hal was still in the deep sleep into which he had fallen, when the bolts of their place of confinement were withdrawn. Blair's clear bright eyes looked full in the face of the English commander, who now stood before him.

"Give me your hand, my boy," said the captain. "I can respect bravery wherever I find it. I honor you for your determined courage. Tell me, who taught you so to love your country?"

Blair's hand still hung at his side as he answered, "My mother, sir—the best of mothers. She would rather have me die in the right cause, than live a traitor."

"You will not give me your hand? Perhaps I do not deserve it, but it was not cruelty which prompted me to act as I did last evening. I felt our danger, and scrupled not to use any means which should bring you to terms. Your constancy triumphed. I knew that no threats could force such a spirit. You shall not lose your reward, in the knowledge of the service you have done your home and your kindred. My orders were to get into the harbor of Fairport, to take possession of the naval stores there belonging to privateersmen, and then to reduce the town to ashes."

For the first time Blair's eyes filled with tears, and his chest swelled with strong emotion as he exclaimed, "Thank God, I have been able to be useful to my country and my home. This will fill my mother's heart with joy. To her I owe all in me that is worthy of praise."

"I believe I can trust you, my lad," said the captain. "I would not willingly have my name go out as one who would maim and torture a brave lad. My desperation is my excuse for my expedient of last evening. I want you to promise to keep that scene a

secret. You may perchance someday have your own sins to cover. I have been reckoned brave and honorable, and I would not have my fair name tarnished. Will you promise?"

"I forgive you from my heart. I promise," said Blair, frankly extending his hand.

"Such a mother as yours can be trusted," said the English commander, warmly grasping the offered hand. "She must know how her son did her honor in his hour of danger. Tell her the story, but let her keep it to herself. The true patriot, my boy, is willing to suffer for his country, though he win no glory from his sufferings. Are you equal to such a sacrifice?"

"I own I should like to be known as one who had done something for his native land," said Blair, "but it will do me good, and make me the purer patriot, I trust, to have only my mother's praise, if we ever meet again."

"*You* shall be released at the earliest opportunity, but this your companion must stay with us. I wish he was of the stuff that you are. We would make a British tar of him, who would do us honor. His tongue tells the story of his birth, even if we could doubt the witness of his Saxon eyes and hair."

"He chose to be an American. He worked his way to a home with us and to us he ought to belong," said Blair boldly.

"He is English, unnaturalized of course, as he is underage. He belongs to us by all law. I wish he were a better prey," said the captain.

"You do Hal Hutchings injustice. A truer heart never throbbed. Timid as he is, he ventured with me in the boat because he would not see me go alone. Let him once love his duty as he loves me, and there will be no post of danger from which he will shrink."

Blair's eyes flashed and his cheek glowed as he spoke.

"He shall be kindly cared for. We will make the best of what is in him. You are both free to go your way on board the ship. There is no chance of escape where we now are. You will see how our good vessel has suffered by the storm. Yet she weathered it bravely. You shall have food here presently, and then you are at large, prisoners on parole."

With these words the captain took his leave.

Blair's first impulse, when left alone was to throw himself on his knees beside his sleeping companion. From the depths of his heart he thanked God for enabling him to be firm to his duty, and earnestly he prayed that he might be made humble in the midst of the honor which had been allowed him. For his dear mother too rose a fervent prayer that she might be kept in the hollow of her Maker's hand during the absence of her son, whom she had striven to train as a Christian patriot, whose watchwords are ever, "God and my native land."

Chapter 10 A New Deck

The British vessel had indeed suffered much damage in the fearful storm. The crashing and wrenching that had so overwhelmed poor Hal with terror, had been the

destruction of mast and yard and bulwark. Yet, though sorely dismantled, the good ship was able to keep bravely on her way.

She had been several days heading for the distant shores of England, alone on the wide ocean, which like a sulky child bore the marks of its late outburst of passion long after the sky above was all smiles and sunshine.

The appearance of three sails along the far horizon caught the captain's wary eye. That they were Americans he did not doubt—privateers, against which singly he could have won an easy victory, but disabled as his vessel now was, he could not dare to cope with such a trio.

They gained rapidly upon him. His resolution was taken at once. He wrote a few lines hastily, sealed them, and summoned Blair to his side. "My boy," he said, "I want to send you on a dangerous mission. Dare you trust yourself in your boat upon the sea, chafing as it still is from the late storm? I want a messenger to send to yonder craft so swiftly nearing us. Dare you go? Your courage shall set you free."

"I will go. God will watch over me, and bring me safe to my mother," said Blair promptly.

A few words of affectionate parting with Hal, and then Blair was again a free boy, the sky above and the friendly waters below. Friendly they seemed to him as he sped over the waves towards the flag of his native land. He did not look behind him to see that the Stars and Stripes were waving above the British vessel, run up when she was called on to show her colors. He did not note the fact that the deck on which he had lately stood was fast passing from sight while he hasted on his errand.

Two of the privateers kept up their chase of the suspicious craft, while the other hove to, to receive the message which had been signaled as in the hands of the boy in the fast approaching boat.

Blair stepped freely and gladly when he was once more among his own dear countrymen, and it was with a beaming face that he presented his sealed note to the captain of the "Molly."

The note was as follows, "We send you herewith an American boy, by chance our prisoner. We trust that the gaining of such an addition to your crew will make amends for the loss of the British property which this delay gives us a chance to carry off in safety."

The captain of the Molly read these few words at a glance, then stamping his foot, he exclaimed, "You young villain! American or no American, you shall suffer for this sneaking trick. We'll send you back again out of the mouth of our guns or half-way at least. It is not worth our while to follow that miserable cheat. Those good ships will take him before many hours are over. Yankees know a British hull if American colors are flying over her."

Blair looked with astonishment where, far over the waters, the British man-of-war was fading from sight.

"It is a shabby trick, but I was no party to it," he exclaimed. "I would sooner lose my right hand than lift one finger against my countrymen. I am an American. I am the son of old Joe Robertson, the pilot of Fairport. Perhaps you know him. If you do, you will be sure that one of his blood would never do dishonor to the Stars and Stripes."

Captain Knox of the privateer Molly had never heard of Joe Robertson, but his knowledge of the world made him see truth and innocence in the face of the boy. Blair's words came too quickly, and his voice was pitched too high for English birth, and that the blunt captain marked at once.

"No matter who you are or where you came from, if you are all right as to the Stars and Stripes," said Captain Knox. "We don't ask too many questions here as to what folks have been before they come aboard the Molly. If you can obey orders and handle a rope, this is the place for you to make your fortune. Go aft, and Derry Duck our first-mate will find something for you to do in short order. He knows how to take the stiffness out of a fellow's bones."

Thus dismissed, Blair mingled among the sailors at the other end of the vessel, by no means a welcome guest. Mutttered curses fell on his ears, and more than one voice was heard to say, "He ought to be sunk forty fathoms in salt water, with a hundred weight of lead at his heels."

Chapter 11 "Mum"

Captain Knox did not set off in pursuit of the British vessel from which Blair had so unexpectedly escaped. Our young sailor soon learned that the "Molly" was on the look-out for richer prey, in the shape of an East Indiaman, whose costly cargo was expected to prove a gold mine for captain and crew.

The love of adventure and the lust for gold seemed uppermost in the minds of Blair's new companions. The Fairport boy was not long in discovering that there was about as little Christian patriotism on board the Molly, as there is verdure in Sahara. In the freedom of the mess-table, the late achievements of the crew were the occasion of many a "yarn," and of many a fierce discussion as to who had been the boldest and most reckless in the excitement of attack and victory.

It was plain that the crew of the Molly were little better than a den of thieves, their whole thought being of plunder, their whole ambition the winning of gold. Blair blushed for the honor of his country, to find such men among her avowed defenders. Oaths and obscenity made even more hateful the rough narratives in which each strove to prove himself more hardened and abandoned than the last speaker. Blair's soul recoiled with horror from the taint of such companionship, yet for him there was no escape. Among these coarse rovers he was forced to eat and sleep, to live and labor, while many weeks went by.

The youngest on board, he was at the beck and call of these rough men, who made his body as weary of doing their bidding as his soul of their words of wickedness. A deep, hearty hatred of the crew of the Molly took possession of Blair Robertson. He wondered that a benevolent Providence should have placed a Christian boy in the midst of the pollution of such associates, and subject to the martyrdom of hearing their daily talk. A cold and haughty silence was Blair's defense against their scolding and their railing. With a feeling of conscious superiority he moved among them, desiring their praise even less than their persecution.

The names of the crew of the Molly were as unattractive as their appearance and manners. These soubriquets spoke not of pious parents who had given their children to God, with a Christian name which they trusted would be registered in heaven. They told rather of lawless lives, and a past which must be buried in oblivion or acknowledged with shame and perhaps fear. "Fighting cock," "Torpedo," "Brimstone," and "the Slasher," were among the leaders who dubbed Blair with the title of "Mum," and so saluted him on all occasions.

Blair had a very considerable sense of his own dignity, and was by no means pleased with this style of address. Yet he showed his resentment by increased taciturnity rather than by words. Captain Knox and Derry Duck soon found out that Blair Robertson was no useless addition to the crew, and promptly gave him his share in the watch and in other duties which his strength would permit.

The hours of the watch were to Blair the most agreeable he now enjoyed. In the silent night, with the sea below and the sentinel stars overhead, he could commune with God, undisturbed by the wickedness of man.

Blair had not been a day on board the Molly, when Torpedo, a fiery young Spaniard, spied him reading his pocket Testament in a quiet part of the ship. The book was snatched away and flung triumphantly into the water, while Torpedo exclaimed in bad English that Blair should follow it if he tried to force any of his canting notions on the free crew of the privateer.

Well was it for Blair that his mind was stored with chapter after chapter of the precious volume, which would otherwise have been to him now a sealed book. It surprised him to see how much of the Scriptures he could by a strong effort recall, and most consoling and cheering to him were those words of peace and power.

In one of these lonely watches, Blair's thoughts turned to his present companions with his usual loathing. Suddenly there came to him the image of these rough bad men in their days of babyhood, ere yet this evil world had found its full response in the evil within their poor human hearts. He could fancy the loving eye of God on those little ones, following them along their dreary pathway, and grieving as thicker grew the crust of sin over all that had been pure and childlike, and more and more dark their coming doom.

Blair realized for the first time the love of God, the pure and holy God, for those wicked transgressors of His law. "Yes," he thought, "it was while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Hateful as must have been to Him the atmosphere of guilt and degradation in this lower world, He left His Father's throne and came to seek and to save that which was lost."

Ah, how unlike the ministry of the Son of man had been Blair's proud, self-exalting, unloving demeanor. Perhaps mercy for those poor abandoned men had sent a Christian boy to dwell among them and show forth the image of his Master. With deep shame Blair saw how unchristian had been his thoughts and acts towards his uncongenial associates.

Had he not cherished the very spirit of the Pharisee, "Stand by thyself; I am holier than thou?" Blair thought of his proud and hasty temper, and of the many sins of his boyhood, and meekly owned that, but for the loving hand of God which had hedged

him round against temptation, and planted him in the garden of the Lord, he might have been even worse than these wild rovers of the sea. Earnestly he prayed that he might so live and love on board the Molly, that at least a faint image might be given of the great Example, who endured the contradiction of sinners, and for their sakes was willing to suffer even unto death.

Shame and indignation that such men should profess to be defenders of the American flag had hitherto been a chill to the patriotism of Blair Robertson. Now the thought struck him, that if he could but win one of these hardy sailors to be a Christian servant of his country, an honor to the flag under which he sailed, not in vain would a young patriot have endured the trials and temptations of the "Molly."

"But," thought Blair, "what am I, single-handed, against so many? How can I hope to bring a blessing by the prayers of my one heart, be it ever so devoted?" He remembered that the prayer of the patriot Moses saved the hosts of the children of Israel from utter destruction at the hand of their offended God. At the prayer of Paul, the Ruler of the seas gave him not only his own life, but the lives of all that were with him in the ship. "I cannot," he said to himself, "hope to prevail like these saints of old, at least not for my own sake, but the name of Jesus is all powerful. I will plead it for the poor wanderers about me, and God will in due time, I trust, prosper and bless my efforts."

Chapter 12 The First Effort

"I've broken my jack-knife," said the yellow-headed, yellow-faced tar who rejoiced in the nickname of Brimstone. The speech was accompanied by an oath that chilled the very soul of Blair Robertson, but it was the morning after the watch which had so changed his views towards his wild associates and he at once seized the opportunity to begin his new line of conduct.

Blair had a large many-bladed Sheffield knife, which had been a present to his father from an English captain. For several years it was hoarded as a special treasure, and then on a Christmas-day found its way into the pocket of the only son. Blair knew the worth and temper of every blade, and its fit and appointed use. Not a boy in Fairport had such a knife, as had been acknowledged on all hands. He had besides often thought of it as no bad weapon in case of an attack from any of the fighting crew of the Molly. "To stick a man," was in their estimation no uncommon occurrence, judging from the tales of their adventures, which they delighted to tell.

"Take my knife, won't you? It is a first-rate one," said Blair, handing over his treasure as freely as if the sacrifice had cost him no effort.

Brimstone opened his round cat-like eyes in surprise, and then dropping the knife into the depths of his pocket, said, "Green, green! You expected to make a trade with me, I suppose. You can't come it. I never swap."

"I meant to make you a present of it. You seemed so put out about your knife's breaking," said Blair pleasantly. "A fellow does hate to break his knife. An English captain gave that to my father five years ago. It has six blades."

Brimstone took the knife out of his pocket and examined it slowly, opening blade after blade with the air of a connoisseur.

"I say, youngster, it's a first-rate article. You meant a swap, now—own up. What did you mean to ask me for it, if I'd been in the humor?"

"There is only one thing I should like to ask of you," began Blair.

"Ha, ha! I knew you meant a swap," said Brimstone. "There's no harm in making a clean breast of it."

"I wanted to ask you not to swear those horrible oaths. I tremble lest God, whose great name you blaspheme, should smite you dead with those curses on your lips," said Blair earnestly.

Brimstone had the long blade of the knife open. He gave an angry thrust at Blair, which the lad skillfully avoided, but without a shadow of fear in his fine face. "No one of that talk," exclaimed Brimstone. "We say *what* we please and *when* we please on board the Molly. Mum's the right word for you. We want no parson just out of petticoats here."

Blair walked quietly away. His precious knife was gone, and he had perhaps but irritated and made more unfriendly one of the very men whom he so longed to influence for good. He had left himself without any defensive weapon among men who reckoned human life as of trifling value. Yet Blair was not discouraged. He had made a beginning, and though roughly received, it was an effort put forth in a Christian spirit, and could not be lost.

With a petition in his heart for the rough sailor he had just quitted, Blair went to a quiet part of the ship to write a few lines to his mother. It seemed to him it would be a comfort to fancy himself in communication with her, though the letter might never fall under her dear eyes. Yet that was not impossible. There were letters waiting already on board, until they could be sent by some homeward-bound craft. The little mail-bag might find a timely and trusty bearer.

Blair had nearly filled the sheet before him, unconscious of any observers. The vessel lay becalmed, scarcely moving on the quiet waters, and the men had been stretched lazily about, or leisurely mending sails, or washing their clothing in true sailors' fashion. Drawn on by Brimstone's beckoning finger, a group had silently gathered round Blair, ready for any wild frolic at the boy's expense which their summoner might have in his unscrupulous brain.

Just as Blair put the signature to his letter, the paper was snatched from his hand by someone from behind.

"Now hear, worshipful shipmates," said Brimstone, making as if he would read the letter aloud.

"You don't know your alphabet," said Derry Duck contemptuously. "I am the scholar for you, but I choose to let the writer do his own reading. Here, Mum, let us have the benefit of your long-tailed letter in plain English, stops put in all right."

Blair's eyes flashed for a moment, but the next he put out his hand for the letter, and said pleasantly, "Do you really want to know how a Yankee boy writes home to his mother? Well, then, I'll read every word out, just as it is written."

The tones of Blair's voice were clear and firm as he read as follows,

“Dear Mother—I always thought I loved you, but I never half knew what you were to me before. I think of you by day and dream of you by night.”

“I should think he was writing to his sweetheart,” said Brimstone with a coarse laugh.

“Silence,” shouted Derry Duck in a tone of command. “Go on, boy.”

Blair resumed. “I am on board the ‘Molly,’ Captain Knox, an American privateer, safe and sound, in full health and fair spirits, thanks to the good God who has watched over. It would be a long story to tell you how I came here, that I will reserve till we meet. When the British commander found he could not *make* me pilot him into Fairport, he put for the open sea, and there we took the gale. A real tear-away it was, and raked the old ship well-nigh clean from stem to stern, but they rigged her up again, and had her skimming the seas like a duck before two days were over. I had to leave Hal Hutchings on board of her. They claimed him for an English subject. It was like losing my eyes to part with him.

“I never thought to see such danger as has fallen to my lot since I kissed you good-by, dear mother, but my heart has never failed me. God has sustained me in every hour of trial, and I trust Him for all that is before me, be it danger or temptation or death. He is all-powerful. In His strength I shall come off conqueror. He spread this smiling sky above me. He measured these limitless waters in the hollow of His hand. He can, he will, keep me from all evil, and if death shall be my portion, He will take me, all unworthy as I am, to His kingdom of glory, for the sake of our crucified Redeemer.”

Blair Robertson had the rare gifts of voice and manner which ever exercise an influence more powerful than force of argument or elegance of style. What he said went home to the hearts of his hearers. As he uttered the deep feelings of his soul, his rude listeners were awed into silence. He paused and there was a moment of deathlike stillness.

It was interrupted by Brimstone, who uttered an oath in coarse bravado, as he exclaimed that he for one would hear no more such stuff, fit only for milk-sop landlubbers and silly women.

“Read no more, my boy,” said Derry Duck soberly. “You cast your pearls before swine.”

Blair turned a quick look upon the mate as he said, “You then know something of Scripture and can make a right use of it. I believe I have found a friend.”

“You have, you have,” said Derry Duck, grasping the offered hand of the stripling in a gripe that would have made him wince with pain, but for the bounding joy of his heart.

Derry Duck was called away at that moment by a summons from the captain, and Blair, unmolested, closed his letter and dropped it in the mail-bag. Prayer for the mate of the Molly was in the heart of Blair, even as his hands were busy with the melting wax, or loosing the rude entrance to the post-office on the sea.

Chapter 13 Temptation

Derry Duck was no mean ally. The strength of his arm, and his position as second in command, gave him great influence on board the Molly. There were traditions of the power of his bare fist to deal death with a single blow—traditions which won for him an odd kind of respect and insured for him the obedience he never failed to exact. Derry having avowed himself the friend of Blair Robertson, it was well-understood that there must be an end to the peculiar persecutions to which the boy had been subjected. He could not of course escape such rough usage of word and act as the crew had for each other, but he was to be no longer their chosen butt and scape-goat.

Blair felt at once the advantage of having so powerful “a friend at court,” and he eagerly seized upon the favorable turn in affairs to carry out his new plans and wishes for his associates. It had struck him that there was but one way to avoid having his ears pained and his soul polluted by the conversation that was the entertainment of the mess. He must do his share of the talking, and so adapt it to his own taste and principles. The lion’s share Blair determined it should be, and that without unfairness, as he had to make up for lost time. Once assured that Brimstone’s unwashed hand was not to be placed over his mouth if he attempted to speak, and the cry, “Shut up, Mum,” raised by his companions, Blair’s tongue was set loose.

We have said that Blair was by no means averse to hearing his own voice, and much as his guiding motives and aims had changed, the Blair on board the Molly was still the same human being that he was in Joe Robertson’s little parlor in Fairport. Never did city belle strive more earnestly to make her conversation attractive to her hearers, than did our young patriot, actuated by a motive which is in comparison with hers as the sunlight to the glow-worm’s uncertain ray.

Blair had songs to sing and speeches to make. He had wild stories of the struggles of the early settlers of Maine, caught long ago from the lips of gray haired men and treasured in the boy’s heart, that had little reckoned the coming use for these hoarded wonders. The captains who had shared the services of the pilot of Fairport had filled his willing ears with tales of their adventures in every sea and on every coast, and the fond father had garnered these marvelous legends to tell to his little listener at home, till the child’s eyes glowed bright as he panted to taste of peril, and do and dare amid the stormy waves.

Now indeed came a time of peril to Blair. With secret delight, he found he had a power to charm and move even the rough band who gathered round him to catch every word of the glowing narratives he poured forth from his crowded storehouse. There is something within us all which prompts us to adapt our conversation to the taste and capacity of our companions. A kindly inclination it may be, and yet it is full of danger.

He who may dare to be “all things to all men,” must, like St. Paul, have set his feet on the rock Christ Jesus, and be exalted by the continual remembrance of the “cloud

of witnesses” in the heavenly kingdom, and the fixed, all-searching glance of the pure eye of God, reading the inmost soul.

Insensibly Blair inclined to use the language in which his hearers couched their own thoughts. As we speak babytalk to the infant, and broken English to the Frenchman, he unconsciously dealt in expressions adapted to the wild eager faces that looked into his. Here had surely been a temptation that would have dragged the young speaker down to the pit which the great adversary had made ready for him, but for the strong Deliverer who walked amid the flames of fire with the three faithful “children” of old.

Blair saw his danger and met it not in his own strength. Whether he sat down at table, or mingled in the groups on deck, or shared the watch of a companion, by a determined and prayerful effort he strove to keep in his mind the presence of “One like unto the Son of man.” To him that face, unsullied by taint of sin or shame, was in the midst of the weather-beaten, guild-marked countenances of the crew of the Molly. He who “turned and looked on Peter” was asking his young servant in a tender, appealing glance, “Will you blaspheme My name? Will you offend Him in whose eyes the heavens are not pure, and who chargeth even His angels with folly?”

A deep, “No, so help me God,” was the full response of the whole being of Blair Robertson. He would watch his tongue and guard his lips by the continual prayer which should stir in his heart in the midst of speech, song, or tale of wild adventure.

When the young sailor had taught his listeners gladly to hear when he would give them pleasure, he by degrees gave full utterance to the natural language and interests of his heart. They learned to love to listen, even when he poured forth in his peculiarly melodious voice some majestic mariner’s hymn, or told in thrilling tones how some God-fearing seaman had stood at the helm of a burning ship and headed her to land, until he passed from amid the devouring flames to the glory of the kingdom of heaven.

They heard and could not but admire the story of the unselfish Christian captain, who saw himself left alone on the sinking ship, but would not crowd the already overloaded boats with his manly form. He preferred to meet his doom in the path of duty, and on the deck where God had placed him go down to the depths of the sea, sure that his Saviour would there receive him and give him an abundant entrance into heaven.

Thus in his own way Blair was laboring for the welfare of his shipmates, ever praying that some good seed might be blessed by the Lord of the vineyard, and spring up unto eternal life.

Chapter 14 Derry Duck

Derry Duck having vouchsafed his protection to the young stranger, for a time sought no further intimacy with him. He might be seen occasionally among the groups who were won to hear a song or a story from Blair, but he was apt to leave these scenes suddenly, as if for some call of duty or stirred by some quick and painful thrust of feeling.

Captain Knox was a stern, moody man, who had very little direct intercourse with his crew. Derry Duck was made his medium of communication on every ordinary occasion. The captain was the only person on board who kept a stock of writing materials, and from him, through Derry, Blair and the other sailors obtained such articles on the rare occasions when they were in demand. There was not much taste or time for literary efforts on board the Molly.

A pleasant evening had collected all the sailors on deck, and Blair had taken the opportunity to retire below to spend sometime in recalling Scripture to his mind, which was now his substitute for reading in the holy book. He was roused from his meditations by the entrance of Derry Duck, with an inkstand in one hand and a sheet of paper in the other. Blair rose as the mate came towards him, supposing the writing materials were to be left in his charge for some shipmate.

“Sit down, boy,” said Derry in his quick way, “sit down, I want you to do something for me.”

“I should be right glad to do anything I could for you. You have been a real friend to me,” said Blair warmly. “You can’t think how much I thank you for it.”

Derry sat down and laid the paper on the table before him. Then the two were for a moment silent. Blair and his “friend” formed a strange contrast to each other.

The slender stripling, tall for his years, was yet in the blossom of his youth. His face, which was so like his loving mother’s, would have been effeminate, but for the savor of old Joe Robertson the pilot, which told in the marked nose and strong chin of the boy, but had no part in his great, clear, soul-lit eyes, or the flexible lines of his changing mouth. That mouth was now parted for some word or sign from his companion.

Derry Duck was a very bundle of time-worn, storm-tried muscles and sinews. The knots on his bare arms were like knobs of oak, and his great brawny hand that lay there on the white paper, looked like a powerful living thing, having almost an identity and will of its own.

Derry’s body and whole development to his thighs were those of a tall, stalwart man, but his lower limbs were short and sturdy, ending in great flat feet which were as much at home in the water as on the rolling deck, or amid the dizzy rigging. These peculiarities had given him the name by which he was known—originally “Daring Duck,” but by degrees contracted into the “Derry Dick” which Blair had caught from the sailors.

It was hard to realize that the mate of the Molly had ever been an infant, whose tender cheek had been pressed to that of a loving mother. And yet it was true that a Christian mother had once hailed that hardened man as a gift from God to nurse for him. His lips had been taught to pray and his young footsteps guided to the house of God.

Time had made sad changes in him since then. His skin was now as tough and well-tanned as his leathern belt, in which hung many a curious implement of war and peace, a perfect tool-shop for the boarder’s wild work, or the seaman’s craft. In that strong, hard face there was a tale of a life of exposure, a lawless life. Which had well-nigh given over to the evil one the soul which God meant for Himself.

"I want you to write a letter for me," said Derry, looking cautiously about him and then going on, "a letter to my little daughter. Hush, not a word of this to any of the men. When it is done, you must put it inside of one of your love letters to your mother. They mustn't get wind of it. They are not fit even to know I have such a child, much less to see her. Be secret! Can I trust you, my boy?"

"I'll write for you with all my heart," said Blair in astonishment, "and of course I won't name it if you don't wish me to. No, not to a soul on board. But I shall have to tell my mother, or she won't know what to do with the letter."

"Just ask her to mail it for one of your shipmates. That will be enough," said Derry quickly. "Least said, soonest mended.' I have my reasons. I know which way the wind blows and how to ward off a sou'-wester."

"What shall I say?" said Blair, taking up the pen, and reaching for the paper. Derry's hand lay on it, a "paperweight" that did not move itself off at Blair's motion.

"You see," began the sailor, "you see I've got a little daughter, not so old as you are by a year or two. I dare say you think she's made of coarse stuff like me, fit for the rough and tumble of life. No such thing. Her hand is white as a sail on a summer sea, and her little round cheek is so soft, Oh, so soft, that when it snugs up to mine it seems as if an angel was touching me, and I feel as if I wasn't fit for such as her to love and hold. Yet she loves me—she loves her old dad. She don't call me Derry Duck, not she. She don't know anything about Derry Duck, and what he does when he's off on the sea. I don't mean she ever shall. I'd rather die first, gnawed to pieces by a hungry shark.

"Her mother left her to me, a little two-year-old thing, a clinging little creature that would snug in my arms and go to sleep, whether I was drunk or sober. I killed her mother—sent her to the better country before her time. I didn't lay my hand to her, I wasn't bad enough for that. But my ways took the pink out of her cheeks, and made her pine away, and just go out of my sight like the wake of a passing ship. Where she had been, there she was not. I loved her, boy, and these eyes cried. These great hands would have willingly been worn to the bone with hard work, if that could have restored her life.

"I don't drink anymore. I've quit that. I haven't touched a drop since she died. I took to the sea. I made up my mind I wouldn't kill the little tender thing she left me. *She* should never die for knowing how bad her father was. I took the little money I had and bought a real gentleman's suit of clothes. Then I went to a minister I knew about, in a far away town, where my—never mind where the child's mother came from—and I asked him and his wife to take care of the little thing, for a sorrowful man that was going off on the sea, and would pay well for what they did. I knew it wasn't the money that would make them lay their hand to the work, but they had nothing to spare, and I didn't mean to leave her to charity. I wanted her brought up to be like her mother, in ways that wouldn't end where I'm going. They took her, and there she is.

"Nobody can see her without loving her, such a little, dainty, winning, clinging, pretty thing, nine years have made out of the toddlin' creature I put out of my arms, that ached after her till I was clear out of sight of land. Don't think I miss seeing her when I'm ashore. Don't I leave Derry Duck aboard ship, and put on my landsman's clothes, and ride up to the door where she is, with my pocket full of money.

“She don’t lack for anything, I warrant you. She’s dressed like a rose, all in pink and green, with little ribbons fluttering like her little heart when she sees me coming. She’s learning too. Why, she knows most enough to teach the queen, the child does. And then she’s so modest and asks me questions, as if I could tell her everything.

“I always have a cold or a headache or something, and can’t say much when I’m there. I keep still, and take my fill of looking at her, and hugging her close to this old tough heart. I wouldn’t let out an oath before her. I’d rather see the Molly go to the bottom in fair weather. I’m scant of my talk, let I should let out that my way of thinking is different from hers. I wouldn’t have her pretty blue eyes turn away from me, so sorrowful, yet so loving, just as her mother’s used to. I couldn’t bear that.

“She loves me, that little pure thing, that says its prayers night and morning, and asks God to bless its father on the sea. She’s my angel. Mayhap those little prayers will get heard someday, and a blessing will come to me and make me a different man. Only the Almighty could turn Derry Duck into a father fit for that child’s eyes to look on.

“My heart yearns after her when I’m far away, but I don’t let her write to me. I wouldn’t have such men as I live with know where my flower hides its little head. I wouldn’t have her run a chance of seeing anybody who knows Derry Duck and might tell her of his wild ways. It would break her little heart, it would. I can’t write to her, not but what I was scholar somewhat, long ago, but these hands have had other work to do than holding a pen and making letters that a wise little girl like her would think all right.

“I couldn’t either put into words just what I want to say. It a’n’t much that I would say, neither, but a kind of letting out how I set all the world by her, and want her to be just so much better than other folks as I am worse. Something would slip in that shouldn’t, if I was to try, I know there would.

“But you can write for me. You would know just how to put it. She says she yearns after me when I’m gone, and would be so full of joy if she could once have a letter from me, all her own, to read over and over when she can’t throw her arms round my neck and put her little loving face close up to mine. Will you write for me, boy, something for the dear girl to read over, and think the right kind of a father is talking to her, a man she wouldn’t be ashamed of before the company her mother keeps *up there?*”

The last words were spoken reverently and formed a strange contrast to much that had gone before. We have omitted the oaths and rough expletives with which Derry interlarded his speech. There is the taint of sin even in the repetition of such language.

Blair Robertson had listened with a throbbing heart and tearful eye to the sailor’s story. It seemed to him that God had not quite cast off one who had such a tender care for the happiness and purity of his child. Blair gently laid his slender hand on Derry’s brawny fingers, and looked up earnestly into his face as he said, “Why can’t you be just such a father, Derry?”

Derry laughed a sorrowful, derisive laugh, and then said almost fiercely, “You don’t know me, lad. It would chill your very blood to know what I’ve done and where I’ve been. There are spots on me that nothing can wash out. I’ve grown into it, boy.

It's my life. I'm hard and tough, soul and body. There's no making me over. I'm spoiled in the grain. I tell you it's too late. I a'n't a father for her to know. I can't be made into one. That a'n't what I came here to talk about. Will you write my letter, that's the question?"

"Certainly I will write for you in the way that seems to me the best. But Derry, 'There is a fountain opened for sin and all uncleanness.' 'The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin.' 'If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a *new creature*; old things have passed away.' 'With God all things are possible.' 'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.' 'Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.'"

As Blair spoke these words, he fixed his earnest eyes on the sailor's face, and seemed pleading for his very soul.

"There is a look about you like her, like her *up there*," said Derry, almost trembling. "I see her face in the dark night when I'm on the watch, and her eyes speak to me just as yours do—Oh, so pleading. Hush! There's someone coming. Write the letter as if it was one of your own. They won't hector you now. I've taught 'em better manners. Let me see 'em touch a hair of your head and I'll finish 'em quick."

As Derry spoke, he gave a thrust with his clenched fist as at an imaginary enemy. The eyes that had lately been softened into tenderness had their old fierce twinkle, and his hard features settled into their fixed expression of determined daring.

The men gave place as he forced his way up the hatchway. On he went, stamping along the deck as if he ground an enemy beneath his heel at every step.

Chapter 15 A Letter

Blair would gladly have chosen another time and place for the composition of the difficult letter he was called onto write, but he felt compelled to fulfil his promise at once. The men passed by him in silence, save the single remark of Brimstone, "Give my love to your *sweet*, mother," delivered in an insulting tone and with a laugh more repulsive than the hiss of a snake.

Blair glanced anxiously in the direction where Derry had disappeared, almost fearing to see that clenched hand coming forth to do its threatened work of vengeance. But Derry was already far away, and Brimstone joined his messmates without receiving a word or sign of rebuke.

Blair took up his pen with a silent prayer that it might be guided by Him without whose aid vain are the most eloquent words of the wisest counsellor. His letter was follows:

"Dear—I don't know your name, but your father is my friend, and of course I feel interested in you for his sake. He has been very kind to me, and it is a great pleasure to me to do anything for him. He has been talking to me of you, and while he has gone on deck he wants me to write to you.

"How he loves you. You are the bright spot to him in life, his oasis in the desert of this weary world. When he is far out on the wide sea, your face comes up before him,

and makes the loneliest place a home. He loves to think that you pray for him. He feels that he needs your prayers. Happy are the fathers who, plunged in earthly cares on sea and land, have children to fold their hands and lift their hearts in prayer for them.

“This is all you can do for your absent father. Though you could give him crowns and kingdoms, wealth and honor, they would not be worth as much as one earnest, faithful, importunate prayer in Jesus’ name. That name is all-powerful, and *must prevail*. Your father calls you his ‘little flower.’ He wants his little flower to be pure and modest and simple, like the lily, which all may consider and see in it the handiwork of God. Only God, who made this beautiful world, can purify and cleanse our souls and help us to walk in His holy ways.

“I know that you have been taught all this by the kind friends who have watched over you from infancy. Your father wants you to give good heed to their counsel, and ever watch and pray and struggle against temptation. No blow could fall on him so sore as to know his little darling was walking in the wrong path. May you never so grieve his fond heart.

“Again I must tell you, though you have read it in his repeated caresses, how your father loves you. May you be to him that best of treasures, a prayerful, pious daughter, is the sincere wish of

“Your father’s friend,

“Blair Robertson.”

Blair folded his letter, and then addressing a few lines to his mother, he inclosed the two in a single envelope, and sought out Derry for further directions. Derry was pacing up and down the deck, making the boards ring with his heavy tread.

“Shall I read you what I have written?” said Blair, laying his hand on Derry’s shoulder.

Derry started as if in a dream, but recollecting himself, he said quickly, “Yes, yes. Here, here in the moonlight. No one will listen here.”

The light of the full moon fell on the open letter, and Blair read it without difficulty.

“That’s it, that’s it. Every word of it true,” said Derry in a voice trembling with feeling. “It would kill me to think of her going wrong. But she won’t. Her way is *up*, and mine is *down, down, down*. Give me the letter. I’ll put the right name on it. You don’t mind my seeing what goes to your mother. That’s no more than fair. I tell you I don’t like folks to know where my flower hides. I’ll see it into the bag, and mind you don’t breathe a word of this. Mind!”

Derry’s finger was raised in a threatening attitude as he spoke, and he stopped after had moved some steps away to give again to Blair this sign of silence and secrecy.

Blair lingered on deck, not to enjoy the calm moonlight which so lovingly crowned and silvered the crests of the waves. His eyes were lifted upward, but not to gaze on the deep blue of the moonlit sky. To the great Creator, without whom was not anything made that was made, Blair was pouring out the earnest petitions of his loving heart. For Derry and his little daughter prayed the young Christian, as they

only can pray who believe the blessed words, "If ye shall ask anything in My name, I will do it."

Chapter 16 A Marvel

Weeks flew by while the Molly was cruising about, waiting and watching for the expected East Indiaman. The privateer, meanwhile, was not losing time. Several small merchant vessels came in her way and submitted without a blow to the argument of her compelling pair of guns. These vessels were either stripped of their cargo and then burnt, or else sent with a few sailors as their prize crew to some American port.

The capture of the British merchant ships kept the Molly supplied with the necessaries for her continued cruise, and served besides to calm the impatience of the men, who were beginning to complain of their captain's pertinacious clinging to the hope of taking the East Indiaman, which might already be safely harbored in English waters. There had been dark nights and foggy days in which she might well have passed them, so they reasoned.

But Derry Duck said there was no moving the captain, and grumblers would do best to "keep their tongues between their teeth." The mail-bag of the Molly had gone home on board one of the captured vessels, and it was a pleasant thought to Blair that his dear mother would soon feel almost as if she heard the voice of her son at her side. Derry's little daughter too would receive her letter, and Blair tried to picture her joy as she held this treasure in her hands.

Derry moved about in his usual way, but was inclined to avoid Blair since the night when he had given the boy his confidence. Blair often found it hard to believe that those gentle, tender tones had come from Derry's great closely shut mouth, and that those snapping eyes had softened almost to tears as he spoke of his darling child.

Sunday on board the Molly was precisely like other days, as far as the movements and occupations of the men were concerned. To Blair there was ever a more solemn stillness over the sea, and a more imposing grandeur in the wide canopy of the overhanging sky. One great temple it seemed to him, the sunlit waves its shining floor, the firmament its arching roof, and the unseen angels the countless worshippers, singing, "Praise and glory and honor to be unto the name of God Most High."

In this adoring song Blair heartily joined, and he longed and prayed for the time to come when on every white-winged ship there should be gathered the servants of the Lord of Sabaoth, rejoicing to call upon His holy name and give Him glory for all His wondrous works.

Absorbed in such thoughts as these, Blair was leaning over the side of the ship one Sunday morning. Suddenly a strong voice close at his side spoke with deep earnestness the words, "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name."

Blair turned in astonishment, and saw Derry Duck close at his side. Tears were coursing down those rough cheeks, and the almost blinded eyes were lifted reverently upward, and silently spoke the same language as the song of praise.

Blair's heart bounded. He could not be deceived. One of God's great miracles of grace had been wrought. The devil had been cast out and the ransomed was giving God the glory. It must be so.

Blair seized the hand of his companion, and looking into his face, said quickly, "Oh, Derry, are you really in earnest?"

"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies," continued Derry with deep feeling. "He found me dead in trespasses and sins. He has given me new life in Christ Jesus. Praise and honor unto His holy name."

Tears rushed to the eyes of Blair Robertson. A fervent "Thank God!" was all he could utter. Blair's whole being did indeed "magnify the Lord" at this wonderful evidence of His power. Curses had been changed to praises. The blaspheming lips had been touched by the Savior's hand and taught the language of the children of God. His young servant could not but "stand in awe," and own the might and wonderful mercy of the King of kings.

Derry was the first to break the solemn silence. "Those words never left me, 'Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool,'" he said. "They stuck to me, and rang in my ears, and searched every nook and cranny of my wicked heart. Often I had longed to be a Christian man for the little dear's sake, if not for my own, but I said to myself, 'No, Derry Duck, you are all pitch, you can't be made white,' and Satan helped me to hold onto that way of thinking.

"Your Scripture gave the lie again and again to that. It seemed to say to me, You choose blackness and damnation, when God asks you to wash and be clean. What I've suffered these weeks, no soul out of perdition can tell. The devil clung to me. He would not let me go. He claimed me for his own. He told over to me my dark, hidden sins, and taunted me that I had gone too far to go back now. He hissed in my ear that no power could cleanse and save such as me.

"Then came up the words, 'With God all things are possible.' 'Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow.' 'Christ Jesus came into the world to save *sinner*s.' And he has saved *me*. I am *His*. He has given me a mouth to praise Him. O Blair, think of His wonderful mercy, to take poor wicked Derry Duck into the kingdom heaven."

The boy's heart throbbed and swelled with joy and praise. What was the changing of water to wine, or the calming of the stormy sea, compared to this marvellous miracle wrought in a living human soul? "He to whom much is forgiven, loveth much," said our blessed Savior and in Derry this truth was abundantly verified. The Christ whose blood could wash such as he, was a Lord for whom he was willing to suffer even unto death. The mercy that could stoop to ransom such a transgressor, claimed an affection before which poor Derry's deep love for his earthly darling paled, as the things of time fade into insignificance before the things of eternity.

Blair had longed to see his rude shipmates forsaking their sins. He had prayed and wrestled in prayer for them. Yet now, when he saw the work begun before his eyes, he felt the faithlessness of those very prayers, and knew that they could have won no fulfilment, but for the merits of the great Intercessor in whose name they had ever been offered.

“Why should it be thought a thing incredible to you that that God should raise the dead?” This question of the apostle comes with power to the Christians of our own day. Do you really believe it *possible* for God to raise to newness of life the dead in trespasses and sins? There is no soul so hardened that it cannot be melted to penitence by the touch of the mighty Spirit of God. Let this thought make us fervent, importunate, instant in prayer for the souls that are at death’s door and hasting to destruction.

Can anything but the power of God make the moral man, once proud of his own uprightness, humble as the little child, leaning only on the cross of Christ for salvation? He who works this wonder can do yet more. What are the sins and self-will of the human heart, in comparison with the might of the majesty of JEHOVAH?

He who laid the strong foundations of the earth, and led forth the marshalled millions of the stars in their wonderful order, can mold and fashion the soul of man at His will. Let us not stand doubting, timid, and fainthearted, discouraged by the foul sins which blot and efface in man the fair image of his Maker.

Let us rather “come boldly to the throne of grace,” and plead though the great Intercessor for every wanderer from the right path, and specially and perseveringly for those dear ones of our own households, who, like the prodigal, have left the Father’s house, to be in misery and want in sin’s far foreign land.

Chapter 17 The Conflict

***Each kind affection nature gives
Religion makes more bright,
As sunshine on the landscape falls,
And beautifies with light.***

The patriot had hitherto been sleeping in the heart of Derry Duck, but now he was to awake like a “strong man armed.” There is not one kindly, pleasant, honorable feeling, but is strengthened and ennobled by the touch of divine grace. Nor only so—he who finds himself suddenly alive to his allegiance to God, has at the same time his vision cleared to see around him a thousand hitherto unknown or neglected ties, which bind him to his fellow men. In a whisper of conscience, he is taught that,

***He is the faithful patriot,
Who keeps his Maker’s laws;
Nor will the servant of his Lord
Forsake his country’s cause.***

Among the sins of which Derry Duck was called deeply to repent, was the dishonor which he had brought on his own Christian land, in many a port where his wild deeds had left their guilty trace. What had he done for the glory of Christian America? Bravely he had fought under her flag, but it had been through reckless daring, or a thirst for gold. Not for a noble principle, not for the defense of home and kindred, altar and hearthstone, had he raised his strong right arm.

Blair Robertson rejoiced to see the spirit of true patriotism awaking in the bosom of the hardy sailor. The high-souled boy had now a sharer in his enthusiastic love of his country and devotion to her cause. They joined their labors at once to improve the defenders of the flag, who were their shipmates, and yet a disgrace to their native land. Blair went on in his own peculiar way, while Derry at once announced his position as a Christian mate, who would suffer no profanity in his hearing, and would see the crew of the Molly engage in no deeds on the high seas, not sanctioned by the letters of marque which were their warrant for their blows struck against the common foe.

Some outward change had been produced in the men of the privateer, when all thoughts were suddenly turned into a new channel. A fast-sailing American merchant ship informed Captain Knox that the expected East Indiaman was not more than half a day behind her.

All was at once stir and bustle from stem to stern of the Molly. The sturdy little craft was like the bristling porcupine, ready and impatient for action, when the masts of the East Indiaman slowly rose above the horizon. The privateer gave chase at once, and rapidly neared its prey. The guns of the Molly gave the signal for surrender. The British flag went down, and Derry Duck, with a strong party of boarders was sent at once to seize the valuable prize.

Ready to pounce on their defenseless victims, the eager sailors climbed the sides of the huge vessel and stood upon its deck, cutlass and pistol in hand. Suddenly the hatchways were thrown open, and a band of British soldiers sprang forth with a fierce battle-cry. Derry Duck rushed among them with desperate valor and was heartily seconded by his fearless followers.

From the deck of the Molly, Captain Knox could see the trap into which he had fallen. He could not use his well-loaded guns without destruction to his own men. He could only send reinforcements to their small band, and quietly see the battle fought hand to hand, which a few cannon balls would have settled in a moment.

Several skillful British marksmen were firing at the few who remained on the approaching privateer, when Captain Knox ordered Blair aloft.

Blair obeyed without a moment's hesitation, and sped upward as if in the glee of boyhood's play. Yet in the heart of the young patriot there was prayer for his soul, should it be set free in that hour of danger—there was burning love for his country's cause. The eye of Derry Duck fell on the isolated group who had been firing at the privateer. He saw a well-known form climbing to the dizzy masthead, while the shot were flying around him. Derry rushed in among them with his axe in his hand, and waving it around his head scattered them like leaves before the wind. He stayed long enough to see that Blair had not dropped like a wounded bird among the rigging of the Molly.

Slowly, very slowly, the boy made his way to the deck, then sank down faint and bleeding. A bullet had entered his side, yet he had been so ready for the stroke that it had not thrown him off his guard. Although weak and giddy, he had made his way down his narrow pathway, and reported his duty done. Even the hardy captain gave a pitying glance at the brave boy as he was borne below by the sailors. Yet this was no time for such thoughts in the mind of Captain Knox. The reinforcement from the Molly were on the deck of the East Indiaman. He could hear the hearty cheer of Derry Duck as he placed himself at their head and rushed upon the brave Britons.

Derry's impetuous charge was too much for the soldiers, many of them enfeebled by the climate of India, and going home to recruit in their native breezes. Over the deck swept Derry and his band like a fierce hurricane, which naught can stay or withstand. A shout of victory went up from the Molly, a shout which Derry's excited men sent back over the water in a deafening reply. The East Indiaman was won—her crew were prisoners, her cargo the prize of the Molly.

Where was Blair Robertson amid the general triumph? This was Derry Duck's first question, as his returning footsteps again trod the deck of the privateer. Alone in the deserted cabin, Derry found what was more precious to him now than his share in the glory or the spoils of the recent fight.

The rough sailor asked no questions of the fainting lad. Tearing open Blair's garments, he found at once the wound, and with ready skill and unwavering firmness his sharp knife did the surgeon's duty. The bullet was forced out by Derry's hard fingers, and his rough hands tied the bandage with a touching attempt at tenderness. Blair uttered no murmur. His lips moved gently, but they whispered only words befitting the sinner passing into the presence of his God.

Derry caught the low whisper and understood its meaning. "I can't let you go. What! Going? Oh my lad!" and Derry Duck's hard, blood-marked face was suddenly wet with tears.

Chapter 18 Wages

The East Indiaman was too important a prize to be trusted to any other than the skillful sailor and brave officer, Derry Duck. He was at once ordered to prepare to take her into an American port, with all due formalities.

Derry's sea-chest contained more than his scanty wardrobe, his golden gains during this long cruise were garnered there. Yet he trusted it to the hands of unscrupulous men, while his own arms found a more welcome burden. Tenderly as a mother bears her sleeping infant, Derry clasped a slender figure to his rough bosom, and would suffer no one to give him aid in his office of love. There was a gentle pulsation in the heart so near to his. There was a growing warmth in the form which was so precious to the mate of the Molly.

Blair was still alive, and Derry would allow no duty to interfere with the sacred privilege of caring for the wounded youth, and bearing him home, living or dead, to his mother.

On a couch of Indian luxury, Derry laid the prostrate figure of Blair Robertson, and as he turned to leave the cabin, the face of the once-hardened tar was softened into womanly gentleness as he said, "God help him, and bring him to, sound and well."

The excessive faintness and exhaustion of the wound had indeed seemed to Blair like the lingering, reluctant parting of soul and body—and he might well have adopted the words of that hymn, honored by the murmured breathings of many a dying saint,

***"What is this absorbs me quite,
Steals my senses, shuts my sight,
Drowns my spirit, draws my breath?
Tell me, my soul, can this be death?"***

***"The world recedes, it disappears:
Heaven opens on my eyes, my ears
With sounds seraphic ring:
Lend, lend your wings: I mount, I fly;
O grave, where is thy victory!
O death, where is thy sting!"***

The curtain which separates this lower world from the glories of the unseen bliss above, had grown thin and almost transparent to the eyes of the Christian boy, thus brought to the gates death. Near, very near to him seemed the face of the Savior who had of late been his realized and beloved companion. It was as the mother bows down to her suffering child, that this glimpse of the dear Redeemer was made so plain to the weakened, prostrate boy. He was still in the flesh, and to know weary waiting and suffering, ere health should once more send the glad blood bounding along his veins.

Yet there was work for Blair Robertson on his couch of pain, work to do for his heavenly Master. Blair was not the only sufferer on board the prize.

Often during the homeward voyage, a settee was placed beside the soft couch which Derry had appropriated to Blair's especial use. The occupant of the settee was a huge, muscular, repulsive young man, whose yellow hair lay uncombed on his pillow, while his pale, freckle marked face was distorted with pain, rage, and the torture of a rebellious spirit, when sorely smitten by the hand of God.

Many of Brimstone's fierce shipmates had been hurried into eternity in the midst of the struggle on the deck of the East Indiaman. Blair's coarse tormentor, however, had escaped with his life, but with one leg so wounded and bruised that it was promptly cut off, as the only way of preventing ultimate death. Brimstone ground his teeth and swore fearful imprecations at each movement that reminded him of his loss. It was in vain that Derry bade him be quiet and rather thank God that time was left him for repentance. In Brimstone's hardened heart, there seemed no resting-place for good seed, no soil prepared for the heavenly plant.

His only relief was in forgetfulness of his misfortune, when he was wiled from thoughts of himself by one of Blair's stirring tales of adventure or ballads of the olden time. Blair would weary out his little strength for the benefit of his companion, and yet

win not one word of thanks for his kindly endeavors. Yet he persevered, ever mingling in his stories and songs whispers of the only source of comfort for the afflicted, the only balm for the suffering soul. Brimstone's wild and wicked life had poisoned the very sources and flow of his life's blood. His was no flesh to heal, like that of a healthy child.

While Blair was daily making long strides towards health, fierce pains and burning inflammation seized on Brimstone's stunted limb. Then no voice could soothe him, no words of comfort reach his ear. He chafed and tossed upon his narrow couch like a wounded beast of the forest, and finally refused to suffer any hand to dress or touch the afflicted part.

Pain ceased at last, the end was near. Death would soon claim the loathsome body and bring the polluted soul before the judgment bar. Blair gently told the sufferer the awful truth, yet not from the lips of the lad would he believe such an announcement. It was not until Derry's blunt confirmation made sure the fearful tidings, that the dying man would believe that he stood on the brink of eternity.

We draw the curtain on the horrors of the scenes that followed. May it never be the reader's lot to hear the desperate cries of a ruined soul about to meet its God. The transgressor must eat of the fruit of his choice and sink into the pit towards which his face has been resolutely set. The *wages* of sin is death.

Vain were the pleadings of Blair, and the rougher urgency of Derry, calling on the dying man to lift his eyes to the cross of Christ, trust, and be saved. With a fearful howl of anguish the condemned soul took its flight, while his companions, awe-struck, prayed God to spare them such a doom. On the dark waters the body of Brimstone was cast, to be seen no more until it should rise at the last day, we fear, to the resurrection of damnation.

Lost seemed the labors of Blair Robertson for the good of his worthless shipmate, but no prayerful effort for the holy cause is vain. Blair had other listeners than the ear to which he spoke. Unconscious of all around him, he had but striven to touch and uplift the soul of the dying man. The group of sailors gathered round the departing wretch would soon be scattered far and wide on the rolling seas, thousands of miles from the home of Blair Robertson, and the solemn truths he had spoken might spring up in their hearts and bear fruit unto eternal life.

Chapter 19 Home

A light fall of snow had clothed all Fairport in white, and whispered in the ears of lingering birds that they had better be off for the "sunny south," ere old winter had fairly begun his icy reign. Cold and dark, the waters of the harbor lay encircled by the pure and glistening land. Cheerful wood fires were warming many a hearth-stone, while wives and mothers thought of their absent ones on the sea, and hoped and prayed no chilling storm might be rending their sails and periling the lives so precious to home and native land.

Mrs. Robertson had suffered from many anxious thoughts since the departure of her brave son. But hers was not a timid or a repining spirit. She knew that the same

eye watched over him on sea as on land, and the almighty arm could protect him as well upon the deep waters, as in the shelter of his mother's fireside.

Fairport glasses had plainly seen the British colors mounted by the vessel which had borne away the young pilot. The mother's heart throbbed as she mentally pictured the determined patriotism of her darling son. Not merely a fancy and a picture that scene remained.

The two privateers which had given chase to the dismantled British vessel had an easy victory, and soon brought her triumphantly into Boston Harbor. Hal Hutchings's story won him liberty at once. The English boy had no sooner set foot on land, than he turned his face in the direction of Fairport. Way-worn and foot-sore he was, when he knocked at last at Mrs. Robertson's door. Warmth and welcome, love and gratitude awaited him within.

It was his privilege first to tell the mother how nobly her son had borne himself in the hour of trial and with what calmness he had faced the king of terrors. Poor Hal by turns wept and glowed with enthusiasm, as he dwelt on the praise of his friend, while the mother's heart welled with deep thankfulness at the mercy which had so spared and honored her boy.

Many and many a time was Hal Hutchings forced to tell over his story to auditors of all ages and conditions. The Fairport Guard, formally assembled, demanded the right of a relation especially for them. Every young heart beat high, and every eye flashed with kindling pride in their brave commander, and each one resolved to be, like him, an honor to his home and country. Like Lycurgus, their leader had given his laws, then left his followers to be faithful until his return. Anew they pledged themselves to keep their pure code and strive to be a body which Blair Robertson the patriot would not be ashamed to command.

Hal Hutchings meekly bore the reflected honors that were thrust upon him and well-understood that it was his connection with the absent Fairport boy which made him such an object of interest. Hal however did not object to the golden gains which resulted from his new position. Everybody was ready to give him "a job" now, and his old clothes were soon exchanged for new ones, bought with his own money and adapted to his own taste.

Not a day passed that did not see Hal Hutchings at Mrs. Robertson's door, to lend his strong arm and willing feet to do for her some little kindness, a true labor of love. When the Sabbath was wearing away, Hal might be seen moving his coarse finger slowly along the sacred page, reading holy words, to which Mrs. Robertson from time to time added her voice of explanation or gentle persuasive counsel.

So the chilling weeks of autumn passed at Fairport, and now the first snow was ushering in November's dreary rule. A strong landward breeze was rolling the waves one after another as in a merry chase towards the shore, while the Fairport Guard were gathered on the wharf, valiantly fighting a battle with snowballs.

The appearance of a ship entering the harbor soon called the attention of the combatants away from the "charge, rally, and charge again," in which they had just been engaged. Men muffled in great coats came out of the neighboring stores and offices, and shivered in the cold wind as they bent their eyes on the stranger ship, for so at once they pronounced her.

“British build and rigging, but the right colors flying. She knows the channel. See, she makes it as well as if she had Joe Robertson himself on board. There now, don’t she come up the harbor as if this was her home and she knew just where she was going to cast anchor?”

Remarks like these dropped from the lips of the eager watchers,

“I shouldn’t wonder if it was our captain coming from foreign parts,” said a small member of the Fairport Guard. “He’s took that ship as likely as not and is coming home in her.”

“Pshaw, child,” burst from several listeners.

“I wish we did know where that boy is,” said another speaker. “He’s a credit to this place, that’s certain.”

“He’s an honor to America,” said Hal Hutchings, who was not allowed to give his views on all occasions. Hal’s face was bent forward and his eye was fixed on a slender lad who was anxiously looking towards the shore. “It’s him, it’s him! It’s Blair, I tell you! It’s him,” shouted Hal, throwing his cap in the air and giving three leaps that would have astounded a catamount.

Hal Hutchings fought his way to the privilege of being the first to grasp Blair’s hand, as he stepped ashore. Then there was a perfect rush of hands and a cheer from young and old that Derry Duck said was the pleasantest music that ever he heard.

“Where is she? Where’s my mother, Hal?” said Blair as soon as he could speak.

“Hearty, hearty, and just like an angel as she always was,” said Hal vociferously. The boy’s joy seemed to have made him almost beside himself. “She don’t know you’re here, she don’t. I’ll be off to tell her.”

“No, Hal, no. I’ll be there in a minute myself,” said Blair, moving off at a marvellous pace for a boy who had been wounded so lately.

The Fairport Guard fell into rank and followed their commander, while a motley crowd brought up the rear.

Blair stood on the familiar door-step. He laid his hand on the lock, and paused for a second to calm his swelling emotions, in which gratitude to God was even stronger than the deep love for his mother. Quietly sat Mrs. Robertson, plying the needle at her fireside, when the door gently opened and her son stood before her.

That was a moment of a joy too deep for description. While the mother and son were clasped in a long embrace, Hal could not help having his share of the interview by crying out, “He’s come home! Be n’t it splendid? He’s come! Dear, dear, I shall burst.”

“You dear good fellow,” said Blair, throwing his arm over Hal’s shoulder, “you’ve been a comfort to my mother, I know.”

“That he has,” said Mrs. Robertson. “It was he who told me how your noble courage saved your native town and the very home of your mother from the flames. I thank God for such a son.”

“Then I did what you would have wished, mother. Your praise is my precious reward,” said Blair with affectionate simplicity.

“God has sustained you in the path of duty, and brought you in safety to your home and your mother. Let us thank Him for all His mercies, my son. Hal is no stranger to prayer now, he will gladly join us.”

It was indeed the voice of true thanksgiving which rose from those grateful hearts. He who has contrived joys for the meanest of His creatures, doubtless takes a pure pleasure in the happiness which He gives to His chosen ones even here, and rejoices to know that it is but the foreshadowing of that eternal delight in store for them where parting shall be no more.

Chapter 20 Sacred Joy

Sweetly the Sabbath bells sounded in the ear of Blair Robertson. What a joy it was to be once more at home, once more in his native land. How delightful the thought that prayer had already gone up from many family altars, and already Christ's little ones were gathering to be taught of Him and sing His praise. To dwell among the ungodly is indeed a bitter trial. The society of the unprincipled had been to Blair like a dark cloud overshadowing his pathway, and it was a new delight to him to be once more among the people of God. What a blessing it seemed to him to be a dweller in the land of light and liberty, where the free worshippers might pray and praise without let or hinderance from ungodly men.

Full of such glad thoughts, he walked towards the church so endeared to him by many hallowed associations. His mother was at his side, and his kind townsmen on every hand were giving him their cordial greeting, while the little children looked at him with curious wonder, as the brave boy whom even their fathers “delighted to honor.”

Once in the house of God, all other thoughts were hushed in the mind of Blair, by the remembrance of the presence into which he was now ushered. It was a joy to him to join in heartfelt prayer, and praise with so many true children of God, and to stand among his brethren who like him could say from the heart, “I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.”

A deep, strong voice near him made the young worshipper aware of the presence of Derry Duck in the solemn assembly, joining with his whole heart in the hymn of praise. Ah, men might heap honor upon the young patriot, and applaud his courage in the hour of danger, and welcome was their cordial tribute, but their loudest acclamations had not power to wake in the soul of Blair Robertson such deep, grateful joy as the sight of that ransomed sailor, brought home to the Father's house.

Every word of the service had its meaning to Derry Duck. He confessed anew the sins of his burdened heart and accepted once more the free forgiveness found in Christ Jesus. He called on God as his Father, and seemed to be professing before men and angels the faith for which he was willing to die.

The clergyman gave forth the simple notice, “A person desires to return thanks for a safe return from sea.” All eyes were suddenly bent upon Blair with loving pride. Very deep and true was the thanksgiving of the Fairport congregation for the return of

their brave deliverer, but who shall tell what passed in the mother's heart or in that of her rejoicing son?

Chapter 21 Conclusion

It was in vain that Blair tried to persuade Derry Duck to see his mother and accept her thanks for his kindness to her wounded boy. Derry declared that he would hear no thanks, the odds were all on the other side. And as for sitting down in a Christian woman's parlor, and making himself easy there, he wasn't fit for that. A forgiven sinner he believed he was, and could bow in the house of God with his fellow-men, but he was a beginner in the ways of godliness, too much tainted with his miserable past to be right company for those who had never gone so far astray. Besides, he pleaded, he had his little flower to see, in her own little nook. It would be a shame to him to set his foot on any other threshold before he had spoken to her. To her his first spare hours belonged.

Derry returned from his visit to his child with his heart more than ever full of love to his darling. She had received his letter, and rejoiced over it with great joy, declaring that not a treasure she possessed was so precious. Derry had allowed himself but the usual short interview, ever trembling lest he should mar her delight in her father by some knowledge of the wild life he had led. Yet, when he laid his hand on her head at parting, he could not resist speaking the fervent, "God bless you, darling," which stirred at his heart.

She had clasped and kissed his hand with a sudden gladness, as if such words from him were both a joy and a surprise. He waited for no questions, but hurried away.

"When the war is over, you will come home and settle down with your little housekeeper, and let her take care of you. How glad that will make her," said Blair persuasively.

"I shall never be fit company for her," said Derry firmly, "I know it, my boy. True, I'm a changed man. I trust I'm forgiven for the sake of the Crucified. But I've a pit within that needs purging thrice over. A man like me is not made into a saint in a minute, though he may read his pardon clear. 'Following hard after,' shall be my motto, 'following on to know the Lord.'

"I'm not the one to sit down at the chimney-side with a creature like her. No, Blair, I tell you no. Look here, my boy. Here's my path of duty. I've a God to glorify, I've a country to serve. Rough sailors won't think of my ways as she would. If I'm like a rock in what I know is right, and God will help me, I can do 'em good. I can set up the right banner among 'em. I can make the forecandle praise the great and holy name. It is for this I mean to work. It is for this I mean to be a sailor now.

"There's not a port I've ever set foot in, but I've shamed a Christian land there. I mean to put into every port where I've showed my face and let them see I've changed my colors. Where I've done evil, there I mean to try to do good. I can't wipe out by-gones. They are written in the book *up there*. But there's One in white robes will stand for me before His Father's throne.

“I’ll work for Him while there’s life in me. And when I die, I hope it will be giving praise and glory to His name. I want to do my country credit too. It’s no shining thing, to get in the papers, that I expect to do, but just a patient-serving God, that brings honor to the land where a man was born.

“You will pray for me, I know, when I’m off on the water. And if I die—your mother knows the name—she’ll go to my little darling, and tell her how her father loved her, and hopes to live with her in the kingdom of heaven. I shall be fit to sit down with her at that marriage-feast. I shall have on the ‘white robes,’ and poor Derry Duck will have a ‘new name,’ by which the angels will call him, and his little darling will not blush to hear it. I shall live with her there.”

Derry dashed the tears from his eyes as he spoke, but he firmly repeated, “Here, I must labor alone, and struggle to grow like the Master. *There*, none shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect, and I and my pretty one will join with her mother in singing round the throne. Good-by, my boy. God bless you. You have sent out a Christian sailor to work for Him on the seas. You have sent out a lover of his country to strive to do her honor in his closet on his knees, at his duty in the fight, and in his hammock when they drop him into the deep sea.”

Derry wrung the hand of the young patriot and then moved away with quick uncertain steps. A lonely man, yet not alone, there was a comfort and joy in the rough sailor’s heart. His life of labor was to be a glad voyage to a better country, whose harbor lights would be ever-leading him onward, and whose shining shore would ever glisten for him in the certain future beyond the grave.

The young patriot had indeed been blessed in winning such a devoted servant to the Master’s cause and such a Christian sailor to maintain the honor of his native land. There was more such work for Blair Robertson and for it he steadily labored.

Peace came with its illuminations and festivities. The sword was laid aside on sea and land, yet Blair might still be serving the country he so dearly loved. His example, his fireside talk, and his glowing words in the assemblies of his people, might ever cast their weight in the right balance. The outcasts and the immigrant were still to be so trained and ennobled as to make them fit citizens of our free and happy land. Above all, by his prayers and his holy living, he might call down on his home and country such a blessing as ever encompasses the dwelling of him who feareth the Lord.

To be such a patriot was the aim of Blair Robertson. Would that there were many so to live and labor. Then might we be sure of victory over all our enemies and of the abounding blessings of lasting peace.

THE END

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