

he was appointed ambassador to a foreign Court; and the first recollections which I retain of him was his return and splendid entry to the castle, in my eighth year. In the meantime, a maiden aunt had officiated as mistress, in his absence; the pride and malice of whose heart had rendered her extremely obnoxious to all around her. In the cottage of her nurse, Agnes always found an affectionate bosom in which to repose her little griefs, and the soothing of tenderness were ever ready to calm the perturbations of her mind. It is impossible to define the feelings of childhood; for, as we grow advanced in years, the softer sympathies become deadened by intercourse with the world, and witnessing the scenes of misery which everywhere present themselves. Solomon hath said, Childhood and youth are vanity: yet what would I give to possess the same innocence of heart, the same purity of thought, which I enjoyed in my early years! In our amusements, Agnes and myself were inseparable; and when removed from the haughty eye of her aunt, we indulged in those little endearments which innocence inspires. My father possessed a cultivated taste, and was well acquainted with the works of the best writers of the day. His leisure hours were occupied in reading, (for through the kindness of the steward, he had free access to Sir Edward's library, and could obtain the loan of any book he wanted) and imparting instruction to myself. At the age of six I could read tolerable well, and understand what I read; but no book delighted me so much as the affecting tale of 'Paul and Virginia.' This was my favorite volume; and often has the sweet Agnes mingled her tears with mine when perusing its pages. She had an elder brother, but he seldom associated with us, for his aunt had centered all her regards in him, and instilled into his mind every notion of high birth and exalted parentage. Yet he was not happy; for when he did deign to share our childish sports, I can well remember the gusts of passion which agitated him, if I did not immediately comply to his wishes, and submit to his caprice; but the last two years before Sir Edward's return, he had been under the management of a tutor, whose kindness I shall never forget. This worthy and excellent man was also a constant visitor at the cottage, whenever his duties would permit; and to his instructions I am indebted for whatever knowledge I possess.

When in my eighth year, intelligence arrived of Sir Edward's return: and much as I desired to see the father of Agnes, still I can remember a dejection came upon my spirits, and I seemed to dread it as something which foreboded evil. He received me however, with great kindness as the foster-brother of Agnes; but never shall I forget his terrible look, when, with the playful familiarity of childhood, the dear girl put her little white arms round my neck. It was the first time I had ever witnessed a storm of passion, and it left an impression on my mind which time can never efface. I was removed from the castle; and nothing but the persuasions of his sister and a nobleman who had accompanied him, would have prevented the dismissal of my father from his situation. In a few days afterwards, the Baronet, with his children and sister, went to the metropolis, and I was left desolate. Four years elapsed, before we met again; but though nothing is sooner erased from the memory of a child than past events, yet the remembrance of the companion who shared our infantine amusements seldom quits us through life: and so I found it with Agnes. Since we had parted I had made great proficiency in learning; I could write and draw with accuracy. Nor was I deficient in athletic exercises; young as I was nothing gave me more delight than skimming through the liquid element, climbing the lofty mountains, or breaking through the thick mazes of the forest. The scenery in 'Paul and Virginia' raised a desire on my mind to imitate the former; and often have I ascended the highest tree, sitting for hours on its topmost branches, and gazing towards the road where I had last seen the equipage of Sir Edward disappear. We were now in our twelfth year; the Baronet was gone abroad, taking his son with him; and Agnes, with her aunt (who had married a gouty old Colonel), took up their abode at the Castle. The Colonel was an 'Honorable,' but the very reverse of his lady or her brother; he was destitute of their pride, and I was frequently permitted to pass whole days at the castle, in reading to, and amusing him. In these pursuits Agnes was generally at my side, when the absence of her aunt allowed it; and I numbersome of those hours as the happiest in my life. Her instructress was a mild, amiable woman, of christian meekness and piety: she had drank deep of the cup of sorrow, and there was a pensive melancholy imprinted on her countenance. Thus passed two happy years, during which time I felt my heart more strongly linked with every thing that concerned the gentle Agnes. I was yet unacquainted with the cause of these feelings; and the first time that the truth opened to my heart, was on my fifteenth birth-day. My father, whom I had occasionally assisted in his

labors, gave a little *fete*. It was the height of summer; the most respectable youths and lasses in the village were assembled to a dance, in the park. The colonel was wheeled to the spot in his garden-chair; and Agnes graced the festival.

The colonel had deceived his lady as to where her niece was going, and no one esteemed her sufficiently to state the fact. The dance commenced, and Agnes was my partner. Oh! then I felt how precious she was to my heart, as her light airy form was pressed in my arms: but when I contrasted the coarseness of my apparel with the delicate texture of her dress, a pang of deep humiliation stung me to the soul. At this moment a young man, in a travelling dress, advanced towards us. It was Sir Edward's son. His face was flushed with anger; he seized the arm of his sister with a wild impetuosity that made her cry out, and I immediately interfered. He raised his riding whip, and struck me—yes, struck me to the earth! I sprang upon my feet, but was instantly held fast, and forced to the cottage, while Agnes was hurried away to the castle. Ah! then I felt what it was to love, and despair took possession of my mind. All other considerations seemed swallowed up, and I determined to fly from the place. Parents, kindred, were forgotten; and ere the dawn broke upon the cottage or the castle, I was far on my way from home. In the early part of the morning I was accosted by a gentleman-like man, who offered me a seat in a post-chaise. This I gladly accepted, and found he was a naval officer, about to join his ship at Plymouth. The world was all before me, and he proposed my 'serving my country.' To my romantic mind there was a magic in the expression; and before another day had elapsed, I was entered on the books of the Amphion frigate as a volunteer. There was no time for reflection. I was wearied with my journey, sleep overpowered my faculties, and before the dawn arose, the ship was out at sea. Never shall I forget my sensations when I first beheld the expanse of the ocean, without a single speck to break its monotonous appearance: blue waters all around, and the clear heaven above, while the tall ship reflecting her image on the waves 'breasted the lofty surge.' I was ignorant of *etiquette*, and without ceremony, evidently addressed my friend the lieutenant; but he repulsed my familiarity with coldness, and directed a lad to take me to his cabin, where he immediately joined me. Here he explained the nature of the service, and the distance it was necessary to keep up between the officers and the crew. He then made inquiry as to my clothes, and generously supplied me with some linen from his own stock. The ship's tailor altered one of his jackets, and in a short time I was equipped as a sailor. But ah! how many hours of bitter mortification and anguish did I undergo! I had every thing to learn, was often ill-used, and every day carried me farther away from all I loved. The frigate was bound to the East Indies, and months must elapse before I could inform my parents of my situation. Remorse preyed upon my mind: I had not contemplated leaving England, much more leaving it without letting them know where I was: but now their affectionate hearts were rung with my indiscretion. Agnes too!—but the remembrance of the sweet girl was ever accompanied by the recollection of the blow I had received, and I determined to persevere in the profession I had engaged in. The lieutenant was my sincere friend, and I endeavored, by every means in my power, to profit by his kindness, and testify my gratitude. At first I was much persecuted by the seamen; but when they found me desirous of learning, and attentive to my duty, there was not a man who did not render me assistance. On one occasion, while the ship was lying nearly becalmed, one of the junior midshipmen, as he was playing about the rigging, fell overboard. I instantly dashed into the sea, and supported him till a boat was lowered down, and took us up. This act, for which I claim no merit, brought me under the immediate notice of the Captain, and I was removed to the quarter-deck, to do duty as a midshipman. Every one expressed satisfaction at my promotion, and my new messmates vied with each other in manifesting their generous feelings.

After a passage of four months, we arrived at Madras; and I lost no time in writing, to acquaint my parents of my destination: but, unfortunately, the letter never reached their hands, as the ship which conveyed it was wrecked off the Cape and every soul perished. Scarcely had we time to refit and victual, when orders were given to proceed to the China seas, as two French frigates had been seen cruising among the islands. For six months we continued in search of them, but without success; and at the expiration of that time we returned to Madras. It would be needless for me to enumerate the many places we visited. Our stay in India occupied three years, and we were then directed to sail for England, with despatches.

During all this time I had never heard from home; but still the fond remembrances of early enjoyments

in that sweet spot, clung to my soul, and became the subject of many sketches from my pencil, some of which the captain had taken to ornament his cabin. Agnes, in all her loveliness, was always present to my imagination; prompting me to many an honorable action, and restraining me from every thing which could bring discredit on my affection. To her dear image I was indebted for the respect and esteem I enjoyed from every one on board. The master's mate had been promoted to a lieutenantcy, and I was appointed to fill the vacant station. Often did I rejoice in my heart at the prospect of once more embracing those who were so dear to me; and as often did the sickening sensations of distracting doubt agitate my breast.

One lovely evening, the sky was beautifully serene—the ocean, like a clear mirror, reflected the golden rays of the setting sun, and the light breeze just lulled the spreading sails to sleep, propelling the ship almost imperceptibly along, at the rate of three knots an hour. It was one of those evenings that baffle the painter's art, and only the poet can pourtray. The first watch was drawing to a close; it had struck seven bells, the seamen on the look-out had proclaimed 'all's well!' and every thing was again hushed to solemn stillness. I was standing on the gangway, full of pensive movements, watching a bright star, just kindling on the verge of the horizon; it beamed like a ray of hope, irradiating the gloom which hung heavy on my heart. Suddenly it expanded like the glowing meteor and the ocean was illumined with a red and fiery tinge. I was struck with astonishment; but at the same moment an exclamation resounded fore and aft, 'A ship on fire! a ship on fire!' and the horrid conviction was, alas! too evident. In a few minutes the flames were distinctly visible, and the ship was pronounced to be about five miles distant. Never before did I witness such alacrity among our crew as in that hour of peril. The captain, and every officer and man, were on deck immediately; and as it was impossible for the frigate to approach in time to rescue the sufferers, before ten minutes had elapsed from the period of first noticing the fire, every boat was in motion towards the scene of danger.

It fell to my lot to command the captain's gig, a swift-pulling boat, with seven men, who bent to their oars with all the might of brave and generous spirits. As we drew near, the destructive element raged with increasing fury; and the shrieks of the wretched creatures came mingling with the crackling of the flames and the crash of falling spars. The frigate had fired guns and hoisted lights, to shew that succour was at hand; and the boats' crews occasionally cheered, to announce that they were approaching to their rescue. The shouts were returned from the burning ship; but so wild, so fearful, that they sounded like the expiring yell of agony, that still clung to hope and life. I would have dashed instantly alongside, but the old coxswain respectfully warned me of the danger of such a measure, 'as the boat,' he said, 'would instantly be swamped by the crowds that would rush into her.' We were now within a short distance of the vessel, and oh! what a sight of horror was presented! The ports were all open, and the flames, pouring from them as from as many mouths, seemed eager for their prey. Numbers of poor creatures were swimming towards us, whilst others held pieces of shattered spars, with strong convulsive grasp. The fore part of the ship was nearly consumed, and the upper part abaft was rapidly falling in. Those who could swim, we left for other boats to take up; and pulling under the stern, we remain unobserved, by the gun-room ports, while the fiery fragments came tumbling thick upon us. Trusting to my skill in swimming, should it be deemed necessary to jump overboard, I instantly entered the port hole; and the ship having turned before the wind, what little air there was, drove the greatest of the smoke forward; yet there was an almost insupportable heat, and the suffocating vapours bid defiance to my efforts to penetrate farther. A feeling I could not account for—an indescribable feeling—urged me on, and I reached the gun-room ladder, at the bottom of which lay a human being, whose sufferings, apparently, were over. I passed my hand quickly to the heart, to feel if any palpitation yet remained, and discovered that the individual was a female: she was yet living, and in a few minutes was safely in the boat. Again I returned with three of my crew, and soon had the satisfaction of rescuing eight poor wretches, who lay in a state of insensibility, and must soon have perished. Stimulated by success we penetrated to the burning deck above; and never shall I forget the horror of the spectacle. Here all was brilliancy and light; and the devouring element, rolling its huge volumes over many a devoted victim, roared in its fierceness, as if to stifle the thrilling scream of the last death-pang. Several half-burnt and mangled bodies could be distinguished in the flames, and many others lay in a senseless state, unconscious of the awful doom awaiting them. Near the transom, abaft, sat a mother, with an