

LITERATURE, &c.

THE LAND PIRATES.

OR, THE CAVE OF WYRRAL.

TOM SMITHERS, an honest fisherman of Liverpool, after having been cast away upon the breakers of Wyrral, is thus described, discovering a den of Land Pirates:

"Smithers leaned his back against one of the surrounding rocks, regretting his lost boat, yet thankful for his own preservation, when a bright flash suddenly glared upon his sight, immediately succeeded by the report of a gun, in a direction with which he was too well acquainted not to know what imminent danger the vessel from whence it proceeded must be in. 'Aye, aye; you may fire,' cried he bitterly, 'but it will be long before you get any help on these bleak shoals; sooner will the land pirates beat out your brains with a handspike, than than throw you a rope's end to save your precious lives. If I had but my boat yet, I might do some good, but she has deserted, like all other friends, and left the old stamp to wither by itself.'

Again the signal gun of danger roared aloud as if appealing to the heavens themselves for pity and assistance, and then all was silent. Even the ruthless winds appeared to be abating their fury, and wailing over the destruction they had caused—like the remorseless groans of the convicted criminal, when it was too late to recal his crime.

Poor Smithers, after listening long in vain for a renewal of some sounds from the vessel, (for the signals of distress, they proved that she and her crew were still existing) he turned disconsolately towards the rocks, and entering one of the largest caverns, threw himself upon the ground and endeavoured to forget his woes in sleep. But before the power of slumber could steep his wearied senses in oblivion, he was startled by the sound of harsh voices near him, apparently approaching the cave in which he lay.

'Haul him along, Jack Brown!' cried a hoarse voice. 'But he wont come,' answered another at a greater distance. 'Then blast him, knock his brains out,' replied the first speaker, 'he's given us more trouble than he's worth already, and it's like enough to be his end at last.'

Then there seemed to be a confused noise, as of a number of men in dispute, and immediately after the whole band entered the mouth of the cavern in which Smithers was crouching—for he had sprung upon his feet at the first noise, and as they drew nearer, had receded into a deep and narrow fissure, which was fortunately close at hand, and effectually concealed him from the casual observation of the passers by, though at the same time, they were distinctly visible to him. He saw (by the light of several lantern which they carried) about a dozen ruffian-like men pass into the interior of a cavern, forcing along a person who seemed frequently and strenuously to resist their efforts, and attempt to look behind; and in a few moments four others appeared, bearing between them a female figure, apparently in a state of insensibility.

So soon as the glare of the lights had begun to cast a faint flickering reflection upon the lofty roof, Smithers stole from his place of concealment, and followed the plunderers at a cautious distance. The cavern for about thirty paces, rose in a lofty and wide-extended arch; it then gradually diminished in height, until the passenger was compelled to stoop low to continue his course, and through this defile, our hero (if so we may call him) pursued the steps of the retreating crew, until the whole band stopped, and one of the foremost removed a large stone, which had seemed like a termination of the vault.

The party disappeared through the cavity thus laid open, with a celerity which showed that the vault beyond must be sufficiently high to permit them to move erect, and the stone was immediately replaced in its former position, presenting an obstacle to the further sight of the seaman:—Near this he remained, listening to the retreating footsteps, until they appeared to die away in the distance. He then stooped forward to endeavour to remove the stone, but just as he had grasped it, he heard a voice close behind him saying: 'This is a queer job, Dick Williams, what dost think old Ironhead means to do with these live stock?—why could'nt he knock 'em on the head, as he always did before?' 'It's little I know or care either,' replied another, 'belike he thinks the lass 'll make a graidly house-keeper, and look well a'ter the whiskey casks, or may be, he thinks there's something about 'em worth hunting for, and he don't like to make a noise outside; he's more upon his sharps than he was before the light-house job. Wasn't that a game trick, Bill?—we've had rare fun amongst the split timbers since—none but old Ironhead would have had pluck enough to set that old steer 'em well a smoking.'

'Hush! he's coming back, and if he hears thee call him old Ironhead, he'll make thy head softer than it is—and there's no no need of that any way,' said the other speaker, and immediately afterwards a number of confused voices were heard, and the sound of approaching footsteps, when old Tom immediately made the best of his way to his former hiding place.

Scarcely had he attained the requisite spot of shelter, before the whole crew hurried from the cavern, no doubt in search of further plunder.—Tom followed them at a distance, and saw, by the light of the moon, which now beamed at intervals through the scattered clouds, that the tide had receded to a sufficient distance from the projecting headlands to afford a safe passage between them and the subsiding waters. Round the western of these headlands they had, doubtless, dragged their prisoners, on entering the bay, and behind it they again disappeared.

No sooner had their retiring figures ceased to be visible, than our adventurer retraced his steps to the cavern, and, with as much speed as he was able to exert, felt his way along the low narrow passage, until he reached the stone which terminated it. This, with a little exertion, he removed, but started back on

perceiving a light on the other side. After a pause of some minutes, finding no sound to follow the removal of the barrier, he ventured to step forward, and found himself in a large square chamber, in the midst of which stood a rough table, composed of spars of wood spliced together, on which was placed a lamp, which, from its appearance, had probably been purloined from the cabin of some stranded vessel. From one corner of the apartment, a narrow, though lofty passage, seemed to lead further, as if to some inner room, whilst around every other part of the walls, were piled casks of spirits and tobacco, surrounded by every description of Goods, evidently the spoil of such ill fated vessels as had been cast upon that desolate coast.

After a hasty glance around, to ascertain that none of its murderous inhabitants still remained within the cave, Smithers raised the lamp, and proceeded cautiously along the passage before him, which, after a gradual and winding descent of about twenty yards, terminated in a chamber much smaller than the last, in the centre of which rose several wooden spars, as a support to the roof, which was of a much softer and more sandy nature than the passages which led to it. To one of those spars was tied a person who appeared about forty years of age, habited in a military great coat, which still displayed a great profusion of ornamental lace, though much defaced with mud, and dripping with water; to another pillar was bound a female figure seemingly just arrived at that age when youth and womanhood are blending into one. Her slight form seemed to be prevented from sinking to the earth, solely by the supporting bard which fettered her, and her dark tresses fell streaming round her form, as her head drooped nearly insensible upon her shoulder.

With as much precaution as a sailor could possibly use, did honest Tom Smithers make known, the purport of his having joined them, and the hopes he entertained of their escape. But still the possibility of deliverance had a moment before appeared so distant, that the thrill of hope was now so sudden, that the lovely and helpless female sufferer, as she heard it, uttered a faint scream, and lost what little portion of consciousness had still remained to her.

A few moments had only elapsed ere the seaman's knife had severed the cords which bound the father (for such he was) and his gentle daughter. Raised in the arms of the sailor and the sire, the insensible fair one was borne swiftly beneath the overhanging arches, until the sea breeze once more greeted the captives and their rescuer with its reviving freshness. The rough blasts seemed to have expended all their fury, though the waves had not yet regained their usual calmness, as the anxious parent supported his unconscious child upon his breast, while the worthy tar bore water in his hat to bathe her snowy temples. The application with the aid of the still fresh blowing sea breeze, quickly recalled her senses to their accustomed station, and the fugitives hastened along the shore with as much speed as their exhausted charge could bear, not without casting many a solicitous look behind them, and often fancying they could distinguish the sound of their pursuers' approaching footsteps on the wavering gale.

Just as they had gained the point where the Mersey unites its waters with the channel, they could discern by the light of the breaking dawn, a small vessel beating out of the river, which the experienced eye of Smithers soon observed to bear a royal streamer at her topmast head. At the desire of his companions, (the weaker of whom was again almost fainting with fatigue and exertion, to which she had been so little accustomed) the seaman watched his opportunity as a tack brought the vessel near the strand, to hail her with that cry which every son of the ocean well understands. He was successful in his efforts, and a few minutes brought her boat in contact with the shore.

A short statement of their situation and danger, induced the midshipman to convey them to the cruiser, which was lying too at a short distance for her boat, and on being received on board her, a few words determined the officer who commanded her to steer direct for the cavern, and attempt to surprise the ruffians in their den. They accordingly made towards the spot as quickly as the still adverse, though now not boisterous wind would permit them, and by the assistance of their boat, landed the greater part of their crew, together with the fisherman and the stranger, both of whom were resolute in their determination to take their part in the struggle which was to be expected with such a merciless and daring band of desperadoes.

They had taken the precaution of bringing a dark lantern from the cruiser, and with the fisherman for their guide, they proceeded with silent steps to explore the smuggler's retreat. For some time they feared the inhabitants were absent, for not a sound arose from the inner cave, even when they reached the stone barrier, which alone divided them from their foe's hold.

Smithers removed the stone, but on stepping forward into the chamber, stumbled over a fragment of rock, and fell. The fall was instantly succeeded by the discharge of a pistol, the ball of which entered the left shoulder of the commander of the cruiser, and in a few moments the whole band were awakened from their sleep, and engaged their assailants, hand to hand, with the ferocity of tigers.

But those few moments were sufficient to admit the whole of the besiegers within the vault, and, although the ruffians fought with all the frenzy of desperation, even desperation itself is a weak opponent to the determined courage of British sailors. Amid the confusion, the chief of the bandits had almost forced his way to the narrow passage which offered the only possibility of escape, when a blow from the hatchet with which Tom had armed himself, proved that his 'iron head' was not proof against the stroke of justice, and levelled him with the dust.

Scarcely had five minutes elapsed, ere thirty lawless men lay breathless in the midst of their ill gotten spoils, and left not a foe to contend with their victorious invaders. They had returned, just at day break, laden with plunder, and thrown themselves on the earth to sleep, totally careless about the pre-

sent state of their prisoners, feeling confident of the impracticability of their escape.

Only three of the cruiser's brave crew fell a sacrifice, but many were severely wounded by the desperate marauders.

A few years rolled on, and an old man was to be seen each sunny day, with his beaming daughter beside him, sitting on the beach in front of a lovely and commodious cottage in Gloucestershire, relating to a group of pleased and listening children, the providential escape of their mother and their grand-father, Sir Charles Montgomery, on the shores of Cheshire.

The cottage and the land around it were the gift of the beings he preserved, and that happy man was old Tom Smithers.

FROM THE NEW MONTHLY MAGAZINE.

REVISITING THIS EARTH AFTER DEATH.

THE late popular Mr Smith, is a gentleman who acquired the power of rising twice from his grave to see how affairs were carried on in his absence, once shortly after his decease, and the second time ten years afterwards. The first time he finds all mourning and desolation; one of the few changes he sees is, that a Mr Mitts has succeeded him as candidate for a Seat in Parliament, as heir to the chalk 'for ever' on the town walls. His second visit to earth is as follows:—

THE ten years of my sepulchral slumber passed away, and the day arrived for my second and last peep at my disconsolate widow, and wide circle of disconsolate friends.

The monument already mentioned opened its ponderous and marble jaws' for the last time, and invisibly I glided to the gates of my old domain. The old Doric lodge had been pulled down and a Gothic one, all thatch and rough poles, little windows and creepers (a sort of cottage gone mad) had been erected in its stead. I entered, and could not find my way to my own house; the road had been turned, old trees had been felled, and new plantations had been made; ponds had been filled up, and lakes had been dug; my own little 'Temple of Friendship' was not to be found, but a temple dedicated to the blind God had been erected in a conspicuous situation. 'Ah!' thought I, 'her love is a buried love, but not the less dear. To me—to her dear departed—to her 'sainted Anthony'—this temple has been dedicated!

So entirely was the park changed that I did not arrive at the mansion until the hour of dinner. There was a butle at the hall door, servants were assembled in gay liveries, carriages were driving up and setting down, and lights gleamed from the interior. A dinnerparty!—no harm in that; on the contrary I think it fortunate. Doubtless my widow, still in the sober grey of ameliorated mourning, had summoned round her the best and the dearest of my friends; and though their griefs were somewhat mellowed by time, they remembered me in their calm yet cheerful circle, and fondly breathed my name! Unseen I passed into the dining room—all that I beheld was new to me—the house had been new built upon a grander scale—and the furniture was magnificent! I cast my eyes round the table, where the guests were now assembled. Oh! what bliss was mine! At the head sat my widowed wife, all smiles, all loveliness, all pink silk and flowers—not so young when I last beheld her, but very handsome and considerably fatter. At the foot (oh! what a touching compliment to me!) sat one of my oldest, dearest, best of friends, Mr Mitts, the son of a baronet who resided in my neighbourhood; his father too was there, with his antiquated lady, and the whole circle was formed by persons whom, living, I had known and loved. My friend at the bottom of the table did the honors well, (though he omitted to do what he ought to have done—drink to my memory) and the only thing that occurred to startle me before the removal of dinner, was my widow's calling him 'my dear.' But there was something gratifying even in that, for it must have been of me she was thinking; it was a slip of the tongue, that plainly showed the fond yearning of the widowed heart.

When the dessert had been arranged on the table, she called to one of the servants, saying, 'tell Miggins to bring the children.' What could she mean? Who was Miggins; and what children did she wish to be brought? I never had any children! Presently the door flew open, and in ran eight noisy, healthy beautiful brats. The younger ones congregated round the hostess; but the two eldest, both fine boys, ran to Mr Mitts, at the bottom of the table, and each took possession of a knee. They both strongly resembled Mitts; and what was my astonishment when he exclaimed, addressing my widow, 'Mary, my love, may I give them some orange?'

'What could he mean by 'Mary my love?'—a singular mode of addressing a deceased friend's relic! But the mystery was soon explained. Sir Marmaduke Mitts filled his glass, and after insisting that all the company should follow his example, he said to his son, 'This is your birth-day, Jack; here's your health my boy, and may you and Mary long live happy together! Come, my friends, the health of Mr and Mrs Mitts!'

So then, after all, I had come out on an exceeding cold day to see my widow do the honors as Mrs Mitts!

'When is your birthday?' said Sir Marmaduke to his daughter-in-law.

'In June,' she replied; 'but I have not been in the habit of keeping birthdays till lately; poor Mr Smith could not bear them to be kept.'

'What's that about poor Smith?' said my successor to my house, my wife, and other appurtenances. 'Do you say that Smith could not bear birthdays? Very silly of him, then; but poor Smith had his oddities.'

'Oh!' said my widow and Mr Mitt's wife, 'we cannot always command perfection; poor dear Mr Smith meant well, but every man cannot be a Mitts.' She smiled, and nodded down the table; Mr Mitts looked, as well he might, particularly pleased; and then the ladies left the room.

'Talking of Smith,' said Sir Marmaduke, 'what wretched