

England. A boat pushed forth from the vessel and presently reached the shore. A man of commanding person stepped upon the beach, and was met by a quiet-looking, middle-aged citizen, who was evidently an old acquaintance.

"How goes the world with you, Master Henderson?" said the first, with rather a condescending air. "And the good wife, and the fair daughter?"

"I have been duly prospered," replied the other, in a subdued voice, "and as for my family, they are well."

"Humph," continued the other, moving up the narrow main street, "a snug little town it is, and well kept. Your very paving stones look as if the housewives had scrubbed them this identical morn. And the little stout houses all marshalled alike, and on to the street, in military rank as it were. Certainly, your magistrates and commanders have merited much praise in the ordering of their several charges."

"We have endeavored to do our duty in defensive preparation," said the other, bowing low, "for the times in which we live are somewhat perilous. But we have arrived at my poor habitation, will it please you to enter?"

He pressed open the door, and had hardly done so when a beautiful young girl came running forward, her cheeks rosy red, and her eyes sparkling with excitement; but, perceiving the stranger, she stopped with a blush, and instantly retreated. The stranger's iron features relaxed from their saturnine expression at the unexpected vision, but as he passed at his host's invitation into an adjoining room, he simply said, with a motion of his hand towards the door through which the girl had vanished:

"And this—"

"Is Margaret."

The visitor bestowed himself in the arm-chair which had been placed for his accommodation, and for a moment or two gazed steadily and in silence at the embers on the hearth, for the autumn had set in, and the ample store of wood had already commenced assault upon the evening chill. Master Henderson, meanwhile, with a certain uneasiness in his countenance, stole occasional glances at his guest. The latter presently aroused himself and turned his chair so as directly to face his entertainer.

"Friend Henderson," he said, "you know that I am a straightforward person, and when I have anything on my mind, am apt to say it at once, in order that the thing may be disposed of. In short, then, I have become tired of toil—I have enough and to spare—I would fain settle down in a home of my own. Though I say it,

[ORIGINAL.]

FORT PEMAQUID.

A TALE OF MAINE'S OLD DOMINION.

BY GIDDINGS H. BALLOU.

I.—THE ARRIVAL.

THE setting sun shone brightly over the rocky point of Pemaquid, in 16—, and gilded the spars of a weighty-looking merchantman which lay at anchor in front of the prosperous village, and the out-jutting fort, then perhaps the strongest in New

few men in ordinary life can as well endow a wife with worldly goods as can Paul Askelyn. When I saw you, four years since, you spoke of my marrying, and somewhat carelessly added that if I did not soon choose me a mate, there might one grow up for me under your own roof. I have waited—the one whom I would choose has grown up under your own roof. Give to me your Margaret for a wife, and I will give you the word of a man whose word, as you well know, can be depended upon. I will cherish her as the apple of my eye. What say you, then, John Henderson?"

Henderson heard the speech with some surprise, and at least a slight discomposure. He answered slowly, and with hesitation.

"It was but a careless jest. I had not thought of your laying it up in mind."

"Turn the jest to earnest, John Henderson," interrupted the other. "Nothing easier."

"And she is but a child, while you—"

"I understand," broke in the other. "But a child! She may seem so to you; but not to herself, nor to others. And I—I am no boy, it is true. Am I the less fitted to protect her whom I would make my wife because that I am in the prime of my years, abundant in means, vigorous in health and strength?"

"You say truly, Master Askelyn," replied Henderson, casting a deprecating glance at his visitor. "There are few men, in good truth, whose alliance would be so desirable as that of yourself. But, in honesty, I must acknowledge that I have not mentioned what is like to be the particular obstacle in the way of your wishes and my own. I have marked of late that there appears to be some attachment between Margaret and a youth who has visited here, a boat-maker in the village, an honest, industrious lad. Her mother and myself, not having in mind any special plan for her future, have not objected to his visits. And, indeed, no one can say aught in the youth's dispraise."

Askelyn rose and walked across the room with a measured pace, and a lowering brow. He turned and faced his host.

"Henderson, this is folly. Is the passing whim of a boy like that to stand in my way? And what excellence has he to boast above me? Has he greater strength of limb, blacker locks, or eyes that are keener than mine? But I scorn to banter about personal appearance. Henderson, my heart is in this matter—I cannot be idly thrust aside. Remember the claims which I have upon you and your family. As your daughter's husband, they are cancelled, and I am bound to you forever. Reject my suit, and a

single word from me makes you a felon. Do you not understand me?"

The other attempted no reply, but bowed his head as if weighed down with sudden humiliation and dread. His visitor regarded him for a moment with a countenance whose stern displeasure was partly mingled with a contemptuous pity.

"Do not make a fool of yourself, Henderson. Look at the thing like a sensible man. Let us suppose that Margaret will object to me, decidedly even, at first. What then? Thousands of girls do so every year to their future husbands, and are none the less attached to them when their lot is cast. You and I do not need to learn so plain a fact as that. And as for the past, with all its secrets, when Margaret is my wife, all that past is buried forever. I pledge my word to that, whatever may happen between us in the future. No danger, thenceforth, that the steady, exemplary citizen of Pemaquid shall be shown us as the disguised smuggler, whose offences have been too rank to be forgiven. Nor, to speak of younger days, need you fear that a certain piratical venture—"

"Hush!" exclaimed the other, starting in sudden terror, and glancing hastily about him. "It must be as you say. But recollect that even walls have ears."

"Pho!" said the other, smiling quietly. "Your nerves are shaken to-day, friend Henderson. Bring forth a little of your old Madeira, and we will drink a glass to oblivion of our youthful follies, and a quiet life in the future."

II.—THE BOAT SHOP.

HUGH EVERETT stood with chisel in hand, but not at work. Standing thus in reverie, he would have formed no unfit subject for picture—tall and well formed, with pleasing features, frank in expression and tinged with ruddy health. Yet the attitude and downcast look plainly discovered an unwonted dejection. As he stood with his face averted from the shop entrance, a neatly-dressed damsel tripped lightly in, and approaching him touched him on the arm.

"A note from my young mistress," said the girl in reply to his inquiring look, at the same time depositing in his hand a billet.

As she turned away, Hugh opened it eagerly, and with a flush of joy which soon paled as he read, until he flung it down with a vexed exclamation. Again he lifted it, reading it afresh as if to detect some expression which might possibly have escaped his attention at first. Again he dropped it with a more hopeless countenance than before.

"Hilloa!" shouted a voice just behind him.

Startled at the sound, Hugh wheeled around, and with a half angry look, confronted the speaker. The latter was of middle height, black-haired and brown-skinned, and keen-eyed, a total stranger to the young boatmaker.

"This is the third time I have spoken to you," said the unknown. "I began to think you had turned into a wax statue, or something of the sort. I came to see about having a boat mended. Quite a shop, this of yours, as I live. Looks, too, as if they kept you pretty busy. I declare, I almost wish that I could leave seacraft and change places with you."

"I wish you were in my place, and I a thousand miles away," ejaculated Hugh, giving perforce some partial vent to his inward vexation. "Anything rather than this dull, gloomy old town."

"A thousand miles away!" echoed the other, lightly placing his browned hand on Paul's arm. "You say well, good sir. A thousand miles and more away, where silver and gold are freely to be had, for the sailor's daring, where a summer sea surges forever over shimmering coral, and kisses the balmy shores of the tropics. That is the region for free spirits who are not averse to running past the king's cutter on a dark night. A thousand miles away! You shall be further off than that in a dozen days from now, if you will but say the word."

"And who may you be, so free with your offers?" inquired Hugh, casting a sullen glance at the stranger.

"One who goes for free trade and sailor's rights. The right of a man who buys honestly to sell when and where he will, without let or hindrance. D'ye see that brig yonder in the harbor? I am skipper there, and though I wot say that I have brought many a piece of silk from over water, yet I will say that there are few men whose countenance has been more pleasant in the sight of some of your worthy citizens than that of John Waldron, skipper and trader. Come away, man, I have taken a liking to the cut of your jib. You're too free-faced and hearty-limbed a young fellow to be doling your life out in this little corner of the world. Come and try the ocean with me. Sell boats and shop to-morrow, or leave them unsold, and in a year from now you'll not think of coming back to tap nails on the head for a paltry subsistence. Put your best foot forward, on a good stout plank, with the sea underneath you, and toss a gay good-by to the jilt who has deserted you for a richer."

"Scoundrel!" shouted Hugh, as astounded

and enraged he caught the skipper by the collar. "How dare you come here to vent your slanderous jibes?"

"Ha, ha!" laughed the stranger, quickly disengaging himself. "I see that you have the right spirit in you. All that's needed is a little experience. Six months of sea life will make you as cool as a veteran. But, my lad, I have merely said the truth. I have passed through the like myself, and know the whole story. That crumpled paper in which you were so entranced—your dolorous sighs and bitter looks, can I not read them? But a little time and change will quickly cure all, and blacker eyes and fairer cheeks will smile on you in southern climes. Let yonder new-come graybeard keep the prize which his money bags have bought. If money is the talisman of life, and I'll not deny it, the thing is within your grasp. Say the word, then, your name on the Sea Gull's roll, and as soon as you have learned the ropes, your place shall be second in command. Come—will you go?"

"No, I'll not!" exclaimed Hugh, striking his clenched fist on the bench. "Your tongue is smooth, and your promises fair enough to lure the devil himself. But my reason is not clean gone yet. And, furthermore, it is very easy to talk about selling out stock and shop at an hour's notice, much easier than to do it. Not but that I'm more than half tempted (this he muttered almost to himself) to leave this miserable place at once and forever."

"Good," retorted the other, "I began to think I had mistaken a milksop for a man. Here," flinging down a purse upon the bench, "is a bunch of good, yellow guineas, which will settle the purchase money of your shop in less time than you mention. One word more. To-morrow night, at sunset fire, I shall await you by the fort water-way, and then—either the purse or yourself. We understand each other." And with a nod he disappeared.

Hugh lifted the weighty purse, and through the heavy blue silk netting saw the rich glitter of the gold, charming as the serpent's eye.

"And this can buy love!" he said. "For this Margaret sells her heart to an old gray beard! 'Requirements of parental duty!' 'Forgive, and do not despise me!' Some two or three mock tears, perhaps, what excuses are these when she well knows that Hugh Everett's offered home, poor as it is, will be sustained by stout and loving hands? Is it not too much to believe? I will see her once more, though she has commanded me not. I will learn the truth of this villany from her own lips, and then—"

"In good season, shipmate. What bring you then, the purse, or yourself?"

"Myself."

"Right, man, and a sailor's grip on't. I'd sooner have spared double the gold than to have missed having you by my side. And the girl—ye have seen her once more, mayhap? I guessed it would be so, and how it would end, too."

The last was said, in a low voice, but the hearer clutched the gunwale as though he would have crushed it.

"You guessed truly," answered the latter. "I don't care to keep anything back now. I could not believe that she was so heartless—the blue-eyed, rosy-lipped girl who once, I was fool enough to fancy, loved me. If I could but see her, I thought. Well—I was ordered from the house. That was not enough. I sent by her servant girl a billet. I begged only to see her once more, if it were but for a moment. In vain. At last, hovering about the spot, I saw her open the garden gate. In an instant I was by her side. I spoke but a word, and she turned from me as though I had been a snake, and she flying for her life. Heavens, and I have made myself fit to be one, grovelling thus like a worm at their feet!"

"Never mind, my hearty, there's a better day in store. But here comes the boat; jump in, my lad, chock up in the stern sheets. Here we are. Now pull, boys, pull!"

The boat flew through the water, till, coming under the brig's counter, a rope was thrown, and she was drawn alongside. The breeze was freshening from the eastward, and as the skipper gained the deck and cast a look to windward, he said to Hugh:

"Well, my friend, we sha'n't spread our wings till daylight. Come down into my cabin, and the steward shall brew you some hot punch. That, and a good night's rest, will set you all right by morning."

Half an hour afterward Hugh was sleeping soundly in his berth. The sun was already shining through his little stateroom window, when he awoke, and the rush of water and the trampling feet overhead told that the brig was under way. Arousing from his half-unconscious doze, he was quickly on deck. The brig was standing out of harbor, over a sea roughened by the easterly swell. The swart skipper was pacing the quarter, anxiously eyeing a ship which was approaching from the offing.

"I don't like the looks of yonder craft by any means," he said, turning round to Hugh. "There might be some inconvenience to me just

now in being brought to by a king's ship. These epauletted fellows sometimes ask very disagreeable questions. And I have reason to suspect that there is a growing prejudice against me among these gentry."

He put the glass to his eye for a moment, and then lowering it, shut it with a jerk.

"Stand by to tack ship!"

The brig was soon standing northward along the Bristol shore. Some twenty minutes had scarce elapsed when a gruff voice from the fore-rigging growled out: "Sail, ho!"

A large brig shot in view from beyond Museongus. A low exclamation of surprise broke from the skipper's lips as he levelled the glass at her.

"A Johnny Crapeau, as I live!" he exclaimed. "And yonder looms another! I see the whole story—a French fleet coming in to try powder and balls on old Pemaquid! Well, let them call me smuggler and outlaw; I am as ready as the straightest of them to fight for the old flag. 'Bout ship, boys!"

The order was quickly executed. A minute or two afterward, the grizzly-headed sailor at the helm, touching his hat as he caught the skipper's eye, exclaimed:

"Beg pardon, captain, but that yonder is the French brig-of-war, L'Agile. I was in her years ago. She's a good 'un to go."

"Very well, we'll show her that there is one craft equally well deserves the name with herself. Lay her straight for the fort, Robinson. Yonder there, two or three get out the cutlasses and muskets from our arm-chest, and see that they are in trim. If we are not to fight ourselves, they will be wanted ashore, perhaps."

A dogged gloom fell over the ship's company. No one stirred to execute the order, but each looked askance at his neighbor.

"What is this?" sternly demanded the skipper, taking a step forward. "Has a sulky fit come over you all, that no one starts?"

"I beg pardon, cap'n, once more," said old Robinson. "If I mought be so bold, I know there ar'n't no sulk in the lads. Only they somehow don't seem to understand the idea of their fixin' up tools for other people to fight with, and they not have no handling of them. It's just kind e' confused 'em like."

"Ah, that's it, eh?" retorted his superior, casting a humorous side glance at Hugh, and turning again to the men. "Rouse out the arms, lads," he said, "I am going to use some of them myself, and you need not fear that I shall forbid any one from following my example, who chooses so to do."

All was now alacrity. Under the guidance of Robinson's steady hand, the brig dashed into the harbor, and up past the fort into the mouth of the river. She was still under headway when a boat was dropped from the stern, and in it the skipper, Hugh, and a portion of the crew quickly gained the shore. In five minutes the whole village was astir.

IV.—THE ATTACK.

"It's a blessing that I've taken good care to keep these war-dogs in trim," said bluff Major Christy, the garrison commandant, carefully inspecting his guns, and training them on the harbor entrance. "Lieutenant Homer, will you inform the townsmen that we have men enough to man the castle guns thoroughly. Let them bestow themselves around the outer wall and keep a good lookout landward. I shall miss my reckoning if we have not soon a few hundred of those copper-headed devils on our flank, while the Frenchmen batter in front."

The topsails of the French squadron soon appeared beyond the outer point of land, but it seemed an age to the expectant citizens before the leading vessel gained position, and opened fire on the fort. She was followed by another and another, till the air was filled with smoke, and the ear with the crashing of guns, and the whirr of balls. The fort guns replied gallantly, and obviously with good effect. All at once from the forest broke forth a yell which rose shrill above even the deafening noise of the artillery, and a dense array of painted savages dashed whooping wildly towards the landward wall of the village, which offered apparently an insignificant barrier against the assault. An instant, and they would have reached it, when a sheet of flame and the simultaneous volley, made them reel backward, decimated and dismayed. The recoil was but momentary, for a master-spirit led, and before the smoke had lifted, a column of the Indians, headed by a chief of giant frame, had gained the bulwark, and were pressing over it, despite the utmost efforts of the defenders. Of these, several were already down, lifeless or sorely wounded.

Among the latter was Paul Askelyn. He had fallen on one knee, one arm hanging broken by his side, his gun swinging in the other hand, in the futile essay to parry the tomahawk which flashed above him. But ere its fall its savage holder had sunk beneath another arm, and Hugh, looking down, caught a glimpse of the man whom he had saved. But it was a flash of sight and thought amidst the perilous work which

raged around. In the wild hurry of the conflict there was no opportunity for delay. The smoke of the conflict eddied in among the villagers, and amid the crash of musketry, the thunder of the fort and the ships, and the horrid yells of the savage assailants, Pandemonium itself seemed to be re-created. All around was confusion and desperation, when a heavy boom struck the ear from the direction of the river.

"Hurrah," cried a stentorian voice, "there goes the Sea Gull's popgun! Our messmates have snaked it out of the hold, and given it mouth. Bang away, my hearties!"

"Water!" gasped Askelyn, struggling for breath. "Would to Heaven I could have another half hour for those red-skinned fiends!"

"It is not needed," replied Hugh, as he turned away to fulfil the wounded man's request. "The savages are beaten back already, they are scattering like sheep."

Askelyn's face lighted up with exultation, and with a convulsive effort he raised himself on his elbow; but the flash of strength passed in an instant, and he sunk back heavily on the ground. Hugh found him on return, with his eyes closed, hardly more than a corpse. A little water, mingled with spirit, was forced through his lips. He revived, looked up, and smiled grimly.

"How goes the battle?"

"It is finished," said Hugh. "The old fort has been sadly pelted, but the ships are hauling off. It's plain enough they have suffered bad treatment, and are little like to repeat the trial."

"It is finished," repeated the other, dreamily. "My battle, too, is nearly done, and the shattered hulk is sinking to its grave—the fair prize escaped—the expected triumph dissolved to nothingness. Yet it is well."

One or two of the combatants, now that the imminent danger was over, approached with offers of assistance.

"Bear me to the house of Master Henderson," said Askelyn. "My moments are few for this world's business, and I must use them quickly."

The wounded man was soon conveyed to the house, whose scattered inmates were in a few moments more gathered together, and Henderson himself pressed with sympathy the hand that was now so powerless.

"Time presses," said the wounded man; "call Margaret hither."

"I am here," whispered the latter, laying her trembling hand upon his arm.

"Poor Margaret!" said Askelyn, with a husky voice. "I was about to do you a sore injustice, although I fondly thought that time would enable me to repair it. It has enabled me, but not

as I intended. Hugh Everett, take her hand. You are a gallant and honest lad, and I am thankful that I have it in my power to do you a good deed before I go."

Hugh did as he was told; but as for Margaret, she fell on her knees by the side of the wounded man, and burst into a flood of tears.

"Little soft-heart," murmured Askelyn, "should you not rather rejoice than weep at this? But, good friend Henderson, summon me a notary, or if there be none at hand, you must even act as such yourself. How is it?"

"Here is neighbor Gamage," replied Henderson, glancing around, "doubtless he will answer your requirements."

"Bring paper, then, and pen and ink. Those here present will act as witnesses to the last will and testament which I shall dictate."

His directions were obeyed, and then in a clear voice, and in accurate form, Paul Askelyn devised to Margaret Henderson all earthly goods of which he was possessed, with the exception of a moderate bequest to her father.

"I have no kin," he said, as the writing was closed, "whom such disposal can injure, and most freely do I make it. And now I yonder perceive the face of the good pastor—my last words must be with him. Yet stay for a moment, Margaret, and you, Henderson, and you, young sir, there is yet one thing more remains."

When the young pair came forth from that room they came as man and wife, for so the dying had willed it. And the new-born happiness which lighted their countenances was softly clouded by sadness for him who had passed away from earth forever.