

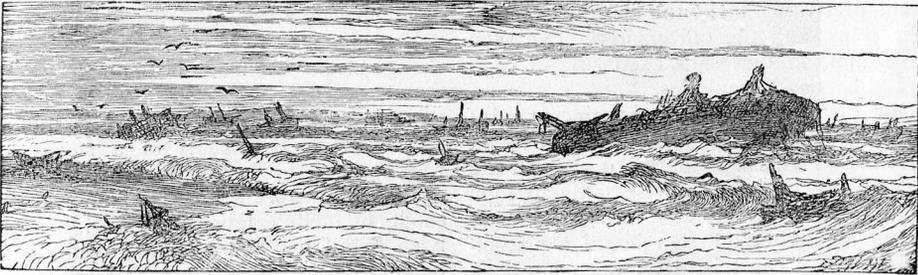
was a ship in a higher state of discipline than the *Queen* was during that commission.

My first ship was what was contemptuously called "a jackass frigate," six-and-twenty guns. None of our youngsters turned out well. The captain was one of the kindest-hearted men that ever breathed, and a clever scientific man too, but he did not know how to command even a jackass frigate. He gave us youngsters the free run of his cabins, and made believe to teach us navigation himself, but we didn't mind him much. I remember one evening we all made such a row that he threw the candlesticks at us, and then we got under the table in the dark and pinched his legs. Shade of Benbow! a midshipman pinching a post-captain's legs! The ship was on the Australian station when the gold fever broke out; the senior midshipman deserted, and went to the diggings. It was a curious instance of carrying coals to Newcastle, that he forgot to leave the mess cash-box behind him.

The success of a youngster's whole career

depends, to a great extent, upon the order and discipline of his first ship, and this rests mainly upon the captain. There's nothing so bad for a youngster as often changing his ship; if you start in a good ship, stick to her. What station you go to matters comparatively little; the Mediterranean is the favourite station, and the fleet is generally in good order, but if you think you have any private interest, don't exert it to be sent to a pleasant station. If you don't go to the West Indies, somebody else must: somebody quite as tenderly loved at home, and probably not more robust than yourself. If you enter your country's service, and draw your country's pay, your sense of honour and generosity tells you you are equally bound to peril your health or life, whether the danger be yellow fever or an enemy's guns. Duty is in itself noble. You remind me that there is a higher duty, which includes our duty to our country. Yes.

Of course a youngster's first two or three days in the Bay of Biscay are very poor fun.



I remember sitting between two guns on the side of the main deck, with a bucket before me, and even wishing I were again alone with Dr. Vaughan, in the fourth-form room at Harrow, or anywhere on dry land. But at twelve years of age sea-sickness soon passes off, and the crisp air of blue water gives life with each breath; and when I was all right again, it was great fun for the older midshipmen to catch me aloft, and lash me in the rigging until I paid some forfeit. This admirable custom, which is called "paying your footing," is very old, and prevails on dry land in some places, as well as at sea; but sailors never call it a *douceur*, or a *honorarium*, or *goodwill*, or *commission*, or *fee*, or *fixtures* at a valuation. There are other nautical customs, more or less prevalent among midshipmen, whose laudable object appears to be to impress the new comer with a sense of his inferiority; one of these is, that every naval cadet must on first joining have his nose slit. I remember at Harrow, in Dr. Vaughan's house, every new boy had

either to sing a song or drink a glass of "tolly-water." Now tolly-water is water in which a tallow candle has been hastily extinguished. If it is true that the boy is the father of the man, how much more of the midship-man! I have known a bench of worshipful magistrates, with a nickname and a penalty of champagne for a newly-fledged brother beak.

Have you pictured to yourself what it must be to have your nose slit? The three ugliest things in the British navy are said to be a big midshipman, a young quartermaster, and a small piece of pork. Imagine two big midshipmen holding down a curly-haired darling, while a third neatly divides the cartilage of the nose with a purser's razor, and allows the two flaps to fall back on each damask cheek; imagine all this, and you will have no idea of what really takes place. Two or three of the senior midshipmen, not one of whom has probably undergone the operation himself, inform the youngsters that this is an invariable custom; that they had