

**TAKEN FROM
THE ENEMY**

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Taken from the enemy by Henry Newbolt

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HENRY NEWBOLT

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BY
HENRY NEWBOLT



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CHAPTER I

It was a bright frosty night towards the middle of March. The moon had risen an hour ago, and hung like a round mirror of burnished silver close above the glittering stream of Thames, as he swept broad-cuing down to Westminster Bridge. The Abbey towers rose sharply into the clear air, and caught the moonlight full upon their heads, but beneath them on the further side lay a wide region of silent and mysterious shadow. In the shadow paced the figure of a man. By the slow and monotonous regularity of his footfalls as he passed backwards and forwards, you might have taken him for a sentinel on guard. But to a closer look the long high-collared coat, the quaint and ample outline of his hat, and a certain balance in his step betrayed the seafaring man, and gave a hint of his rank. His figure and the easy swing of his movements proclaimed him strong, but the obscurity concealed all other characteristics.

Up and down, up and down he paced; always the same measured step, always the same distance to

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a yard. Nothing about him spoke of impatience, and yet he was evidently expecting someone or something. For each time that his beat ended at the angle of the northern tower he stopped, and looked first to the right across the deserted square up to the entrance of Whitehall, and then to the left, where, on the edge of St. James's Park, the lights of Glamorgan House shone through a few gaunt and leafless trees.

For this was in 1821, and in 1821 Glamorgan House was still standing. And to-night it was especially in evidence, for the open gates and the unwonted illumination of the garden court showed plainly that some festivity was in preparation within.

Minute after minute passed, till suddenly from overhead came the deep sound of the clock striking the half hour. At the same instant a carriage rolled into the square. The watcher had just turned his back and was retreating for the fiftieth time towards the doorway of the Abbey, when the vibration of the chimes ceased, and the sound of the approaching hoofs and wheels fell upon his ear. In a moment he was back at the corner of the building, where he stood motionless, with his head thrown forward like a dog straining in the leash.

The carriage passed close before him, wheeled off to the right, and disappeared into the court of Glamorgan House. He made a quick step forward as if to follow, but checked himself, and stood for a moment irresolute. While he was hesitating, a party of ladies muffled in opera-cloaks and shawls and attended by several gentlemen, crossed the road from the entrance of Dean's Yard, and took the same

direction as the carriage. The figure in the shadow hesitated no longer, but followed in their wake with long and resolute strides. He came up with them as they reached the portico, and passed into the cloak-room with the gentlemen of the party. There coat and hat were laid aside, and he stood revealed as an officer of the king's navy, wearing a captain's epaulettes upon a very stalwart pair of shoulders.

His face was that of a quiet, self-reliant man of thirty-five; brown eyes set wide apart, lips somewhat full but firmly closed, a straight nose, and a chin slightly rounded upwards in front, combined to make up an expression of modesty and reserved force.

As a matter of fact he was this evening unusually excited, but he had merely the look of one who has made up his own mind and intends to keep it to himself for the present.

Other guests were now arriving, and he passed among the rest along a corridor and across a hall to the entrance of the ball-room, where the hostess and her husband were stationed to receive them.

As he entered, Lord Glamorgan—a tall old man with bushy eyebrows and a jovial red face—stepped in front and shook him warmly by the hand. Then putting a big hand upon his shoulder with a fatherly air, he wheeled him forward, and himself turned to face his wife. 'My dear,' he said, with a half bow, 'I present to you Captain Richard Estcourt of His Majesty's ship — Well, well, Dick, which shall it be, eh?'

His lordship had been a Lord of the Admiralty in the last Ministry, and though now for some time

out of office, he retained a perhaps exaggerated idea of his own influence in naval affairs.

Lady Glamorgan received the young man with all the graciousness for which she was deservedly popular. 'Captain Estcourt,' she said, 'is slower to follow an advantage on shore than at sea; his reputation has been here long before him.'

Estcourt flushed. 'I have been four years on the Indian stations,' he said, 'and three before that in America.'

'You have left out Algiers,' his hostess answered, with a smile, 'but we have better memories here, and shall not forget you.'

He murmured his thanks, and made way for others of the company who were beginning to enter the room in twos and threes. But he did not move far away; placing himself in the angle of a recess opposite the doorway, he began once more to watch patiently, scanning every group of guests as they came in.

Since he had been almost the first in the room, it seemed impossible that he should miss the person for whom he was waiting; but when the stream of incomers had apparently ceased, and Lady Glamorgan found time to leave the door and look at the dancing, her eye fell upon him at once, still on guard in his solitary corner. She came towards him immediately, bent on the hostess's congenial duty of introduction.

'Captain Estcourt,' she said, 'you are positively not dancing! a sailor too, and at a sea lord's ball!'

'Pray do not trouble about me, Lady Glamorgan,' he replied, 'I am in no hurry to begin.'

'No, no!' she said, 'I must find you some pretty