

**PERCY HAMILTON; OR,
THE ADVENTURES OF A
WESTMINSTER BOY**

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Percy Hamilton; or, The adventures of a Westminster boy by William Pitt Lennox

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WILLIAM PITT LENNOX

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PERCY HAMILTON;

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CHAPTER I.

“He that has sailed upon the dark blue sea
Has view'd at times, I ween, a full fair sight;
When the fresh breeze is fair as breeze may be,
The white sail set, the gallant frigate tight;
Masts, spires, and strand retiring to the right,
The glorious main expanding o'er the bow,
The convoy spread like wild swans in their flight,
The dullest sailer wearing bravely now,
So gaily curl the waves before each dashing prow.”

BYRON.

“Outward bound”—The Middy's Adventures—Land at
Passages—Proceed to join the Army—Head Quarters—
Wellington, his Personal Staff—Battle of Orthes.

THE bustle and excitement of the journey,
the spirit-stirring scene of a maritime port

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in war time, the rapidity with which we had been transported from mother earth to the trackless ocean, and the busy life that there presented itself, all combined to keep my mind in such a state of distraction and bewilderment that for a moment Mary Wilmot's image was banished from my thoughts. It was not until the middle watch, when none save those on duty trod the deck, that I left my cabin to seek the fresh air of a bright moonlight night. The captain had given his orders to the officer in charge to carry all possible sail with discretion, and the gallant frigate was going at the rate of twelve knots an hour under all plain sail, except royals and flying jib.

The Scilly light had now receded from my view, and

" Bending o'er the vessel's laving side,
To gaze on Dian's wave-reflected sphere."

I gave myself up to meditation. The morn-

ing watch was set before I roused myself from my reverie; I then descended into my cabin, threw myself into my hammock, and after a few hours' rest awoke refreshed and invigorated. Upon going on deck, I was introduced to some half-dozen brother-officers who, like myself, were proceeding, for the first time, to join the army in the south of France. The captain of the frigate, albeit a strict disciplinarian, was a thorough-bred gentleman, and did all in his power to make our passage agreeable; Colonel Marsland and myself were daily guests at his table, and the time passed delightfully.

Among my fellow passengers was a young subaltern, lately gazetted to a crack Hussar regiment, who had passed the earlier part of his life at sea; his anecdotes of the naval service interested me not a little, and two adventures that befell him amused me so much that I cannot refrain from laying them before my readers. As no phrase-

ology of mine could improve the simple recital of his doings, I give them, as far as my memory serves, in his own words.

THE MIDDY'S STORY.

“ I was about fourteen years of age when I was appointed midshipman on board His Majesty's ship ‘ Donegal.’ The discipline of those days was very different from what it is at the present time, and the life of a recfer was anything but agreeable. I pass over the mast-heading, not forgetting that upon one occasion I was ordered to the fore-top-mast-head for the *serious* offence of skylarking with a favourite dog over the captain's cabin, where I remained for more than twelve hours, the fact of my being ‘ perched up aloft’ for that length of time having entirely escaped the memory of the first-lieutenant, and I should probably have fallen a victim to hunger and cold, had

not my messmates stealthily handed me up a warm jacket and a cold pumpkin pie. I dwell not upon our doghole of a berth, from which the sun and air of heaven were carefully excluded, nor enlarge upon the fragrance of the bilge-water, the brilliancy of the purser's 'dips,' and the delicacies of our table—weavilly biscuits, not alone the staff of life, but *life* itself. salt butter, and briny junk.

"I descant not upon the tricks of the mischievous urchins of our mess, but proceed to narrate an adventure that occurred to me during the war. For some days we had been upon the look-out for a French *Chasse Marée*; we were cruising off Ushant, and I was midshipman of the middle watch. Now if there was one thing in the world more than another that I detested, it was the middle watch. I cared not for any other duty: to board an enemy under a sharp fire of musketry, to