

**CAPTAIN RALPH: A
SEQUEL TO
BEATRICE HALLAM**

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Captain Ralph: a sequel to Beatrice Hallam by John Esten Cooke

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JOHN ESTEN COOKE

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CAPTAIN RALPH.

A SEQUEL TO
BEATRICE HALLAM.

BY JOHN ESTEN COOKE,

AUTHOR OF
"SURRY OF EAGLES NEST," "MOHUN," "HILT
TO HILT," ETC., ETC.



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CAPTAIN RALPH.

CHAPTER I.

HOW CAPTAIN WATERS THREATENED LANKY WITH THE BASTI-
NADO IF HE SIGNED.

SINCE the events we have related, more than a year has passed.

March, 1765, has come.

We cannot pause here to narrate those important political events, which marked the period between the winter of 1763 and the spring of 1765 : but in the course of our history, the result of those events will unfold themselves and rise to view, as the coral reef long growing beneath the ocean and unseen, raises at last its dangerous wall above the waves—events which made more noise than breakers : upon which lordlier ships were shattered, than ever strewed the fatal coasts of Madagascar.

In place of regaling the reader with an historical disquisition, we shall proceed to relate the adventures which befell the personages of our narrative, after the violent denouement in which, as in a huge vortex, so many of the dramatis personæ were swallowed up.

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March has come again into the world, as that merry month promises to come in all future times—with wind, and rainy gusts, and chill moonshiny nights, and flowers peeping from the sod looking for April, and their close-friend the gentle May. The earth smiles again, and begins to forget the snow and ice:—the days are growing warm again, but fires are still far from uncomfortable. So at least thought a military gentleman, who warmed his hands listlessly by a cheerful blaze, on the day at which we have now arrived.

Captain Ralph Waters sits in that room, of the old fisherman's mansion, which listened in the winter of '63, to the narrative of his adventures. The room is very little changed—the Captain scarcely more. He is as handsome and martial-looking as ever—his moustache is as long and as black—his face as open and careless—his sword clatters as gayly, and his spurs jingle as serenely as before. Perhaps it is not exactly correct in us to say, that his face is as careless as ever:—for, though there is no absolute *care* upon the martial countenance, there is a decided expression of ennui.

The worthy soldier stretches out his legs, draws a long breath from the bottom of his stalwart chest—and yawns portentously: he then twirls his moustache, endeavoring to give it the warlike and gallant curl toward the eye, but the moustache rebels, as if it were weary, like its master, and persists in curling in the opposite direction.

The Captain, after several attempts to coerce the rebellious ornament, submits and yawns again.

"The fact is," he says, addressing his hat and cloak which—hanging on a nail,—bear no bad resemblance to an exceedingly thin gentleman, walking on the air,—“the fact is,” says the Captain sighing, “I am going to pieces here, like a ship cast upon the shore and falling away, timber after timber. My good spirits are leaving me, *parbleu!*—I am dying of ennui.”

And having made this communication to the hat and cloak, he relapses into silence for a moment.

“I really think that I will set out, and go and find *mon bon père*, and Charley, and Beatrice, in their mountain home. I have not seen them, *hifl himmel!* since last fall:—they talk about something they call ‘Springs,’ up there,

and its benefiting Beatrice's cold! All nonsense! I assert that there is nothing in them, for they did me no good, whatsoever!"

And having thus floored his imaginary opponent in debate, and proved that the medicinal baths were folly, the soldier again paused.

"I wonder where that farcical fellow Lanky is," continues the Captain, again attacking his moustache, "he makes me die a-laughing, with his opinions upon love and all that. I fancy, however, that Miss Smith has not been enlightened on her admirer's real sentiments yet."

And the Captain smiles.

"Heigho!" he adds, again yawning, "what the devil is come to me! I am expiring of ennui—I am becoming fat, I really believe—I have no longer any muscles!"

And to test the reality of his fears, the Captain draws his hanger, and makes half a dozen furious lunges at the cloak, which suffers considerably.

"I'm as strong as ever," he adds, with a sigh, "I must go and find somebody to quarrel with, or *ventre du pape!* I shall die."

At the same moment Lanky Lugg enters—clad nearly as we had the pleasure of seeing him on a former occasion, and wiping his face with an exceedingly dirty sleeve. Lanky's feet are perhaps larger than ever, his hands more like reaping hooks, his head more like a pine knot, than ever it has been at any previous time. But there are some changes observable in the gentleman. His stockings are more ornamental than before, his clothes less ragged, his gait more proud and impressive. When he bows his head from north-east to south-west, he presents the appearance of a mandarin figure flippiped by the finger of a child.

As Lanky enters, the Captain makes a terrific lunge at him, the sword's point only stopping within an inch of his breast:—at which horrible circumstance, Lanky starts back in profound terror, and looks at his master with astonished eyes.

The Captain bursts into a laugh.

"Don't be afraid, *mon garçon!*" he says, "I am only taking a little exercise."

But the explanation does not satisfy Lanky, who keeps at a safe and respectful distance, scratching his head.

"Lanky," says the Captain, "I am dying of weariness."

Lanky is unimpressed.

"Come, give me a little advice, you rascal! Oh! you are afraid of my toasting iron, are you? Well, here it goes."

And the Captain throws away the sword, which falls with a tremendous clatter upon the table. This reassures his companion, and obedient to his master's sign, he sits down in the chimney corner.

"I am getting tired of life, Lanky," resumes the Captain "existence, parbleu! seems to me not worth having, so to speak. Come, give me your views. What do you think?"

"I never thinks about nothin', Cap'n," says Lanky; "leastways—"

"Never think!"

"I does sometimes—yes, I does," adds Lanky, correcting himself.

"What do you think of? Of Donsy Smith, I'll wager."

Lanky draws himself up like an emperor.

"I ain't seen that young 'ooman lately, Cap'n," he says.

"Have you quarrelled?"

"No, Cap'n."

"How then?"

"Parted."

And Lanky groans.

"Lanky, you are getting into bad spirits," says the Captain, "I shall not permit that, *Diable!* if we are both down, what will become of us?"

Lanky nods his head, with a sigh.

"Don't sigh, you rascal—I will not allow it: no retainer of mine shall sigh on pain of the bastinado."

Lanky apparently does not understand this rhetorical paraphrase.

"Take a slice of bacon, and a mug of beer, and get your spirits again," continues the Captain.

Lanky assents to this, and is soon munching and drinking.

"Now advise me, animal!" says the Captain, "egad! I am perfectly ennuyé," and the soldier yawns

"S'pose you fall in love, Cap'n," says Lanky, with his mouth full.

The Captain greets this suggestion with a laugh.

"I cannot," he replies.

"You ain't tried."

"Have you?"

"Yes, sur."

"And successfully?"

"Yes, Cap'n."

"Miss Smith, eh?"

"Miss Smith and me, is 'most quit—" says Lanky, woefully.

"But she was the object of your affections?"

Lanky nods, woefully.

"I think then, I shall follow your advice," says his master, "and as you are a man of taste, I will adopt your own sweetheart."

Lanky starts.

"Rather a pretty girl, too," says the Captain, caressing the midnight fringo upon his upper lip.

"Oh, Cap'n!" Lanky observes, overcome with horror.

The soldier bursts into laughter.

"Well, well!" he says, "don't fear: we shall not probably be rivals—but don't be too well assured. Let us now dismiss the subject, and on this fine March morning, lay out some plan for amusement."

Lanky reflects.

"There's the races sir, near Jeamston," he says soon.

"But they're a month or so off. Now in a month I shall die, at the present rate. Something else, *parbleu!* *mon ami!*"

"S'pose you take a ride, Cap'n. I never see a day better for't."

The Captain yawns.

"Well," he says, "I believe I shall follow your advice, go and get the Arab."

Lanky risks obediently.

"No: the roan," says the Captain.

"He's cast a shoe, and that's a fact, Cap'n."

"Diable! then the Arabian—Selim, as the heathen dog I bought him of calls him."

Lanky goes out, and the Captain yawns uninterruptedly until he returns.

"Ready, sir," says Mr. Lugg.

The Captain then buckles on his sword, issues forth and mounts the slim-legged animal, who whinnies at his approach. He throws the bridle on his neck, and trusts to Providence to direct him. Lanky meanwhile resumes his meat and beer, and sees imaginary obstacles with the stereotyped north-east and south-west movement of his visage.

Before following the soldier on his morning ride, let us return for a moment to those personages who no longer light up the rude mansion with their pleasant faces as of old—and whose whereabouts we have heard Captain Waters very briefly allude to in his muttered soliloquy.

We have seen how Hallam and his "Company of Virginia Comedians," had, like birds of passage, disappeared from Virginia, after gathering in those "sweet fields"—to carry out the simile—as much golden grain as could be found therein: and the whispered words of Beatrice, as she sobbed and poured out her tender regrets to Charles Waters, have put the reader in possession of the particulars of that last interview between herself and her pseudo father.

We may understand readily how the young girl's reluctant and half-formed desperate resolution to remain with Hallam, had melted before the tender caresses of the kind old man, her uncle—the more than tender looks and words of him whom she had loved so dearly, and yet given up with a bursting heart, at the call of inexorable duty. Thus she had remained—and soon after the scene upon the river, the company had taken their departure, and were no more seen in those borders—not any more, for ever.

Hallam, Shylock, Shallow, Mr. Effingham—all these had passed from Beatrice's horizon, leaving it bright and calm: and in the fresh sunshine now she saw alone the figures of her kind uncle, and her tender Charles, and jovial honest Captain Ralph, and Townes, and Lanky—all smiling on her, full of love for her. Thus the poor dove, beaten so long by storms, and tossed about from land to land; exposed every where to persecutions, similar to those under which we have seen her labor; thus Beatrice found