

My prospects in life had begun to brighten. I served in the capacity of mate in a large West India trader, the master of which, an elderly man of considerable wealth, was on the eve of quitting the sea; and the owners had already determined that I should succeed him in the charge. But fate had ordered it otherwise. Our seas were infested at this period by American privateers, — prime sailors and strongly armed; and, when homeward bound from Jamaica with a valuable cargo, we were attacked and captured, when within a day's sailing of Ireland, by one of the most formidable of the class. Vain as resistance might have been deemed, — for the force of the American was altogether overpowering, — and though our master, poor old man! and three of the crew, had fallen by the first broadside, we had yet stood stiffly by our guns, and were only overmastered when, after falling foul of the enemy, we were boarded by a party of thrice our strength and number. The Americans, irritated by our resistance, proved on this occasion no generous enemies: we were stripped and heavily ironed, and, two days after, were set ashore on the wild shore of Connaught, without a single change of dress, or a single sixpence to bear us by the way.

I was sitting, on the following night, beside the turf-fire of a hospitable Irish peasant, when a seafaring man, whom I had sailed with about two years before, entered the cabin. The meeting was equally unexpected on either side. My acquaintance was the master of a smuggling lugger then on the coast; and, on acquainting him with the details of my disaster and the state of destitution to which it had reduced me, he kindly proposed that I should accompany him on his voyage to the west coast of Scotland, for which he was then on the eve of sailing.