

CHAPTER II.

THE KATE HUNTER.

The lapdog—The parrot—The dormouse—The dream—Search for a vessel—The outward bound—Torbay—Life on board—Young Go-a-head—Captain Parsons—Icebergs—Mysterious causes of our mode of travel—Our yacht—Accidents—The pilot—Our invalid.

MY eldest son, who had gone from Talence to England to settle some business for us, could not return in time to embark with us. Only eleven of our children, therefore, were to accompany us. But we had as many other pets as Don Juan carried with him from St. Petersburg. We had a lapdog—no great beauty in England, being a cross between a yellow cur and a long-haired spaniel: but as it was small and retained the long hair of one of its progenitors united to the dun colour of the other, it was admired by many people. We had six canary birds in a cage—having given two, of a brood hatched at Talence, to our curé and two to our landlord there. We had an African

parrot in a tin travelling box, which I had often joyed to see the French porters, ignorant of its contents, bury under piles of baggage; but the malicious beast would not be smothered, and generally uttered some scream which startled and caused them to release it from its confinement. I own that I had done all I could to cause its neck to be twisted: with the chance of going into Italy, I had taught it to cry "à bas l'Autriche!" "Vive Napoléon!" and I now laboured to make it say "General Cass—hurra!" I fondly hoped that some or other contending faction would silence it for me: but there I now still hear it below stairs—whistling, whooping, and crying "Vive Napoléon!" as if triumphant over me and all its own adventures. We had a dormouse also, with a hairless tail: for said dormouse had a habit of escaping from its box; and being once caught by the tail, it had slipped its skin, which had remained, like a scabbard, in my wife's fingers. She had dreamed a dream about that dormouse, which I submit to the judgment of those curious in such matters. She had dreamed, some three

years before, when this dormouse, who was called "Sailor", had a fellow-pet, called "Soldier", that it said to her, "Oh, Mistress, Sailôr has beaten me so cruelly that I have been obliged to run away and hide in your box of worsted work." Of course, when the maid came in the morning to wake her mistress, she told her to fetch instantly the dormouse cage. The cage was open: a small spot of blood stained its door—"Sailor" alone was there, and poor injured "Soldier" was missing.

"Fetch the box of worsted!"

In vain it was tumbled over: no dormouse was to be found. Who would be so silly as to believe in dreams!

Three weeks afterwards, a doll's cap was wanted: the worsted box was again hunted over; and there, in a netted cap, used as a bag for loose bits of worsted, was found coiled up the missing dormouse. He was near starved, and had eaten half the worsted around him. All this is a fact. Whether it afterwards died in consequence of Sailor's cruelty, its own escapade or starvation, matters not: but I am happy in being able to record, also as a fact,