



RODNEY STONE. BY A CONAN DOYLE.

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and Neptune's eldest son, which he endured with the same signs of gratitude and pleasure. That a man of the world, 45 years of age, shrewd as he was, and acquainted with courts, should be beguiled by such crude and coarse homage amazed me, as it did all who knew him, but you who have seen much of life do not need to be told how often the strongest and noblest nature has its own inexplicable weakness, showing up the more obviously in contrast to the rest as the dark stain looks the foulest upon the whitest sheet. "You are a sea officer of my own hour, Stone," said he, when his lordship had exhausted her patience. "You are one of the old breed." He walked up and down the room with little impatient steps as he talked, turning with a whisk upon his heel every now and then as if some invisible rail had brought him up. "We are getting too fine for our work with these new-fangled epaulettes and quarter-deck trimmings. When I joined the service you would find a lieutenant gammoning and reeking his own bowspirt, or aloft maybe with a martinspike slung round his neck, showing an example to his men. Now it is as much as he'll do to carry his own sextant up the companion. When could you join?"

with such extraordinary animation that the empty sleeve flapped about in the air, giving him the strangest appearance. Seeing my eyes fast upon it, he turned with a smile to my father: "I can still work my fin, Stone," said he, putting his hand across to the stump of his arm. "What used they to say in the fleet about it?" "That it was a sign, sir, that it was a bad time to cross your haws." "They knew me the fashions. You can see, young gentleman, that not a scrap of the ardor with which I serve my country has been shot away. Some day you may find that you are dying your own flag down that time comes you may remember that my advice to an officer is that he should have nothing to do with tame show measures. Lay all your stake, and if you lose, you lose. Lay your stake over the country will find you another stake as large. Never mind maneuvers. Go for them. The only maneuver that you need is that which will place you alongside your enemy. Always fight and you will always be right. Give not a thought to your own ease or your own life. For from the day that you draw the blue coat over your life you have no life of your own. It is the country's, to be most freely spent if the smallest gain can come from it. How in the wind this morning, Stone?" "East-south-east," my father answered readily. "Then Cornwallis is doubtless keeping well up to West, though for my own I had rather tempt them out into the open sea." "That is the worst of the matter, sir, that man in the fleet would prefer, your lordship," said my father. "They do not love the blockading service any more than the world since neither money nor honor is to be gained by it. You can remember how it was in the winter months before Toulon, Stone, when we had neither firing, beef, pork, nor flour about the ship. We braced the old hulks with our spare cables, and God knows there was never a levanter that I did not expect to send us to the bottom. But we held our grip all the same. Yet I fear that we do not get much credit for it here in England, Stone, where they light the windows for a great battle, but they do not understand that it is easier for us to fight the Nile six times over than to keep our station all winter in the block. I pray God that we may meet this sea of devils and settle the matter by a pell-mell battle."

within him, it seemed so absurd that he should speak as though my friendship to him were a concession, that I could not help laying it down as a rule. "That is all very well, Rodney," said he, looking hard into my eyes. "But what does your uncle think about it?" "This was a poor and I could answer lamely enough that, much as I was indebted to my uncle, I had known Jim first, and that I was surely old enough to choose my own friends. Jim's misgivings were so far correct that my uncle did very strongly object to any permanent ties of such a nature, and so many other points in which he disapproved of my conduct that it made the less difference. I fear that he was already disappointed in me, and would not enter into a centricity, although he was good enough to point out several by which I might come out of the rock, as he expressed it, and so which the attention of the strange world in which he lived.



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HOLDING OUT HIS LEFT HAND TO MY FATHER.

knights will never fall her in her need," said Lady Hamilton. "Thinking as I did that they were speaking of our own Queen Charlotte, I could make no meaning out of this, but my father told me afterwards that both Nelson and Lady Hamilton had conceived an extraordinary affection for the queen of Naples, and that it was the interest of her little kingdom which he had so strenuously at heart. It may have been my expression of bewilderment which attracted Nelson's attention to me, for he suddenly stopped in his quarter-deck walk and looked me up and down with a severe eye. "Well, young gentleman," said he sharply. "This is my only son, sir," said my father, looking under orders to take command of the Mediterranean fleet. You can think that at such a moment—but, ah, he is not his lordship's step-son, that I hear."

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But my heart won't let me do it, for Bill Warr's always been on the side of good sport and fair play. If I use it for you I expect that you won't see me the loser." "You can do what you like," said my uncle. "If your news is of service to me I shall know how to treat you." "You can't say fairer than that. We'll let it stand there, governor, and you'll go the handsome thing, as you've always 'ad the name of doin'." Well, then, your man, Jim Morrison, fights Crab Wilson of Gloucester on Crawley Down tomorrow mornin' for a stake."

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