

TALES OF THE COAST GUARD

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Tales of the Coast Guard by C. P. Morgan

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C. P. MORGAN

**TALES OF THE
COAST GUARD**

Morgan, C. P.

TALES

OF

The Ghost Guard.

BY

LIEUTENANT WARNEFORD, R.N. *London*

"There be land-rats and water-rats, water-thieves and land-thieves; and the peril of waters, winds, and rocks."

SHAKSPERE.

SECOND EDITION.

LONDON:

J. & C. BROWN & CO., AVE MARIA LANE.

1857.

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Preface.

IT has occurred to me whilst running over the Printer's proofs of these transcripts from a Journal, the last page of which was written nearly thirty years ago, that some of the incidents may lack likelihood in the eyes of men whose experience of the Coast-Guard Service is of modern date. Those gentlemen will, however, please to remember that the now efficient organization of the Preventive Service, formerly carried on without plan, or more

PREFACE.

correctly without methodized intelligence, combined with a great reduction of duties, has so crippled the chances and gains of the professional smuggler, that whilst the risk to be run is much greater, he has no longer the same inducement to encounter it. Given, however, the same conditions—prohibitive duties and a comparatively inefficient Preventive Service, as on the coast of Spain in the present day—and adventures such as I have sketched would soon cease to startle by their novelty or strangeness.

R. W.

London, 1856.

Tales of the Coast-Guard.

MOTHER AND SON.

It may be as well to observe at starting, that the slight, unpretending sketches I am about to jot down of a few rough adventures in the Preventive Service of this country will present no fancy pictures of high-souled, dashing smugglers, such as I have seen spouting heroics at minor theatres—rollicking gentlemen, who abound in all the first-rate virtues of generosity, daring, gallantry, and skill, slightly clouded, if at all, by an irresistible propensity for defrauding the revenue—more, it is usually made to appear, for the fun

quest, kindly obtained a midshipman's warrant for me; and not very long after joining the ship to which I was appointed, I found myself, to my great astonishment, doubling the French line at the Nile—an exploit which I have since read of with far more satisfaction than I remember to have experienced during its performance.

Four years passed before I had an opportunity of revisiting home; and it was with a beating as well as joyful heart, and light, elastic step, that I set off to walk the distance from Gosport to Itchen. I need hardly say that I was welcomed by Jane with tears of love and happiness. It was not long, however, before certain circumstances occurred which induced my worthy but peremptory father to cut my leave of absence suddenly and unmercifully short. I have before noticed that the aborigines of my native place were for the most part Dibles or Diapers. Well, it happened that among the former was one Ellen Dible, the daughter of a fisherman somewhat more prosperous than many of his fellows. This young lady was a slim, active, blue-eyed, bright-haired gipsy, about three years younger than myself, but somewhat tall and womanly for her age, of a light, charming figure, and rather genteel manners; which latter quality, by-the-by, must have come by nature, for but little education of any kind had fallen to her share. She was, it may be supposed, the *belle* of the place, and very numerous were her rustic admirers; but they all vanished in a

twinkling, awe-struck by my uniform, and especially by the dangling dirk, which I occasionally handled in a very alarming manner; and I, sentimental moon-calf that I was, fell, as it is termed, deeply and earnestly in love with the village beauty! It must have been her personal graces alone—her conversation it could not be—which thus entranced me; for she seldom spoke, and then in reply only, and in monosyllables; but she listened divinely, and as we strolled in the evening through the fields and woods between Ichen and Netley Abbey, gazed with such enchanting eloquence in my face as I poured forth the popular love and nonsense poetry of the time, that it is very possible I might have been sooner or later entrapped into a ruinous marriage—not by her, poor girl! she was, I am sure, as guileless as infancy, but by her parents, who were scheming, artful people—had not my father discovered what was going on, and in his rough way dispelled my silly day-dreams at once and for ever.

The churchyard at the summit of Pear-Tree Green, it used to be commonly said, was that in which Gray composed his famous "Elegy," or at all events which partially inspired it. I know not if this be correct; but I remember thinking, as I sat one fine September evening by the side of Ellen Dible upon the flat wooden railing which then enclosed it, that the tradition had great likelihood. The broad and tranquil waters of the Southampton and Itchen rivers

—bounded in the far distance by the New Forest, with its wavy masses of varying light and shade, and on the left by the leafy woods, from out of which I often think the gray ruins of the old abbey must in these days look grimly and spectre-like forth upon the teeming, restless life which mocks its hoary solitude—were at the full of a spring-tide. It was just, too, the hour of “parting day;” and as the sun-tipped spires of the Southampton churches faded gradually into indistinctness, and the earlier stars looked forth, the curfew, mellowed by distance into music, came to us upon the light air which gently stirred fair Ellen’s glossy ringlets, as she, with her bonnet in her hand—for our walk had tired her—looked with her dove-innocent, transparent eye in mine while I repeated Gray’s melodious lines. The Elegy was concluded, and I was rapturising even more vehemently than was my wont, when, whack! I received a blow on my shoulder, which sent us both off the rail; for Ellen held me by the arm, and it was quite as much as I could do to keep my feet when I reached them. I turned fiercely round, only to encounter the angry and sardonic countenance of my father. “I’ll have no more of this nonsense, Bob!” he gruffly exclaimed. “Be off home with you, and to-morrow I’ll see you safe on board your ship, depend upon it. As for this pretty minx,” he continued, addressing Ellen, who so trembled with confusion and dismay that she could scarcely tie her bonnet-strings, “I