

Great Sea Stories eBook

Great Sea Stories

The following sections of this BookRags Literature Study Guide is offprint from Gale's For Students Series: Presenting Analysis, Context, and Criticism on Commonly Studied Works: Introduction, Author Biography, Plot Summary, Characters, Themes, Style, Historical Context, Critical Overview, Criticism and Critical Essays, Media Adaptations, Topics for Further Study, Compare & Contrast, What Do I Read Next?, For Further Study, and Sources.

(c)1998-2002; (c)2002 by Gale. Gale is an imprint of The Gale Group, Inc., a division of Thomson Learning, Inc. Gale and Design and Thomson Learning are trademarks used herein under license.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction: "Social Concerns", "Thematic Overview", "Techniques", "Literary Precedents", "Key Questions", "Related Titles", "Adaptations", "Related Web Sites". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults: "About the Author", "Overview", "Setting", "Literary Qualities", "Social Sensitivity", "Topics for Discussion", "Ideas for Reports and Papers". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

All other sections in this Literature Study Guide are owned and copyrighted by BookRags, Inc.

Contents

Great Sea Stories eBook.....	1
Contents.....	2
Table of Contents.....	10
Page 1.....	11
Page 2.....	13
Page 3.....	15
Page 4.....	17
Page 5.....	19
Page 6.....	21
Page 7.....	23
Page 8.....	25
Page 9.....	27
Page 10.....	29
Page 11.....	31
Page 12.....	33
Page 13.....	35
Page 14.....	37
Page 15.....	39
Page 16.....	41
Page 17.....	43
Page 18.....	44
Page 19.....	46
Page 20.....	47
Page 21.....	48
Page 22.....	49

Page 23.....	51
Page 24.....	53
Page 25.....	54
Page 26.....	56
Page 27.....	58
Page 28.....	59
Page 29.....	60
Page 30.....	61
Page 31.....	63
Page 32.....	65
Page 33.....	66
Page 34.....	67
Page 35.....	69
Page 36.....	71
Page 37.....	73
Page 38.....	74
Page 39.....	76
Page 40.....	78
Page 41.....	79
Page 42.....	80
Page 43.....	82
Page 44.....	83
Page 45.....	84
Page 46.....	85
Page 47.....	86
Page 48.....	87

Page 49.....	88
Page 50.....	90
Page 51.....	91
Page 52.....	93
Page 53.....	95
Page 54.....	97
Page 55.....	99
Page 56.....	101
Page 57.....	103
Page 58.....	104
Page 59.....	105
Page 60.....	107
Page 61.....	109
Page 62.....	110
Page 63.....	111
Page 64.....	112
Page 65.....	114
Page 66.....	115
Page 67.....	116
Page 68.....	118
Page 69.....	119
Page 70.....	120
Page 71.....	121
Page 72.....	122
Page 73.....	123
Page 74.....	124

Page 75.....	125
Page 76.....	127
Page 77.....	128
Page 78.....	129
Page 79.....	130
Page 80.....	131
Page 81.....	132
Page 82.....	133
Page 83.....	135
Page 84.....	136
Page 85.....	138
Page 86.....	140
Page 87.....	142
Page 88.....	144
Page 89.....	145
Page 90.....	147
Page 91.....	149
Page 92.....	150
Page 93.....	151
Page 94.....	152
Page 95.....	154
Page 96.....	155
Page 97.....	157
Page 98.....	158
Page 99.....	160
Page 100.....	162

Page 101.....	164
Page 102.....	166
Page 103.....	168
Page 104.....	169
Page 105.....	171
Page 106.....	173
Page 107.....	175
Page 108.....	176
Page 109.....	178
Page 110.....	179
Page 111.....	180
Page 112.....	182
Page 113.....	184
Page 114.....	186
Page 115.....	188
Page 116.....	190
Page 117.....	192
Page 118.....	193
Page 119.....	195
Page 120.....	197
Page 121.....	198
Page 122.....	200
Page 123.....	202
Page 124.....	204
Page 125.....	206
Page 126.....	208

Page 127.....	209
Page 128.....	211
Page 129.....	213
Page 130.....	215
Page 131.....	217
Page 132.....	219
Page 133.....	220
Page 134.....	222
Page 135.....	224
Page 136.....	226
Page 137.....	228
Page 138.....	229
Page 139.....	230
Page 140.....	232
Page 141.....	234
Page 142.....	236
Page 143.....	237
Page 144.....	239
Page 145.....	241
Page 146.....	242
Page 147.....	243
Page 148.....	245
Page 149.....	247
Page 150.....	249
Page 151.....	251
Page 152.....	253

Page 153.....	255
Page 154.....	257
Page 155.....	259
Page 156.....	261
Page 157.....	263
Page 158.....	265
Page 159.....	267
Page 160.....	268
Page 161.....	270
Page 162.....	272
Page 163.....	274
Page 164.....	276
Page 165.....	278
Page 166.....	280
Page 167.....	282
Page 168.....	284
Page 169.....	286
Page 170.....	287
Page 171.....	289
Page 172.....	290
Page 173.....	292
Page 174.....	293
Page 175.....	295
Page 176.....	297
Page 177.....	298
Page 178.....	299

Page 179.....	301
Page 180.....	303
Page 181.....	305
Page 182.....	307
Page 183.....	309
Page 184.....	310
Page 185.....	311
Page 186.....	313
Page 187.....	315
Page 188.....	317
Page 189.....	319
Page 190.....	321
Page 191.....	323
Page 192.....	325
Page 193.....	327
Page 194.....	329
Page 195.....	330
Page 196.....	331
Page 197.....	332
Page 198.....	333
Page 199.....	334

Table of Contents

Section	Table of Contents	Page
Start of eBook		1
ILLUSTRATION		1
FOREWORD		1
GREAT SEA STORIES		2
THE CLUB-HAULING OF THE DIOMEDE		17
THE CRUISE OF THE TORCH		23
THE MERCHANTMAN AND THE PIRATE		47
NARRATIVE OF THE MUTINY OF THE <i>BOUNTY</i>		61
FATE OF THE CASTAWAYS		64
FATE OF THE MUTINEERS— COLONY OF PITCAIRN'S ISLAND		76
THE WRECK OF THE <i>ROYAL CAROLINE</i>		80
THE CAPTURE OF THE GREAT WHITE WHALE		89
SECOND DAY.		96
THIRD DAY.		102
THE CORVETTE <i>CLAYMORE</i>		111
THE MERCHANTS' CUP		123
I		123
II		126
III		128
IV		131
V		134
A STORM AND A RESCUE		137
THE SAILOR'S WIFE		151
THE SALVING OF THE YAN-SHAN		158
I		158
II		162
III		165
THE DERELICT <i>NEPTUNE</i> *		169
THE TERRIBLE SOLOMONS*		183
EL DORADO		194

Page 1

Spanish Bloodhounds and English Mastiffs From "Westward Ho!" By CHARLES KINGSLEY

The Club-Hauling of the *Diomede*
From "Peter Simple." By *captain Frederick marryat*

The Cruise of the *Torch*
From "Tom Cringle's Log." By *Michael Scott*

The Merchantman and the Pirate
From "Hard Cash." By *Charles Reade*

The Mutiny of the *Bounty*
From "Chamber's Miscellany." *Anonymous*

The Wreck of the *Royal Caroline*
From "The Red Rover." By *James Fennimore Cooper*

The Capture of the Great White Whale
From "Moby Dick." By *Herman Melville*

The Corvette *Claymore*
From "Ninety-three." By *Victor Hugo*

The Merchants' Cup
From "Broken Stowage." By *David W. Bone*

A Storm and a Rescue
From "The Wreck of the *Grosvenor*." By *W. Clark Russell*

The Sailor's Wife
From "An Iceland Fisherman." By *Pierre LOTI*

The Salving of the *Yan-Shan*
From "In Blue Waters." By *H. De Vere STACKPOOLE*

The Derelict *Neptune*
From "Spun Gold." By *Morgan Robertson*

The Terrible Solomons
From "South Sea Tales." By *jack London*

El Dorado
From "A Tarpaulin Muster." By *John Masefield*

ILLUSTRATION

Song sung by labor gang.

FOREWORD

The theme of the sea is heroic—epic. Since the first stirrings of the imagination of man the sea has enthralled him; and since the dawn of literature he has chronicled his wanderings upon its vast bosom.

It is one of the curiosities of literature, a fact that old Isaac Disraeli might have delighted to linger over, that there have been no collectors of sea-tales; that no man has ever, as in the present instance, dwelt upon the topic with the purpose of gathering some of the best work into a single volume. And yet men have written of the sea since 2500 B.C. when an unknown author set down on papyrus his account of a struggle with a sea-serpent. This account, now in the British Museum, is the first sea-story on record. Our modern sea-stories begin properly with the chronicles of the early navigators—in many of which there is an unconscious art that none of our modern masters of fiction has greatly surpassed. For delightful reading the lover of sea stories is referred to Best's account of Frobisher's second voyage—to Richard Chancellor's chronicle of the same period—to Hakluyt, an immortal classic—and to Purchas' "Pilgrimage."

Page 2

But from the earliest growth of the art of fiction the sea was frankly accepted as a stirring theme, comparatively rarely handled because voyages were fewer then, and the subject still largely unknown. To the general reader it may seem a rather astounding fact that in “Robinson Crusoe” we have the first classic of this period and in “Colonel Jack” another classic of much the same type. These two stories by the immortal Defoe may be accepted as the foundation of the sea-tale in literary art.

A century, however, was to elapse before the sea-tale came into its own. It was not until a generation after Defoe that Smollett, in “Roderick Random,” again stirred the theme into life. Fielding in his “Voyage to Lisbon” had given some account of a personal experience, but in the general category it must be set down as simply episodal. Foster’s “Voyages,” a translation from the German published in England at the beginning of the third quarter of the eighteenth century, a compendium of monumental importance, continued the tradition of Hakluyt and Purchas. By this time the sea-power of England had become supreme,—Britannia ruled the waves, and a native sea-literature was the result. The sea-songs of Thomas Dibdin and other writers were the first fruits of this newly created literary nationalism.

Shortly after the beginning of the nineteenth century the sea-writer established himself with Michael Scott in “Tom Cringle’s Log,” a forgotten, but ever-fresh classic. Then came Captain Marryat, who was to the sea what Dickens and Thackeray were to land folk. America, too, contributed to this literary movement. Even before Marryat, our own Cooper had essayed the sea with a masterly hand, while in “Moby Dick,” as in his other stories, Herman Melville glorified the theme. Continental writers like Victor Hugo and the Hungarian, Maurus Jokai, who had little personal knowledge of the subject, also set their hands to tales of marine adventure.

Such work as this has established a succession which has been continuous and progressive ever since. The literature of the sea of the past half-century is voluminous, varied and universally known, and whether in the form of personal adventure, or in purely fictional shape, it has grown to be an art cultivated with great care by the best contemporary writers.

The noble band of singers of the sea, from the days of the Elizabethans to the sublime Swinburne, belongs to another volume. It is the sincere hope of the compiler that the present collection offers undisputable evidence that the prose tradition has been fully sustained and the reader will find in these pages living testimony to the marvelous interest of the theme—its virility and its beauty.

Joseph Lewis French.

GREAT SEA STORIES

SPANISH BLOODHOUNDS AND ENGLISH MASTIFFS

From "Westward Ho!" *By Charles Kingsley*

Page 3

When the sun leaped up the next morning, and the tropic light flashed suddenly into the tropic day, Amyas was pacing the deck, with disheveled hair and torn clothes, his eyes red with rage and weeping, his heart full—how can I describe it? Picture it to yourselves, you who have ever lost a brother; and you who have not, thank God that you know nothing of his agony. Full of impossible projects, he strode and staggered up and down, as the ship thrashed and close-hauled through the rolling seas. He would go back and burn the villa. He would take Guayra, and have the life of every man in it in return for his brother's. "We can do it, lads!" he shouted. "Drake took Nombre de Dios, we can take La Guayra." And every voice shouted, "Yes."

"We will have it, Amyas, and have Frank too, yet," cried Cary; but Amyas shook his head. He knew, and knew not why he knew, that all the ports in New Spain would never restore to him that one beloved face.

"Yes, he shall be well avenged. And look there! There is the first crop of our vengeance." And he pointed toward the shore, where between them and the now distant peaks of the Silla, three sails appeared, not five miles to windward.

"There are the Spanish bloodhounds on our heels, the same ships which we saw yesterday off Guayra. Back, lads, and welcome them, if they were a dozen."

There was a murmur of applause from all around; and if any young heart sank for a moment at the prospect of fighting three ships at once, it was awed into silence by the cheer which rose from all the older men, and by Salvation Yeo's stentorian voice.

"If there were a dozen, the Lord is with us, who has said, 'One of you shall chase a thousand.' Clear away, lads, and see the glory of the Lord this day."

"Amen!" cried Cary; and the ship was kept still closer to the wind.

Amyas had revived at the sight of battle. He no longer felt his wounds or his great sorrow as he bustled about the deck; and ere a quarter of an hour had passed, his voice cried firmly and cheerfully as of old—

"Now, my masters, let us serve God, and then to breakfast, and after that clear for action."

Jack Brimblecombe read the dally prayers, and the prayers before a fight at sea, and his honest voice trembled, as, in the Prayer for all Conditions of Men (In spite of Amyas's despair), he added, "and especially for our dear brother Mr. Francis Leigh, perhaps captive among the idolaters;" and so they rose.

"Now, then," said Amyas, "to breakfast. A Frenchman fights best fasting, a Dutchman drunk, an Englishman full, and a Spaniard when the devil is in him, and that's always."

“And good beef and the good cause are a match for the devil,” said Cary. “Come down, captain; you must eat too.”

Amyas shook his head, took the tiller from the steersman, and bade him go below and fill himself. Will Cary went down, and returned in five minutes with a plate of bread and beef, and a great jack of ale, coaxed them down Amyas’s throat, as a nurse does with a child, and then scuttled below again with tears hopping down his face.

Page 4

Amyas stood still steering. His face was grown seven years older in the last night. A terrible set calm was on him. Woe to the man who came across him that day!

"There are three of them, you see, my masters," said he, as the crew came on deck again. "A big ship forward, and two galleys astern of her. The big ship may keep; she is a race ship, and if we can but recover the wind of her, we will see whether our height is not a match for her length. We must give her the slip, and take the galleys first."

"I thank the Lord," said Yeo, "who has given so wise a heart to so young a general; a very David and Daniel, saving his presence, lads. Silas Staveley, smite me that boy over the head, the young monkey; why is he not down at the powder-room door?"

And Yeo went about his gunnery, as one who knew how to do it, and had the most terrible mind to do it thoroughly, and the most terrible faith that it was God's work.

So all fell to; and though there was comparatively little to be done, the ship having been kept as far as could be in fighting order all night, yet there was "clearing of decks, lacing of nettings, making of bulwarks, fitting of waistcloths, arming of tops, tallowing of pikes, slinging of yards, doubling of sheets and tacks." Amyas took charge of the poop, Cary of the forecastle, and Yeo, as gunner, of the main-deck, while Drew, as master, settled himself in the waist; and all was ready, and more than ready, before the great ship was within two miles of them.

She is now within two musket-shots of the *Rose*, with the golden flag of Spain floating at her poop; and her trumpets are shouting defiance up the breeze, from a dozen brazen throats, which two or three answer lustily from the *Rose*, from whose poop flies the flag of England, and from her fore the arms of Leigh and Cary side by side, and over them the ship and bridge of the good town of Bideford. And then Amyas calls—

"Now, silence trumpets, waits, play up! 'Fortune my foe!' and God and the Queen be with us!"

Whereon (laugh not, reader, for it was the fashion of those musical, as well as valiant days) up rose that noble old favorite of good Queen Bess, from cornet and sackbut, fife and drum; while Parson Jack, who had taken his stand with the musicians on the poop, worked away lustily at his violin.

"Well played, Jack; thy elbow flies like a lamb's tail," said Amyas, forcing a jest.

"It shall fly to a better fiddle-bow presently, sir, and I have the luck—"

"Steady, helm!" said Amyas. "What is he after now?"

The Spaniard, who had been coming upon them right down the wind under a press of sail, took in his light canvas.

“He don’t know what to make of our waiting for him so bold,” said the helmsman.

“He does though, and means to fight us,” cried another. “See, he is hauling up the foot of his mainsail: but he wants to keep the wind of us.”

Page 5

"Let him try, then," quoth Amyas. "Keep her closer still. Let no one fire till we are about. Man the starboard guns; to starboard, and wait, all small arm men. Pass the order down to the gunner, and bid all fire high, and take the rigging."

Bang went one of the Spaniard's bow guns, and the shot went wide. Then another and another, while the men fidgeted about, looking at the priming of their muskets, and loosened their arrows in the sheaf.

"Lie down, men, and sing a psalm. When I want you I'll call you. Closer still, if you can, helmsman, and we will try a short ship against a long one. We can sail two points nearer the wind than he."

As Amyas had calculated, the Spaniard would gladly enough have stood across the *Rose's* bows, but knowing the English readiness dare not for fear of being raked; so her only plan, if she did not intend to shoot past her foe down to leeward, was to put her head close to the wind, and wait for her on the same tack.

Amyas laughed to himself. "Hold on yet awhile. More ways of killing a cat than choking her with cream. Drew, there, are your men ready?"

"Ay, ay, sir!" and on they went, closing fast with the Spaniard, till within a pistol-shot.

"Ready about!" and about she went like an eel, and ran upon the opposite tack right under the Spaniard's stern. The Spaniard, astonished at the quickness of the maneuver, hesitated a moment, and then tried to get about also, as his only chance; but it was too late, and while his lumbering length was still hanging in the wind's eye, Amyas's bowsprit had all but scraped his quarter, and the *Rose* passed slowly across his stern at ten yards' distance.

"Now, then!" roared Amyas. "Fire, and with a will! Have at her, archers: have at her, muskets all!" and in an instant a storm of bar and chain-shot, round and canister, swept the proud Don from stem to stern, while through the white cloud of smoke the musket-balls, and the still deadlier clothyard arrows, whistled and rushed upon their venomous errand. Down went the steersman, and every soul who manned the poop. Down went the mizzen topmast, in went the stern-windows and quarter-galleries; and as the smoke cleared away, the golden flag of Spain, which the last moment flaunted above their heads, hung trailing in the water. The ship, her tiller shot away, and her helmsman killed, staggered helplessly a moment, and then fell up into the wind.

"Well done, men of Devon!" shouted Amyas, as cheers rent the welkin.

"She has struck," cried some, as the deafening hurrahs died away.

"Not a bit," said Amyas. "Hold on, helmsman, and leave her to patch her tackle while we settle the galleys."

On they shot merrily, and long ere the armada could get herself to rights again, were two good miles to windward, with the galleys sweeping down fast upon them.

Page 6

And two venomous-looking craft they were, as they shot through the short chopping sea upon some forty oars apiece, stretching their long sword-fish snouts over the water, as if snuffing for their prey. Behind this long snout, a strong square forecastle was crammed with soldiers, and the muzzles of cannon grinned out through port-holes, not only in the sides of the forecastle, but forward in the line of the galley's course, thus enabling her to keep up a continual fire on a ship right ahead.

The long low waist was packed full of the slaves, some five or six to each oar, and down the center, between the two banks, the English could see the slave-drivers walking up and down a long gangway, whip in hand. A raised quarter-deck at the stern held more soldiers, the sunlight flashing merrily upon their armor and their gun-barrels; as they neared, the English could hear plainly the cracks of the whips, and the yells as of wild beasts which answered them; the roll and rattle of the oars, and the loud "Ha!" of the slaves which accompanied every stroke, and the oaths and curses of the drivers; while a sickening musky smell, as of a pack of kenneled hounds, came down the wind from off those dens of misery. No wonder if many a young heart shuddered as it faced, for the first time, the horrible reality of those floating hells, the cruelties whereof had rung so often in English ears from the stories of their own countrymen, who had passed them, fought them, and now and then passed years of misery on board of them. Who knew but what there might be English among those sun-browned, half-naked masses of panting wretches?

"Must we fire upon the slaves?" asked more than one, as the thought crossed him.

Amyas sighed.

"Spare them all you can, in God's name: but if they try to run us down, rake them we must, and God forgive us."

The two galleys came on abreast of each other, some forty yards apart. To out-manuever their oars as he had done the ship's sails, Amyas knew was impossible. To run from them was to be caught between them and the ship.

He made up his mind, as usual, to the desperate game.

"Lay her head up in the wind, helmsman, and we will wait for them."

They were now within musket-shot, and opened fire from their bow-guns; but, owing to the chopping sea, their aim was wild. Amyas, as usual, withheld his fire.

The men stood at quarters with compressed lips, not knowing what was to come next. Amyas, towering motionless on the quarter-deck, gave his orders calmly and decisively. The men saw that he trusted himself, and trusted him accordingly.

The Spaniards, seeing him wait for them, gave a shout of joy—was the Englishman mad? And the two galleys converged rapidly, intending to strike him full, one on each bow.

They were within forty yards—another minute, and the shock would come. The Englishman's helm went up, his yards creaked round, and gathering way, he plunged upon the larboard galley.

Page 7

"A dozen gold nobles to him who brings down the steersman!" shouted Cary, who had his cue.

And a flight of arrows from the forecastle rattled upon the galley's quarter-deck.

Hit or not hit, the steersman lost his nerve, and shrank from the coming shock. The galley's helm went up to port, and her beak slid all but harmless along Amyas's bow; a long dull grind, and then loud crack on crack, as the *Rose* sawed slowly through the bank of oars from stem to stern, hurling the wretched slaves in heaps upon each other; and ere her mate on the other side could swing round to strike him in his new position, Amyas's whole broadside, great and small, had been poured into her at pistol-shot, answered by a yell which rent their ears and hearts.

"Spare the slaves! Fire at the soldiers!" cried Amyas; but the work was too hot for much discrimination; for the larboard galley, crippled but not undaunted, swung round across his stern, and hooked herself venomously on to him.

It was a move more brave than wise; for it prevented the other galley from returning to the attack without exposing herself a second time to the English broadside; and a desperate attempt of the Spaniards to board at once through the stern-ports and up the quarter was met with such a demurrer of shot and steel that they found themselves in three minutes again upon the galley's poop, accompanied, to their intense disgust, by Amyas Leigh and twenty English swords.

Five minutes' hard cutting, hand to hand, and the poop was clear. The soldiers in the forecastle had been able to give them no assistance, open as they lay to the arrows and musketry from the *Rose's* lofty stern. Amyas rushed along the central gangway, shouting in Spanish, "Freedom to the slaves! death to the masters!" clambered into the forecastle, followed close by his swarm of wasps, and set them so good an example how to use their stings that in three minutes more there was not a Spaniard on board who was not dead or dying.

"Let the slaves free!" shouted he. "Throw us a hammer down, men. Hark! there's an English voice!"

There is indeed. From amid the wreck of broken oars and writhing limbs, a voice is shrieking in broadest Devon to the master, who is looking over the side.

"Oh, Robert Drew! Robert Drew! Come down, and take me out of hell!"

"Who be you, in the name of the Lord?"

"Don't you mind William Prust, that Captain Hawkins left behind in the Honduras, years and years ago? There's nine of us aboard, if your shot hasn't put 'em out of their misery. Come down, if you've a Christian heart, come down!"

Utterly forgetful of all discipline, Drew leaps down hammer in hand, and the two old comrades rush into each other's arms.

Page 8

Why make a long story of what took but five minutes to do? The nine men (luckily none of them wounded) are freed, and helped on board, to be hugged and kissed by old comrades and young kinsmen; while the remaining slaves, furnished with a couple of hammers, are told to free themselves and help the English. The wretches answer by a shout; and Amyas, once more safe on board again, dashes after the other galley, which has been hovering out of reach of his guns: but there is no need to trouble himself about her; sickened with what she has got, she is struggling right up wind, leaning over to one side, and seemingly ready to sink.

“Are there any English on board of her?” asks Amyas, loth to lose the chance of freeing a countryman.

“Never a one, sir, thank God.”

So they set to work to repair damages; while the liberated slaves, having shifted some of the galley’s oars, pull away after their comrade; and that with such a will that in ten minutes they have caught her up, and careless of the Spaniard’s fire, boarded her en masse, with yells as of a thousand wolves. There will be fearful vengeance taken on those tyrants, unless they play the man this day.

And in the meanwhile half the crew are clothing, feeding, questioning, caressing those nine poor fellows thus snatched from living death; and Yeo, hearing the news, has rushed up on deck to welcome his old comrades, and—

“Is Michael Heard, my cousin, here among you?”

Yes, Michael Heard is there, white-headed rather from misery than age; and the embracings and questionings begin afresh.

“Where is my wife, Salvation Yeo?”

“With the Lord.”

“Amen!” says the old man, with a short shudder. “I thought so much; and my two boys?”

“With the Lord.”

The old man catches Yeo by the arm.

“How, then?” It is Yeo’s turn to shudder now.

“Killed in Panama, fighting the Spaniards; sailing with Mr. Oxeham; and ’twas I led ’em into it. May God and you forgive me!”

“They couldn’t die better, cousin Yeo.”

The old man covers his face with his hands for a while.

“Well, I’ve been alone with the Lord these fifteen years, so I must not whine at being alone awhile longer—’twon’t be long.”

“Put this coat on your back, uncle,” says some one.

“No; no coats for me. Naked came I into the world, and naked I go out of it this day, if I have a chance. You’m better go to your work, lads, or the big one will have the wind of us yet.”

“So she will,” said Amyas, who had overheard; but so great is the curiosity of all hands that he has some trouble in getting the men to quarters again; indeed, they only go on condition of parting among themselves with them the newcomers, each to tell his sad and strange story. How after Captain Hawkins, constrained by famine, had put them ashore, they wandered in misery till the Spaniards took them; how, instead

Page 9

of hanging them (as they at first intended), the Dons fed and clothed them, and allotted them as servants to various gentlemen about Mexico, where they thrived, turned their hands (like true sailors) to all manner of trades, and made much money; so that all went well, until the fatal year 1574, when, much against the minds of many of the Spaniards themselves, that cruel and bloody Inquisition was established for the first time in the Indies; and how from that moment their lives were one long tragedy; how they were all imprisoned for a year and a half, racked again and again, and at last adjudged to receive publicly, on Good Friday, 1575, some three hundred, some one hundred stripes, and to serve in the galleys for six or ten years each; while as the crowning atrocity of the Moloch sacrifice, three of them were burnt alive in the market-place of Mexico.

The history of the party was not likely to improve the good feeling of the crew towards the Spanish ship which was two miles to leeward of them, and which must be fought with, or fled from, before a quarter of an hour was past. So, kneeling down upon the deck, as many a brave crew in those days did in like case, they "gave God thanks devoutly for the favor they had found," and then with one accord, at Jack's leading, sang one and all the ninety-fourth Psalm:

"Oh, Lord, thou dost revenge all wrong;
Vengeance belongs to thee," *etc.*

And then again to quarters; for half the day's work, or more than half, still remained to be done; and hardly were the decks cleared afresh, and the damage repaired as best it could be, when she came ranging up to leeward, as closehailed as she could.

She was, as I said, a long flushed-decked ship of full five hundred tons, more than double the size, in fact, of the *Rose*, though not so lofty in proportion; and many a bold heart beat loud, and no shame to them, as she began firing away merrily, determined, as all well knew, to wipe out in English blood the disgrace of her late foil.

"Never mind, my merry masters," said Amyas, "she has quantity and we quality."

"That's true," said one, "for one honest man is worth two rogues."

"And one culverin three of their footy little ordnance," said another. "So when you will, captain, and have at her."

"Let her come abreast of us, and don't burn powder. We have the wind, and can do what we like with her. Serve the men out a horn of ale all round, steward, and all take your time."

So they waited five minutes more, and then set to work quietly, after the fashion of English mastiffs, though, like those mastiffs, they waxed right mad before three rounds were fired, and the white splinters (sight beloved) began to crackle and fly.

Amyas, having, as he had said, the wind, and being able to go nearer it than the Spaniard, kept his place at easy point-blank range for his two-eighteen-pounder culverins, which Yeo and his mate worked with terrible effect.

Page 10

"We are lacking her through and through every shot," said he. "Leave the small ordnance alone yet awhile, and we shall sink her without them."

"Whing, whing," went the Spaniard's shot, like so many humming-tops, through the rigging far above their heads; for the ill-constructed ports of those days prevented the guns from hulling an enemy who was to windward, unless close alongside.

"Blow, jolly breeze," cried one, "and lay the Don over all thou canst.—What the murrain is gone, aloft there?"

Alas! a crack, a flap, a rattle; and blank dismay! An unlucky shot had cut the foremast (already wounded) in two, and all forward was a mass of dangling wreck.

"Forward, and cut away the wreck!" said Amyas, unmoved. "Small arm men, be ready. He will be aboard of us in five minutes!"

It was true. The *Rose*, unmanageable from the loss of her head-sail, lay at the mercy of the Spaniard; and the archers and musqueteers had hardly time to range themselves to leeward, when the *Madre Dolorosa's* chains were grinding against the *Rose's*, and grapples tossed on board from stem to stern.

"Don't cut them loose!" roared Amyas. "Let them stay and see the fun! Now, dogs of Devon, show your teeth, and hurrah for God and the Queen!"

And then began a fight most fierce and fell: the Spaniards, according to their fashion, attempted to board: the English, amid fierce shouts of "God and the Queen!" "God and St. George for England!" sweeping them back by showers of arrows and musquet balls, thrusting them down with pikes, hurling grenades and stink-pots from the tops; while the swivels on both sides poured their grape, and bar, and chain, and the great main-deck guns, thundering muzzle to muzzle, made both ships quiver and recoil, as they smashed the round shot through and through each other.

So they roared and flashed, fast clenched to each other in that devil's wedlock, under a cloud of smoke beneath the cloudless tropic sky; while all around, the dolphins gamboled, and the flying-fish shot on from swell to swell, and the rainbow-hued jellies opened and shut their cups of living crystal to the sun.

So it raged for an hour or more, till all arms were weary, and all tongues clove to the mouth. And sick men, rotting with scurvy, scrambled up on deck, and fought with the strength of madness: and tiny powder-boys, handing up cartridges from the hold, laughed and cheered as the shots ran past their ears; and old Salvation Yeo, a text upon his lips, and a fury in his heart as of Joshua or Elijah in old time, worked on, calm and grim, but with the energy of a boy at play. And now and then an opening in the smoke showed the Spanish captain, in his suit of black steel armor, standing cool and

proud, guiding and pointing, careless of the iron hail, but too lofty a gentleman to soil his glove with aught but a knightly sword-hilt: while Amyas and Will, after the fashion of the English

Page 11

gentlemen, had stripped themselves nearly as bare as their own sailors, and were cheering, thrusting, hewing, and hauling, here, there, and everywhere, like any common mariner, and filling them with a spirit of self-respect, fellow-feeling, and personal daring, which the discipline of the Spaniards, more perfect mechanically, but cold and tyrannous, and crushing spiritually, never could bestow. The black-plumed Senor was obeyed; but the golden-locked Amyas was followed, and would have been followed through the jaws of hell.

The Spaniards, ere five minutes had passed, poured en masse into the *Rose's* waist: but only to their destruction. Between the poop and forecastle (as was then the fashion) the upper-deck beams were left open and unplanked, with the exception of a narrow gangway on either side; and off that fatal ledge the boarders, thrust on by those behind, fell headlong between the beams to the main-deck below, to be slaughtered helpless in that pit of destruction, by the double fire from the bulkheads fore and aft; while the few who kept their footing on the gangway, after vain attempts to force the stockades on poop and forecastle, leaped overboard again amid a shower of shot and arrows. The fire of the English was as steady as it was quick.

Thrice the Spaniards clambered on board, and thrice surged back before that deadly hail. The decks on both sides were very shambles; and Jack Brimblecombe, who had fought as long as his conscience would allow him, found, when he turned to a more clerical occupation, enough to do in carrying poor wretches to the surgeon, without giving that spiritual consolation which he longed to give, and they to receive. At last there was a lull in that wild storm. No shot was heard from the Spaniard's upper-deck.

Amyas leaped into the mizzen rigging and looked through the smoke. Dead men he could descry through the blinding veil, rolled in heaps, laid flat; dead men and dying; but no man upon his feet. The last volley had swept the deck clear; one by one had dropped below to escape that fiery shower: and alone at the helm, grinding his teeth with rage, his mustachios curling up to his very eyes, stood the Spanish captain.

Now was the moment for a counter stroke. Amyas shouted for the boarders, and in two minutes more he was over the side, and clutching at the Spaniard's mizzen rigging.

What was this? The distance between him and the enemy's side was widening. Was she sheering off? Yes—and rising, too, growing bodily higher every moment, as if by magic. Amyas looked up in astonishment and saw what it was. The Spaniard was heeling fast over to leeward away from him. Her masts were all sloping forward, swifter and swifter—the end was come, then!

“Back! in God's name back, men! She is sinking by the head!” And with much ado some were dragged back, some leaped back—all but old Michael Heard.

With hair and beard floating in the wind, the bronzed naked figure, like some weird old Indian fakir, still climbed on steadfastly up the mizzen-chains of the Spaniard, hatchet in hand.

Page 12

“Come back, Michael! Leap while you may!” shouted a dozen voices. Michael turned

“And what should I come back for, then, to go home where no one knoweth me? I’ll die like an Englishman this day, or I’ll know the reason why!” and turning, he sprang in over the bulwarks, as the huge ship rolled up more and more, like a dying whale, exposing all her long black hulk almost down to the keel, and one of her lower-deck guns as if in defiance exploded upright into the air, hurling the ball to the very heavens.

In an instant it was answered from the *Rose* by a column of smoke, and the eighteen-pound ball crashed through the bottom of the defenseless Spaniard.

“Who fired! Shame to fire on a sinking ship!”

“Gunner Yeo, sir,” shouted a voice from the maindeck. “He’s like a madman down here.”

“Tell him if he fires again, I’ll put him in irons, if he were my own brother. Cut away the grapples aloft, men. Don’t you see how she drags us over? Cut away, or we shall sink with her.”

They cut away, and the *Rose*, released from the strain, shook her feathers on the wave-crest like a freed sea-gull, while all men held their breaths.

Suddenly the glorious creature righted herself, and rose again, as if in noble shame, for one last struggle with her doom. Her bows were deep in the water, but her after-deck still dry. Righted: but only for a moment, long enough to let her crew come pouring wildly up on deck, with cries and prayers, and rush aft to the poop, where, under the flag of Spain, stood the tall captain, his left hand on the standard-staff, his sword pointed in his right.

“Back men!” they heard him cry, “and die like valiant mariners.”

Some of them ran to the bulwarks, and shouted “Mercy! We surrender!” and the English broke into a cheer and called to them to run her alongside.

“Silence!” shouted Amyas. “I take no surrender from mutineers. *Senor*,” cried he to the captain, springing into the rigging and taking off his hat, “for the love of God and these men, strike! and surrender *a buena guerra*.”

The Spaniard lifted his hat and bowed courteously, and answered. “Impossible, *Senor*. No *guerra* is good which stains my honor.”

“God have mercy on you, then!”

“Amen!” said the Spaniard, crossing himself.

She gave one awful lunge forward, and dived under the coming swell, hurling her crew into the eddies. Nothing but the point of her poop remained, and there stood the stern and steadfast Don, cap-a-pie in his glistening black armor, immovable as a man of iron, while over him the flag, which claimed the empire of both worlds, flaunted its gold aloft and upwards in the glare of the tropic noon.

“He shall not carry that flag to the devil with him; I will have it yet, if I die for it!” said Will Cary, and rushed to the side to leap overboard, but Amyas stopped him.

Page 13

"Let him die as he lived, with honor."

A wild figure sprang out of the mass of sailors who struggled and shrieked amid the foam, and rushed upward at the Spaniard. It was Michael Heard. The Don, who stood above him, plunged his sword into the old man's body: but the hatchet gleamed, nevertheless: down went the blade through the headpiece and through head; and as Heard sprang onward, bleeding, but alive, the steel-clad corpse rattled down the deck into the surge. Two more strokes, struck with the fury of a dying man, and the standard-staff was hewn through. Old Michael collected all his strength, hurled the flag far from the sinking ship, and then stood erect one moment and shouted, "God save Queen Bess!" and the English answered with a "Hurrah!" which rent the welkin.

Another moment and the gulf had swallowed his victim, and the poop, and him; and nothing remained of the *Madre Dolorosa* but a few floating spars and struggling wretches, while a great awe fell upon all men, and a solemn silence, broken only by the cry

"Of some strong swimmer in his agony."

And then, suddenly collecting themselves, as men awakened from a dream, half-a-dozen desperate gallants, reckless of sharks and eddies, leaped overboard, swam towards the flag, and towed it alongside in triumph.

"Ah!" said Salvation Yeo, as he helped the trophy up over the side; "ah! it was not for nothing that we found poor Michael! He was always a good comrade. And now, then, my masters, shall we inshore again and burn La Guayra?"

"Art thou never glutted with Spanish blood, thou old wolf?" asked Will Cary.

"Never, sir," answered Yeo.

"To St. Jago be it," said Amyas, "if we can get there: but—God help us!"

And he looked round sadly enough; while no one needed that he should finish his sentence, or explain his "but."

The fore-mast was gone, the main-yard sprung, the rigging hanging in elf-locks, the hull shot through and through in twenty places, the deck strewn with the bodies of nine good men, besides sixteen wounded down below; while the pitiless sun, right above their heads, poured down a flood of fire upon a sea of glass.

And it would have been well if faintness and weariness had been all that was the matter; but now that the excitement was over, the collapse came; and the men sat down listlessly and sulkily by twos and threes upon the deck, starting and wincing when they heard some poor fellow below cry out under the surgeon's knife; or murmuring to each

other that all was lost. Drew tried in vain to rouse them, telling them that all depended on rigging a jury-mast forward as soon as possible. They answered only by growls; and at last broke into open reproaches. Even Will Cary's volatile nature, which had kept him up during the fight gave way, when Yeo and the carpenter came aft, and told Amyas in a low voice—

“We are hit somewhere forward, below the waterline, sir. She leaks a terrible deal, and the Lord will not vouchsafe to us to lay our hands on the place, for all our searching.”

Page 14

"What are we to do now, Amyas, in the devil's name?" asked Cary, peevishly.

"What are we to do, in God's name, rather," answered Amyas in a low voice. "Will, Will, what did God make you a gentleman for, but to know better than those poor fickle fellows forward, who blow hot and cold at every change of weather!"

"I wish you'd come forward and speak to them, sir," said Yeo, who had overheard the last words, "or we shall get nought done."

Amyas went forward instantly.

"Now then, my brave lads, what's the matter here, that you are all sitting on your tails like monkeys?"

"Ugh!" grunts one. "Don't you think our day's work has been long enough yet, captain?"

"You don't want us to go in to La Guayra again, sir? There are enough of us thrown away already, I reckon, about that wench there."

"Best sit here, and sink quietly. There's no getting home again, that's plain."

"Why were we brought out here to be killed."

"For shame, men!" cries Yeo, "murmuring the very minute after the Lord has delivered you from the Egyptians."

Now I do not wish to set Amyas up as better, thank God, than many and many a brave and virtuous captain in her Majesty's service at this very day: but certainly he behaved admirably under that trial. Drake had trained him, as he trained many another excellent officer, to be as stout in discipline and as dogged of purpose, as he himself was: but he had trained him also to feel with and for his men, to make allowances for them, and to keep his temper with them, as he did this day. Amyas's conscience smote him (and his simple and pious soul took the loss of his brother as God's verdict on his conduct), because he had set his own private affection, even his own private revenge, before the safety of his ship's company and the good of his country.

"Ah," said he to himself, as he listened to his men's reproaches, "if I had been thinking, like a loyal soldier, of serving my queen, and crippling the Spaniard, I should have taken that great bark three days ago, and in it the very man I sought!"

So "choking down his old man," as Yeo used to say, he made answer cheerfully—

"Pooh! pooh! brave lads! For shame, for shame! You were lions half-an-hour ago; you are not surely turned sheep already! Why, but yesterday evening you were grumbling because I would not run in and fight those three ships under the batteries of La Guayra,

and now you think it too much to have fought them fairly out at sea? Nothing venture, nothing win; and nobody goes birdnesting without a fall at times. If any one wants to be safe in this life, he'd best stay at home and keep his bed; though even there who knows but the roof might fall through on him?"

"Ah, it's all very well for you, captain," said some grumbling youngster, with a vague notion that Amyas must be better off than he because he was a gentleman. Amyas's blood rose.

Page 15

“Yes, sirrah! Do you fancy that I have nothing to lose? I who have adventured in this voyage all I am worth, and more; who, if I fall, must return to beggary and scorn? And if I have ventured rashly, sinfully, if you will, the lives of any of you in my own private quarrel, am I not punished? Have I not lost——?”

His voice trembled and stopped there, but he recovered himself in a moment.

“Pish! I can’t stand here chattering. Carpenter! an ax! and help me to cast these spars loose. Get out of my way, there! lumbering the scuppers up like so many moulting fowls! Here, all old friends, lend a hand! *Pelican’s* men, stand by your captain! Did we sail round the world for nothing?”

This last appeal struck home, and up leaped half-a-dozen of the old Pelicans, and set to work at his side manfully to rig the jury-mast.

“Come along!” cried Cary to the malcontents; “we’re raw longshore fellows, but we won’t be outdone by any old sea-dog of them all.” And setting to work himself, he was soon followed by one and another, till order and work went on well enough.

“And where are we going, when the mast’s up?” shouted some saucy hand from behind.

“Where you daren’t follow us alone by yourself, so you had better keep us company,” replied Yeo.

“I’ll tell you where we are going, lads,” said Amyas, rising from his work. “Like it or leave it as you will, I have no secrets from my crew. We are going inshore there to find a harbor, and careen the ship.”

There was a start and a murmur.

“Inshore! Into the Spaniards’ mouths?”

“All in the Inquisition in a week’s time.”

“Better stay here, and be drowned.”

“You’re right in that last,” shouts Cary. “That’s the right death for blind puppies. Look you! I don’t know in the least where we are, and I hardly know stem from stern aboard ship; and the captain may be right or wrong—that’s nothing to me; but this I know, that I am a soldier, and will obey orders; and where he goes, I go; and whosoever hinders me must walk up my sword to do it.”

Amyas pressed Cary’s hand, and then—

“And here’s my broadside next, men. I’ll go nowhere, and do nothing without the advice of Salvation Yeo and Robert Drew; and if any man in the ship knows better than these two, let him up, and we’ll give him a hearing. Eh, *Pelicans*?”

There was a grunt of approbation from the Pelicans; and Amyas returned to the charge.

“We have five shots between wind and water, and one somewhere below. Can we face a gale of wind in that state, or can we not?”

Silence.

“Can we get home with a leak in our bottom?”

Silence.

“Come along now! Here’s the wind again round with the sun, and up to the northwest. In shore with her.”

Sulkily enough, but unable to deny the necessity, the men set to work, and the vessel’s head was put toward the land; but when she began to slip through the water, the leak increased so fast that they were kept hard at work at the pumps for the rest of the afternoon.

Page 16

The current had by this time brought them abreast of the bay of Higuerote. As they ran inward, all eyes were strained greedily to find some opening in the mangrove belt: but none was to be seen for some time. The lead was kept going; and every fresh heave announced shallower water.

"We shall have very shoal work of those mangroves, Yeo," said Amyas; "I doubt whether we shall do aught now, unless we find a river's mouth."

"If the Lord thinks a river good for us, sir, he'll show us one." So on they went, keeping a southeast course, and at last an opening in the mangrove belt was hailed with a cheer from the older hands, though the majority shrugged their shoulders, as men going open-eyed to destruction.

Of the mouth they sent in Drew and Cary with a boat, and watched anxiously for an hour. The boat returned with a good report of two fathoms of water over the bar, impenetrable forests for two miles up, the river sixty yards broad, and no sign of man. The river's banks were soft and sloping mud, fit for careening.

"Safe quarters, sir," said Yeo, privately, "as far as Spaniards go. I hope in God it may be as safe from fevers."

"Beggars must not be choosers," said Amyas. So in they went.

They towed the ship up about half-a-mile to a point where she could not be seen from the seaward; and there moored her to the mangrove-stems. Amyas ordered a boat out, and went up the river himself to reconnoiter. He rowed some three miles, till the river narrowed suddenly, and was all but covered in by the interlacing boughs of mighty trees. There was no sign that man had been there since the making of the world.

He dropped down the stream again, thoughtfully and sadly. How many years ago was it that he had passed this river's mouth? Three days. And yet how much had passed in them! Don Guzman found and lost—Rose found and lost—a great victory gained, and yet lost—perhaps his ship lost—above all, his brother lost.

Lost! O God, how should he find his brother?

Some strange bird out of the woods made mournful answer—"Never, never, never!"

How should he face his mother?

"Never, never, never!" wailed the bird again; and Amyas smiled bitterly, and said "Never!" likewise.

The night mist began to steam and wreath upon the foul beer-colored stream. The loathy floor of liquid mud lay bare beneath the mangrove forest. Upon the endless web

of interarching roots great purple crabs were crawling up and down. They would have supped with pleasure upon Amyas's corpse; perhaps they might sup on him after all; for a heavy sickening graveyard smell made his heart sink within him, and his stomach heave; and his weary body, and more weary soul, gave themselves up helplessly to the depressing influence of that doleful place. The black bank of dingy leathern leaves above his head, the endless labyrinth of stems and withes (for

Page 17

every bough had lowered its own living cord, to take fresh hold of the foul soil below); the web of roots, which stretched away inland till it was lost in the shades of evening—all seemed one horrid complicated trap for him and his; and even where, here and there, he passed the mouth of a lagoon, there was no opening, no relief—nothing but the dark ring of mangroves. Wailing sadly, sad-colored mangrove-hens ran off across the mud into the dreary dark. The hoarse night-raven, hid among the roots, startled the voyagers with a sudden shout, and then all was again silent as a grave. The loathy alligators lounging in the slime lifted their horny eyelids lazily, and leered upon him as he passed with stupid savageness. Lines of tall herons stood dimly in the growing gloom, like white fantastic ghosts, watching the passage of the doomed boat. All was foul, sullen, weird as witches' dream. If Amyas had seen a crew of skeletons glide down the stream behind him, with Satan standing at the helm, he would scarcely have been surprised. What fitter craft could haunt that Stygian flood?

THE CLUB-HAULING OF THE DIOMEDE

From "Peter Simple," BY CAPTAIN FREDERICK MARRYAT

We continued our cruise along the coast, until we had run down into the Bay of Arcason, where we captured two or three vessels, and obliged many more to run on shore. And here we had an instance showing how very important it is that the captain of a man-of-war should be a good sailor, and have his ship in such discipline as to be strictly obeyed by his ship's company. I heard the officers unanimously assert, after the danger was over, that nothing but the presence of mind which was shown by Captain Savage could have saved the ship and her crew. We had chased a convoy of vessels to the bottom of the bay: the wind was very fresh when we hauled off, after running them on shore; and the surf on the beach even at that time was so great, that they were certain to go to pieces before they could be got afloat again. We were obliged to double-reef the topsails as soon as we hauled to the wind, and the weather looked very threatening. In an hour afterwards, the whole sky was covered with one black cloud, which sank so low as nearly to touch our mast-heads, and a tremendous sea, which appeared to have risen up almost by magic, rolled in upon us, setting the vessel on a dead lee shore. As the night closed in, it blew a dreadful gale, and the ship was nearly buried with the press of canvas which she was obliged to carry: for had we sea-room, we should have been lying-to under storm staysails; but we were forced to carry on at all risks, that we might claw off shore. The sea broke over us as we lay in the trough, deluging us with water from the forecabin, aft, to the binnacles; and very often as the ship descended with a plunge, it was with such force that I really thought she would divide in half with the violence of the shock.

Page 18

Double breechings were rove on the guns, and they were further secured with tackles; and strong cleats nailed behind the trunnions; for we heeled over so much when we lurched, that the guns were wholly supported by the breechings and tackles, and had one of them broken loose it must have burst right through the lee side of the ship, and she must have foundered. The captain, first lieutenant, and most of the officers, remained on deck during the whole of the night; and really, what with the howling of the wind, the violence of the rain, the washing of the water about the decks, the working of the chain-pumps, and the creaking and groaning of the timbers, I thought that we must inevitably have been lost; and I said my prayers at least a dozen times during the night, for I felt it impossible to go to bed. I had often wished, out of curiosity, that I might be in a gale of wind; but I little thought it was to have been a scene of this description, or anything half so dreadful. What made it more appalling was, that we were on a lee shore, and the consultations of the captain and officers, and the eagerness with which they looked out for daylight, told us that we had other dangers to encounter besides the storm. At last the morning broke, and the look-out man upon the gangway called out, "Land on the lee beam!" I perceived the master dash his feet against the hammock-rails, as if with vexation, and walk away without saying a word, looking very grave.

"Up there, Mr. Wilson," said the captain to the second lieutenant, "and see how far the land trends forward, and whether you can distinguish the point." The second lieutenant went up the main-rigging, and pointed with his hand to about two points before the beam.

"Do you see two hillocks, inland?"

"Yes, sir," replied the second lieutenant.

"Then it is so," observed the captain to the master, "and if we weather it we shall have more sea-room. Keep her full, and let her go through the water; do you hear, quartermaster?"

"Ay, ay, sir."

"Thus, and no nearer, my man. Ease her with a spoke or two when she sends; but be careful, or she'll take the wheel out of your hands."

It really was a very awful sight. When the ship was in the trough of the sea, you could distinguish nothing but a waste of tumultuous water; but when she was borne up on the summit of the enormous waves, you then looked down, as it were, upon a low, sandy coast, close to you, and covered with foam and breakers. "She behaves nobly," observed the captain, stepping aft to the binnacle, and looking at the compass; "if the wind does not baffle us, we shall weather." The captain had scarcely time to make the

observation, when the sails shivered and flapped like thunder. "Up with the helm; what are you about, quartermaster?"

"The wind has headed us, sir," replied the quartermaster, coolly.

The captain and master remained at the binnacle watching the compass; and when the sails were again full, she had broken off two points, and the point of land was only a little on the lee-bow.

Page 19

"We must wear her round, Mr. Falcon. Hands, wear ship—ready, oh, ready."

"She has come up again," cried the master, who was at the binnacle.

"Hold fast there a minute. How's her head now?"

"N.N.E., as she was before she broke off, sir."

"Pipe belay," said the captain. "Falcon," continued he, "if she breaks off again we may have no room to wear; indeed, there is so little room now, that I must run the risk. Which cable was ranged last night—the best bower?"

"Yes, sir."

"Jump down, then, and see it double-bitted and stoppered at thirty fathoms. See it well done—our lives may depend upon it."

The ship continued to hold her course good; and we were within half a mile of the point, and fully expected to weather it, when again the wet and heavy sails flapped in the wind, and the ship broke off two points as before. The officers and seamen were aghast, for the ship's head was right on to the breakers. "Luff now, all you can, quartermaster," cried the captain. "Send the men aft directly. My lads, there is no time for words—I am going to *club-haul* the ship, for there is no room to wear. The only chance you have of safety is to be cool, watch my eye, and execute my orders with precision. Away to your stations for tacking ship. Hands by the best bower anchor. Mr. Wilson, attend below with the carpenter and his mates, ready to cut away the cable at the moment that I give the order. Silence there, fore and aft. Quartermaster, keep her full again for stays. Mind you ease the helm down when I tell you." About a minute passed before the captain gave any further orders. The ship had closed-to within a quarter-mile of the beach, and the waves curled and topped around us, bearing us down upon the shore, which presented one continued surface of foam, extending to within half a cable's length of our position. The captain waved his hand in silence to the quartermaster at the wheel, and the helm was put down. The ship turned slowly to the wind, pitching and chopping as the sails were spilling. When she had lost her way, the captain gave the order, "Let go the anchor. We will haul all at once, Mr. Falcon," said the captain. Not a word was spoken; the men went to the fore brace, which had not been manned; most of them knew, although I did not, that if the ship's head did not go round the other way, we should be on shore, and among the breakers, in half a minute. I thought at the time that the captain had said that he would haul all the yards at once, there appeared to be doubt or dissent on the countenance of Mr. Falcon; and I was afterwards told that he had not agreed with the captain; but he was too good an officer, and knew that there was no time for discussion, to make any remark: and the event proved that the captain was right. At last the ship was head to wind, and the captain gave the signal. The yards flew round with such a creaking noise, that

Page 20

I thought the masts had gone over the side, and the next moment the wind had caught the sails; and the ship, which for a moment or two had been on an even keel, careened over to her gunwale with its force. The captain, who stood upon the weather hammock-rails, holding by the main-rigging, ordered the helm a-midships, looked full at the sails, and then at the cable, which grew broad upon the weather-bow, and held the ship from nearing the shore. At last he cried, "Cut away the cable!" A few strokes of the axes were heard, and then the cable flew out of the hawse-hole in a blaze of fire, from the violence of the friction, and disappeared under a huge wave, which struck us on the chesstree, and deluged us with water fore and aft. But we were now on the other tack, and the ship regained her way, and we had evidently increased our distance from the land.

"My lads," said the captain to the ship's company, "you have behaved well, and I thank you; but I must tell you honestly that we have more difficulties to get through. We have to weather a point of the bay on this tack. Mr. Falcon, splice the main-brace, and call the watch. How's her head, quartermaster?"

"S.W. by S. Southerly, sir."

"Very well; let her go through the water;" and the captain, beckoning to the master to follow him, went down into the cabin. As our immediate danger was over, I went down into the berth to see if I could get anything for breakfast, where I found O'Brien and two or three more.

"By the powers, it was as nate a thing as ever I saw done," observed O'Brien: "the slightest mistake as to time or management, and at this moment the flatfish would have been dubbing at our ugly carcasses. Peter, you're not fond of flatfish, are you, my boy? We may thank Heaven and the captain, I can tell you that, my lads; but now, where's the chart, Robinson? Hand me down the parallel rules and compasses, Peter; they are in the corner of the shelf. Here we are now, a devilish sight too near this infernal point. Who knows how her head is?"

"I do, O'Brien: I heard the quartermaster tell the captain S.W. by S. Southerly."

"Let me see," continued O'Brien, "variation 2 1/4—leeway—rather too large an allowance of that, I'm afraid; but, however, we'll give her 2 1/2 points; the *Diomedé* would blush to make any more, under any circumstances. Here—the compass—now, we'll see;" and O'Brien advanced the parallel rule from the compass to the spot where the ship was placed on the chart. "Bother! you see, it's as much as she'll do to weather the other point now, on this tack, and that's what the captain meant when he told us we had more difficulty. I could have taken my Bible oath that we were clear of everything, if the wind held."

Page 21

"See what the distance is, O'Brien," said Robinson. It was measured, and proved to be thirteen miles. "Only thirteen miles; and if we do weather, we shall do very well, for the bay is deep beyond. It's a rocky point, you see, just by way of variety. Well, my lads, I've a piece of comfort for you, anyhow. It's not long that you'll be kept in suspense, for by one o'clock this day you'll either be congratulating each other upon your good luck, or you'll be past praying for. Come, put up the chart, for I hate to look at melancholy prospects; and, steward, see what you can find in the way of comfort." Some bread and cheese, with the remains of yesterday's boiled pork, were put on the table, with a bottle of rum, procured at the time they "spliced the main brace," but we were all too anxious to eat much, and one by one returned on deck to see how the weather was, and if the wind at all favored us. On deck the superior officers were in conversation with the captain, who expressed the same fear that O'Brien had in our berth. The men, who knew what they had to expect, were assembled in knots, looking very grave, but at the same time not wanting in confidence. They knew that they could trust to the captain, as far as skill or courage could avail them; and sailors are too sanguine to despair, even at the last moment. As for myself, I felt such admiration for the captain, after what I had witnessed that morning, that, whenever the idea came over me, that in all probability I should be lost in a few hours, I could not help acknowledging how much more serious it was that such a man should be lost to his country. I do not intend to say that it consoled me, but it certainly made me still more regret the chances with which we were threatened.

Before twelve o'clock the rocky point which we so much dreaded was in sight, broad on the lee bow; and if the low sandy coast appeared terrible, how much more did this, even at a distance. The captain eyed it for some minutes in silence, as if in calculation.

"Mr. Falcon," said he, at last, "we must put the mainsail on her."

"She never can bear it, sir."

"She *must* bear it," was the reply. "Send the men aft to the mainsheet. See that careful men attend the bunt-lines."

The mainsail was set, and the effect of it upon the ship was tremendous. She careened over so that her lee channels were under the water; and when pressed by a sea, the lee side of the quarter-deck and gangway were afloat. She now reminded me of a goaded and fiery horse, mad with the stimulus applied; not rising as before, but forcing herself through whole seas, and dividing the waves, which poured in one continual torrent from the forecastle down upon the decks below. Four men were secured to the wheel—the sailors were obliged to cling to prevent being washed away—the ropes were thrown in confusion to leeward—the shot rolled out of the lockers, and every eye was fixed aloft, watching the masts,

Page 22

which were expected every moment to go over the side. A heavy sea struck us on the broadside, and it was some moments before the ship appeared to recover herself; she reeled, trembled, and stopped her way, as if it had stupefied her. The first lieutenant looked at the captain, as if to say, "This will not do." "It is our only chance," answered the captain to the appeal. That the ship went faster through the water, and held a better wind, was certain; but just before we arrived at the point the gale increased in force. "If anything starts we are lost, sir," observed the first lieutenant again.

"I am perfectly well aware of it," replied the captain, in a calm tone; "but, as I said before, and as you must now be aware, it is our only chance. The consequence of any carelessness or neglect in the fitting and securing of the rigging will be felt now; and this danger, if we escape it, ought to remind us how much we have to answer for if we neglect our duty. The lives of a whole ship's company may be sacrificed by the neglect or incompetence of an officer when in harbor. I will pay you the compliment, Falcon, to say, that I feel convinced that the masts of the ship are as secure as knowledge and attention can make them."

The first lieutenant thanked the captain for his good opinion, and hoped that it would not be the last compliment which he paid him.

"I hope not, too; but a few minutes will decide the point."

The ship was now within two cables' lengths of the rocky point; some few of the men I observed to clasp their hands, but most of them were silently taking off their jackets, and kicking off their shoes, that they might not lose a chance of escape provided the ship struck.

"'Twill be touch and go, indeed, Falcon," observed the captain (for I had clung to the belaying pins, close to them for the last half-hour that the mainsail had been set). "Come aft, you and I must take the helm. We shall want *nerve* there, and only there, now."

The captain and first lieutenant went aft, and took the fore-spokes of the wheel, and O'Brien, at a sign made by the captain, laid hold of the spokes behind him. An old quartermaster kept his station at the fourth. The roaring of the seas on the rocks, with the howling of the wind, were dreadful; but the sight was more dreadful than the noise. For a few minutes I shut my eyes, but anxiety forced me to open them again. As near as I could judge, we were not twenty yards from the rocks, at the time that the ship passed abreast of them. We were in the midst of the foam, which boiled around us; and as the ship was driven nearer to them, and careened with the wave, I thought that our main yard-arm would have touched the rock; and at this moment a gust of wind came on, which laid the ship on her beam-ends, and checked her progress through the water,

while the accumulating noise was deafening. A few moments more the ship dragged on, another wave dashed over

Page 23

her and spent itself upon the rocks, while the spray was dashed back from them, and returned upon the decks. The main rock was within ten yards of the counter, when another gust of wind laid us on our beam-ends, the foresail and mainsail split, and were blown clean out of the bolt-ropes—the ship righted, trembling fore and aft. I looked astern:—the rocks were to windward on our quarter, and we were safe. I thought at the time that the ship, relieved of her courses, and again lifting over the waves, was not a bad similitude of the relief felt by us all at that moment; and, like her, we trembled as we panted with the sudden reaction, and felt the removal of the intense anxiety which oppressed our breasts.

The captain resigned the helm, and walked aft to look at the point, which was now broad on the weather-quarter. In a minute or two, he desired Mr. Falcon to get new sails up and bend them, and then went below to his cabin. I am sure it was to thank God for our deliverance: I did most fervently, not only then, but when I went to my hammock at night. We were now comparatively safe—in a few hours completely so; for, strange to say, immediately after we had weathered the rocks, the gale abated, and before morning we had a reef out of the topsails.

THE CRUISE OF THE TORCH

From “Tom Cringle’s Log,” BY MICHAEL SCOTT

Heligoland light—north and by west—so many leagues—wind baffling—weather hazy—Lady Passengers on deck for the first time.

Arrived in the Downs—ordered by signal from the guardship to proceed to Portsmouth. Arrived at Spithead—ordered to fit to receive a general officer, and six pieces of field artillery, and a Spanish Ecclesiastic, the Canon of ----- . Plenty of great guns, at any rate—a regular park of artillery.

Received General ----- and his wife, and aide-de-camp, and two poodle-dogs, one white man-servant, one black ditto, and the Canon of -----, and the six nine-pound field-pieces, and sailed for the Cove of Cork.

It was blowing hard as we stood in for the Old Head of Kinsale—pilot boat breasting the foaming surge like a sea gull—*Carrol* Cove in her tiny mainsail—pilot jumped into the main channel—bottle of rum swung by the lead line into the boat—all very clever.



Ran in, and anchored under Spike Island. A line-of-battle ship, three frigates, and a number of merchantmen at anchor—men-of-war lovely craft—bands playing—a good deal of the pomp and circumstances of war. Next forenoon, Mr. Treenail, the second lieutenant, sent for me.

“Mr. Cringle,” said he, “you have an uncle in Cork, I believe?”

I said I had.

Page 24

"I am going there on duty to-night; I daresay, if you asked the captain to let you accompany me, he would do so." This was too good an offer not to be taken advantage of. I plucked up courage, made my bow, asked leave, and got it; and the evening found my friend the lieutenant, and myself, after a ride of three hours, during which I, for one, had my bottom sheathing grievously rubbed, and a considerable botheration at crossing the Ferry at Passage, safe in our inn at Cork. I soon found out that the object of my superior officer was to gain information amongst the crimp shops, where ten men who had run from one of the West Indiamen, waiting at Cove for convoy, were stowed away, but I was not let further into the secret; so I set out to pay my visit, and after passing a pleasant evening with my friends, Mr. and Mrs. Job Cringle, the lieutenant dropped in upon us about nine o'clock. He was heartily welcomed; and under the plea of our being obliged to return to the ship early next morning, we soon took leave, and returned to the inn. As I was turning into the public room, the door was open, and I could see it full of blowsy-faced monsters, glimmering and jabbering, through the midst of hot brandy grog and gin twist; with poodle Benjamins, and greatcoats, and cloaks of all sorts and sizes, steaming on their pegs, with Barcelonas and comforters, and damp travelling caps of seal-skin, and blue cloth, and tartan, arranged above the same. Nevertheless, such a society in my juvenile estimation, during my short *escapade* from the middy's berth, had its charms, and I was rolling in with a tolerable swagger, when Mr. Treenail pinched my arm.

"Mr. Cringle, come here into my room."

From the way in which he spoke, I imagined, in my innocence, that his room was at my elbow; but no such thing—we had to ascend a long, and not over-clean staircase, to the fourth floor, before we were shown into a miserable little double-bedded room. So soon as we had entered, the lieutenant shut the door.

"Tom," said he, "I have taken a fancy to you, and therefore I applied for leave to bring you with me; but I must expose you to some danger, and I will allow, not altogether in a very creditable way either. You must enact the spy for a short space."

I did not like the notion, certainly, but I had little time for consideration.

"Here," he continued—"here is a bundle." He threw it on the floor. "You must rig in the clothes it contains, and make your way into the celebrated crimp-shop in the neighborhood, and pick up all the information you can regarding the haunts of the pressable men at Cove, especially with regard to the ten seamen who have run from the West Indiaman we left below. You know the Admiral has forbidden pressing at Cork, so you must contrive to frighten the blue jackets down to Cove, by representing yourself as an apprentice of one of the merchant vessels, who had run from his indentures, and that you had narrowly escaped from a press-gang this very night *here*."

Page 25

I made no scruples, but forthwith arrayed myself in the slops contained in the bundle; in a pair of shag trousers, red flannel shirt, coarse blue cloth jacket, and no waistcoat.

“Now,” said Mr. Treenail, “stick a quid of tobacco in your cheek, and take the cockade out of your hat; or stop, leave it, and ship this striped woollen night cap—so—and come along with me.”

We left the house, and walked half a mile down the *Quay*.

Presently we arrived before a kind of low grog-shop—a bright lamp was flaring in the breeze at the door, one of the panes of the glass of it being broken.

Before I entered, Mr. Treenail took me to one side—“Tom, Tom Cringle, you must go into this crimp-shop; pass yourself off for an apprentice of the *Guava*, bound for Trinidad, the ship that arrived just as we started, and pick up all the knowledge you can regarding the whereabouts of the men, for we are, as you know, cruelly ill manned, and must replenish as we best may.” I entered the house, after having agreed to rejoin my superior officer so soon as I considered I had obtained my object. I rapped at the inner door, in which there was a small unglazed aperture cut, about four inches square; and I now, for the first time, perceived that a strong glare of light was cast into the lobby, where I stood, by a large argand with a brilliant reflector, that, like a magazine lantern, had been mortised into the bulkhead, at a height of about two feet above the door in which the spy-hole was cut. My first signal was not attended to: I rapped again, and, looking round, I noticed Mr. Treenail flitting backwards and forwards across the doorway, in the rain, his pale face and his sharp nose, with the sparkling drop at the end on’t, glancing in the light of the lamp. I heard a step within, and a very pretty face now appeared at the wicket.

“Who are you saking here, an’ please ye?”

“No one in particular, my dear; but if you don’t let me in, I shall be lodged in jail before five minutes be over.”

“I can’t help that, young man,” said she; “but where are ye from, darling!”

“Hush—I am run from the *Guava*, now lying at the Cove.”

“Oh,” said my beauty, “come in”; and she opened the door, but still kept it on the chain in such a way, that although, by bobbing, I crept and slid in beneath it, yet a common-sized man could not possibly have squeezed himself through. The instant I entered, the door was once more banged to, and the next moment I was ushered into the kitchen, a room about fourteen feet square, with a well-sanded floor, a huge dresser on one side, and over against it a respectable show of pewter dishes in racks against the wall. There was a long stripe of a deal table in the middle of the room—but no tablecloth—at the

bottom of which sat a large, bloated, brandy, or rather whisky faced savage, dressed in a shabby greatcoat of the hodden grey worn by the Irish peasantry, dirty

Page 26

swandown vest, and greasy corduroy breeches, worsted stockings, and well-patched shoes; he was smoking a long pipe. Around the table sat about a dozen seamen, from whose wet jackets and trousers the heat of the blazing fire, that roared up the chimney, sent up a smoky steam that cast a halo round a lamp which depended from the roof, and hung down within two feet of the table, stinking abominably of coarse whale oil. They were, generally speaking, hardy, weather-beaten men, and the greater proportion half, or more than half, drunk. When I entered, I walked up to the landlord.

“Yo ho, my young un! whence and whither bound, my hearty?”

“The first don’t signify much to you,” said I, “seeing I have wherewithal in my locker to pay my shot; and as to the second, of that hereafter; so, old boy, let’s have some grog, and then say if you can ship me with one of them colliers that are lying alongside the quay?”

“My eye, what a lot of brass that small chap has!” grumbled mine host. “Why, my lad, we shall see to-morrow morning; but you gammons so about the rhino, that we must prove you a bit; so, Kate, my dear,”—to the pretty girl who had let me in—“score a pint of rum against—Why, what is your name?”

“What’s that to you?” rejoined I, “let’s have the drink, and don’t doubt but the shiners shall be forthcoming.”

“Hurrah!” shouted the party, most of them now very tipsy. So the rum was produced forthwith, and as I lighted a pipe and filled a glass of swizzle, I struck in, “Messmates, I hope you have all shipped?”

“No, we han’t,” said some of them.

“Nor shall we be in any hurry, boy,” said others.

“Do as you please, but I shall, as soon as I can, I know; and I recommend all of you making yourselves scarce to-night, and keeping a bright look-out.”

“Why, boy, why?”

“Simply because I have just escaped a press-gang, by bracing sharp up at the corner of the street, and shoving into this dark alley here.”

This called forth another volley of oaths and unsavoury exclamations, and all was bustle and confusion, and packing up of bundles, and settling of reckonings.

“Where,” said one of the seamen,—“where do you go to, my lad?”



"Why, if I can't get shipped to-night, I shall trundle down to Cove immediately, so as to cross at Passage before daylight, and take my chance of shipping with some of the outward-bound that are to sail, if the wind holds, the day after to-morrow. There is to be no pressing when the blue Peter flies at the fore—and that was hoisted this afternoon, I know, and the foretopsail will be loose to-morrow.

"D—n my wig, but the small chap is right," roared one.

"I've a bloody great mind to go down with him," stuttered another, after several unavailing attempts to weigh from the bench, where he had brought himself to anchor.

"Hurrah!" yelled a third, as he hugged me, and nearly suffocated me with his maudlin caresses, "I trundles wid you too, my darling, by the piper!"

Page 27

“Have with you, boy—have with you,” shouted half-a-dozen other voices, while each stuck his oaken twig through the handkerchief that held his bundle, and shouldered it, clapping his straw or tarpaulin hat, with a slap on the crown, on one side of his head, and staggering and swaying about under the influence of the potfen, and slapping his thigh, as he bent double, laughing like to split himself, till the water ran over his cheeks from his drunken half-shut eyes, while jets of tobacco-juice were squirting in all directions.

I paid the reckoning, urging the party to proceed all the while, and indicating Pat Doolan’s at the Cove as a good rendezvous; and, promising to overtake them before they reached Passage, I parted company at the corner of the street, and rejoined the lieutenant.

Next morning we spent in looking about the town—Cork is a fine town—contains seventy thousand inhabitants *more or less*—safe in that—and three hundred thousand pigs, driven by herdsmen, with coarse grey greatcoats. The pigs are not so handsome as those in England, where the legs are short, and tails curly; here the legs are long, the flanks sharp and thin, and tails long and straight.

All classes speak with a deuced brogue, and worship graven images; arrived at Cove to a late dinner—and here follows a great deal of nonsense of the same kind.

By the time it was half-past ten o’clock, I was preparing to turn in, when the master at arms called down to me,—

“Mr. Cringle, you are wanted in the gunroom.”

I put on my jacket again, and immediately proceeded thither, and on my way I noticed a group of seamen, standing on the starboard gangway, dressed in pea-jackets, under which, by the light of a lantern, carried by one of them, I could see they were all armed with pistols and cutlass. They appeared in great glee, and as they made way for me, I could hear one fellow whisper, “There goes the little beagle.” When I entered the gunroom, the first lieutenant, master, and purser, were sitting smoking and enjoying themselves over a glass of cold grog—the gunner taking the watch on deck—the doctor was piping anything but mellifluously on the double flageolet, while the Spanish priest, and aide-de-camp to the general, were playing at chess, and wrangling in bad French. I could hear Mr. Treenail rumbling and stumbling in his stateroom, as he accoutred himself in a jacket similar to those of the armed boat’s crew whom I had passed, and presently he stepped into the gunroom, armed also with cutlass and pistol.

“Mr. Cringle, get ready to go in the boat with me, and bring your arms with you.”

Page 28

I now knew whereabouts I was, and that my Cork friends were the quarry at which we aimed. I did as I was ordered, and we immediately pulled on shore, where, leaving two strong fellows in charge of the boat, with instructions to fire their pistols and shove off a couple of boat-lengths should any suspicious circumstances indicating an attack take place, we separated, like a pulk of Cossacks coming to the charge, but without the *hourah*, with orders to meet before Pat Doolan's door, as speedily as our legs could carry us. We had landed about a cable's length to the right of the high precipitous bank—up which we stole in straggling parties—on which that abominable congregation of the most filthy huts ever pig grunted in is situated, called the Holy Ground. Pat Doolan's domicile was in a little dirty lane, about the middle of the village. Presently ten strapping fellows, including the lieutenant, were before the door, each man with his stretcher in his hand. It was very tempestuous, although moonlight, night, occasionally clear, with the moonbeams at one moment sparkling brightly in the small ripples on the filthy puddles before the door, and one the gem-like water drops that hung from the eaves of the thatched roof, and lighting up the dark statue-like figures of the men, and casting their long shadows strongly against the mud wall of the house; at another, a black cloud, as it flew across her disk, cast everything into deep shade; while the only noise we heard was the hoarse dashing of the distant surf, rising and falling on the fitful gusts of the breeze. We tried the door. It was fast.

"Surround the house, men," said the lieutenant in a whisper. He rapped loudly. "Pat Doolan, my man, open the door, will ye?" No answer. "If you don't, we shall make free to break it open, Patrick, dear."

All this while the light of a fire, or of candles, streamed through the joints of the door. The threat at length appeared to have the desired effect. A poor decrepit old man undid the bolt and let us in. "*Ohon a ree! Ohon a ree!* What make you all this boder for—come you to help us to wake poor ould Kate there, and bring you the whisky wid you?"

"Old man, where is Pat Doolan?" said the lieutenant.

"Gone to borrow whisky, to wake ould Kate, there;—the howling will begin whenever Mother Doncannon and Mithress Conolly come over from Middleton, and I look for dem every minute."

There was no vestige of any living thing in the miserable hovel, except the old fellow. On two low trestles, in the middle of the floor, lay a coffin with the lid on, on the top of which was stretched the dead body of an old emaciated woman in her graveclothes, the quality of which was much finer than one could have expected to have seen in the midst of the surrounding squalidness. The face of the corpse was uncovered, the hands were crossed on the breast, and there was a plate of salt on the stomach.

Page 29

An iron cresset, charged with coarse rancid oil, hung from the roof, the dull smoky red light flickering on the dead corpse, as the breeze streamed in through the door and numberless chinks in the walls, making the cold, rigid, sharp features appear to move, and glimmer, and gibber as it were, from the changing shades. Close to the head there was a small door opening into an apartment of some kind, but the coffin was placed so near it that one could pass between the body and the door.

"My good man," said Treenail to the solitary mourner, "I must beg leave to remove the body a bit, and have the goodness to open that door."

"Door, yere honour! It's no door o' mine—and it's not opening that same that old Phil Carrol shall busy himself wid."

"Carline," said Mr. Treenail, quick and sharp, "remove the body." It was done.

"Cruel heavy the old dame is, sir, for all her wasted appearance," said one of the men.

The lieutenant now ranged the press-gang against the wall fronting the door, and stepping into the middle of the room, drew his pistol and cocked it. "Messmates," he sang out, as if addressing the skulkers in the other room, "I know you are here; the house is surrounded—and unless you open that door now, by the powers, but I'll fire slap into you!" There was a bustle, and a rumbling tumbling noise within. "My lads, we are now sure of our game," sang out Treenail, with great animation; "sling that clumsy bench there." He pointed to an oaken form about eight feet long and nearly three inches thick. To produce a two-inch rope, and junk it into three lengths, and rig the battering ram, was the work of an instant. "One, two, three,"—and bang the door flew open, and there were our men stowed away, each sitting on the top of his bag, as snug as could be, although looking very much like condemned thieves. We bound eight of them, thrusting a stretcher across their backs, under their arms, and lashing the fins to the same by good stout lanyards, we were proceeding to stump our prisoners off to the boat, when, with the innate deviltry that I have inherited, I know not how, but the original sin of which has more than once nearly cost me my life, I said, without addressing my superior officer, or any one else directly, "I should like now to scale my pistol through that coffin. If I miss, I can't hurt the old woman; and an eyelet hole in the coffin itself will only be an act of civility to the worms."

I looked towards my superior officer, who answered me with a knowing shake of the head. I advanced, while all was silent as death—the sharp click of the pistol lock now struck acutely on my own ear. I presented, when—crash—the lid of the coffin, old woman and all, was dashed off in an instant, the corpse flying up in the air, and then falling heavily on the floor, rolling over and over, while a tall handsome fellow, in his striped flannel shirt and blue trousers, with the sweat pouring down over his face in streams, sat up in the shell.

Page 30

"All right," said Mr. Treenail; "help him out of his berth."

He was pinioned like the rest, and forthwith we walked them all off to the beach. By this time there was an unusual bustle in the Holy Ground, and we could hear many an anathema—curses not loud but deep—ejaculated from many a half-opened door as we passed along. We reached the boat, and time it was we did, for a number of stout fellows, who had followed us in a gradually increasing crowd until they amounted to forty at the fewest, now nearly surrounded us, and kept closing in. As the last of us jumped into the boat, they made a rush, so that if we had not shoved off with the speed of light, I think it very likely that we should have been overpowered. However, we reached the ship in safety, and the day following we weighed, and stood out to sea with our convoy.

It was a very large fleet, nearly three hundred sail of merchant vessels—and a noble sight truly.

A line-of-battle ship led, and two frigates and three sloops of our class were stationed on the outskirts of the fleet, whipping them in, as it were. We made Madeira in fourteen days, looked in, but did not anchor; superb island—magnificent mountains—white town, —and all very fine, but nothing particular happened for three weeks. One fine evening (we had by this time progressed into the trades, and were within three hundred miles of Barbadoes) the sun had set bright and clear, after a most beautiful day, and we were bowling along right before it, rolling like the very devil; but there was no moon, and although the stars sparkled brilliantly, yet it was dark, and as we were the sternmost of the men-of-war, we had the task of whipping in the sluggards. It was my watch on deck. A gun from the commodore, who showed a number of lights. "What is that, Mr. Kennedy?" said the captain to the old gunner. "The commodore has made the night-signal for the sternmost ships to make more sail and close, sir." We repeated the signal and stood on, hailing the dullest of the merchantmen in our neighbourhood to make more sail, and firing a musket-shot now and then over the more distant of them. By-and-by we saw a large West Indiamen suddenly haul her wind and stand across our bows.

"Forward there!" sung out Mr. Splinter; "stand by to fire a shot at that fellow from the boat gun if he does not bear up. What can he be after? Sergeant Armstrong"—to a marine, who was standing close by him in the waist—"get a musket and fire over him."

It was done, and the ship immediately bore up on her course again; we now ranged alongside of him on his larboard quarter.

"Ho, the ship, ahoy!"—"Hillo!" was the reply. "Make more sail, sir, and run into the body of the fleet, or I shall fire into you: why don't you, sir, keep in the wake of the commodore?" No answer. "What meant you by hauling your wind just now, sir?"

“Yesh, yesh,” at length responded a voice from the merchantman.

Page 31

“Something wrong here,” said Mr. Splinter. “Back your maintopsail, sir, and hoist a light at the peak; I shall send a boat on board of you. Boatswain’s mate, pipe away the crew of the jolly-boat.” We also hove to, and were in the act of lowering down the boat, when the officer rattled out—“Keep all fast with the boat; I can’t comprehend that chap’s manoeuvres for the soul of me. He has not hove to.” Once more we were within pistol-shot of him. “Why don’t you heave to, sir?” All silent.

Presently we could perceive a confusion and noise of struggling on board, and angry voices, as if people were trying to force their way up the hatches from below; and a heavy thumping on the deck, and a creaking of the blocks, and rattling of the cordage, while the mainyard was first braced one way, and then another, as if two parties were striving for the mastery. At length a voice hailed distinctly—“we are captured by a——.” A sudden sharp cry, and a splash overboard, told of some fearful deed.

“We are taken by a privateer or pirate,” sung out another voice. This was followed by a heavy crunching blow, as when the spike of a butcher’s axe is driven through a bullock’s forehead deep into the brain.

By this time all hands had been called, and the word had been passed to clear away two of the foremost carronades on the starboard side, and to load them with grape.

“On board there—get below, all you of the English crew, as I shall fire with grape,” sung out the captain.

The hint was now taken. The ship at length came to the wind—we rounded to, under her lee—and an armed boat, with Mr. Treenail, and myself, and sixteen men, with cutlasses, were sent on board.

We jumped on deck, and at the gangway Mr. Treenail stumbled and fell over the dead body of a man, no doubt the one who had hailed last, with his skull cloven to the eyes, and a broken cutlass-blade sticking in the gash. We were immediately accosted by the mate, who was lashed down to a ring-bolt close by the bits, with his hands tied at the wrists by sharp cords, so tightly that the blood was spouting from beneath his nails.

“We have been surprised by a privateer schooner, sir; the lieutenant of her, and several men, are now in the cabin.”

“Where are the rest of the crew?”

“All secured in the forecabin, except the second-mate and boatswain, the men who hailed you just now; the last was knocked on the head, and the former was stabbed and thrown overboard.”

We immediately released the men, eighteen in number, and armed them with boarding-pikes. “What vessel is that astern of us?” said Treenail to the mate. Before he could

answer, a shot from the brig fired at the privateer showed she was broad awake. Next moment Captain Deadeye hailed. "Have you mastered the prize crew, Mr. Treenail?" "Ay, ay, sir." "Then bear up on your course, and keep two lights hoisted at your mizzen-peak during the night, and blue Peter at the maintopsail yardarm when the day breaks: I shall haul my wind after the suspicious sail in your wake."

Page 32

Another shot, and another, from the brig—the time between each flash and the report increasing with the distance. By this the lieutenant has descended to the cabin, followed by his people, while the merchant crew once more took charge of the ship, crowding sail into the body of the fleet.

I followed him close, pistol and cutlass in hand, and I shall never forget the scene that presented itself when I entered. The cabin was that of a vessel of five hundred tons, elegantly fitted up; the panels filled with crimson cloth, edged with gold mouldings, with superb damask hangings before the stern windows and the side berths, and brilliantly lighted up by the two large swinging-lamps hung from the deck above, which were reflected from, and multiplied in, several plate-glass mirrors in the panels. In the recess, which in cold weather had been occupied by the stove, now stood a splendid grand piano, the silk in the open work above the keys corresponding with the crimson cloth of the panels; it was open, a Leghorn bonnet with a green veil, a parasol, and two long white gloves, as if recently pulled off, lay on it, with the very mould of the hands in them.

The rudder case was particularly beautiful; it was a richly carved and gilded palm-tree, the stem painted white and interlaced with golden fretwork, like the lozenges of a pineapple, while the leaves spread up and abroad on the roof.

The table was laid for supper, with cold meat, and wine, and a profusion of silver things, all sparkling brightly: but it was in great disorder, wine spilt, and glasses broken, and dishes with meat upset, and knives, and forks, and spoons, scattered all about. She was evidently one of those London West Indiamen, on board of which I knew there was much splendour and great comfort. But, alas, the hand of lawless violence had been there. The captain lay across the table, with his head hanging over the side of it next to us, and unable to help himself, with his hands tied behind his back, and a gag in his mouth; his face purple from the blood running to his head, and the white of his eyes turned up, while his loud stertorous breathing but too clearly indicated the rupture of a vessel on the brain.

He was a stout portly man, and although we released him on the instant, and had him bled, and threw water on his face, and did all we could for him, he never spoke afterwards, and died in half an hour.

Four gentlemanly-looking men were sitting at table, lashed to their chairs, pale and trembling, while six of the most ruffian-looking scoundrels I ever beheld stood on the opposite side of the table in a row fronting us, with the light from the lamps shining full on them. Three of them were small but very square mulattoes; one was a South American Indian, with the square high-boned visage and long, lank, black glossy hair of his caste. These four had no clothing besides their trousers, and stood with their arms folded, in all the calmness of desperate

Page 33

men caught in the very fact of some horrible atrocity, which they knew shut out every hope of mercy. The two others were white Frenchmen, tall, bushy-whiskered, sallow desperadoes, but still, wonderful to relate, with, if I may so speak, the manners of gentlemen. One of them squinted, and had a hare-lip, which gave him a horrible expression. They were dressed in white trousers and shirts, yellow silk sashes round their waists, and a sort of blue uniform jackets, blue Gascon caps, with the peaks, from each of which depended a large bullion tassel, hanging down on one side of their heads. The whole party had apparently made up their minds that resistance was vain, for their pistols and cutlasses, some of them bloody, had all been laid on the table, with the butts and handles towards us, contrasting horribly with the glittering equipage of steel, and crystal, and silver things, on the snow-white damask tablecloth. They were immediately seized and ironed, to which they submitted in silence. We next released the passengers, and were overpowered with thanks, one dancing, one crying, one laughing, and another praying. But, merciful Heaven! what an object met our eyes! Drawing aside the curtain that concealed a sofa fitted into a recess, there lay, more dead than alive, a tall and most beautiful girl, her head resting on her arm, her clothes disordered and torn, blood on her bosom, and foam on her mouth, with her long dark hair loose and dishevelled, and covering the upper part of her deadly pale face, through which her wild sparkling black eyes, protruding from their sockets, glanced and glared with the fire of a maniac's, while her blue lips kept gibbering an incoherent prayer one moment, and the next imploring mercy, as if she had still been in the hands of those who knew not the name; and anon, a low hysterical laugh made our very blood freeze in our bosoms, which soon ended in a long dismal yell, as she rolled off the couch upon the hard deck, and lay in a dead faint.

Alas the day!—a maniac she was from that hour. She was the only daughter of the murdered master of the ship, and never awoke, in her unclouded reason, to the fearful consciousness of her own dishonour and her parent's death.

The *Torch* captured the schooner, and we left the privateer's men at Barbadoes to meet their reward, and several of the merchant sailors were turned over to the guardship, to prove the facts in the first instance, and to serve his Majesty as impressed men in the second,—but scrimp measure of justice to the poor ship's crew.

Anchored at Carlisle Bay, Barbadoes. Town seemed built of cards—black faces—showy dresses of the negroes—dined at Mr. C——'s—capital dinner—little breeze-mill at the end of the room, that pumped a solution of salpetre [Transcriber's note: saltpetre?] and water into a trough of tin, perforated with small holes, below which, and exposed to the breeze, were ranged the wine and liqueurs, all in cotton bags; the water then flowed into a well, where the pump was stepped, and thus was again pumped up and kept circulating.

Page 34

Landed the artillery, the soldiers, officers, and the Spanish Canon—discharged the whole battery.

Next morning, weighed at day-dawn, with the trade for Jamaica, and soon lost sight of the bright blue waters of Carlisle Bay, and the smiling fields and tall cocoanut trees of the beautiful island. In a week after we arrived off the east end of Jamaica; and that same evening, in obedience to the orders of the admiral on the windward Island station, we hove to in Bull Bay, in order to land despatches, and secure our tithe of the crews of the merchant-vessels bound for Kingston, and the ports to leeward, as they passed us. We had fallen in with a pilot canoe of Morant Bay with four negroes on board, who requested us to hoist in their boat, and take them all on board, as the pilot schooner to which they belonged had that morning bore up for Kingston, and left instructions to them to follow her in the first vessel appearing afterwards. We did so, and now, as it was getting dark, the captain came up to Mr. Treenail.

“Why, Mr. Treenail, I think we had better heave to for the night, and in this case I shall want you to go in the cutter to Port Royal to deliver the despatches on board the flag-ship.

“I don’t think the admiral will be at Port Royal, sir,” responded the lieutenant; “and, if I might suggest, those black chaps have offered to take me ashore here on the *Palisadoes*, a narrow spit of land, not above one hundred yards across, that divides the harbour from the ocean, and to haul the canoe across, and take me to the agent’s house in Kingston, who will doubtless frank me up to the pen where the admiral resides, and I shall thus deliver the letters, and be back again by day-dawn.”

“Not a bad plan,” said old Deadeye; “put it in execution, and I will go below and get the despatches immediately.”

The canoe was once more hoisted out; the three black fellows, the pilot of the ship continuing on board, jumped into her alongside.

“Had you not better take a couple of hands with you, Mr. Treenail?” said the skipper.

“Why, no, sir, I don’t think I shall want them; but if you will spare me Mr. Cringle I will be obliged, in case I want any help.”

We shoved off, and as the glowing sun dipped under Portland Point, as the tongue of land that runs out about four miles to the southward, on the western side of Port Royal harbour, is called, we arrived within a hundred yards of the *Palisadoes*. The surf, at the particular spot we steered for, did not break on the shore in a rolling curling wave, as it usually does, but smoothed away under the lee of a small sandy promontory that ran out into the sea, about half a cable’s length to windward, and then slid up the smooth white sand without breaking, in a deep clear green swell, for the space of twenty yards,

gradually shoaling, the colour becoming lighter and lighter until it frothed away in a shallow white fringe, that buzzed as it receded back into the deep green sea, until it was again propelled forward by the succeeding billow.

Page 35

"I say, friend Bungo, how shall we manage? You don't mean to swamp us in a shove through that surf, do you?" said Mr. Treenail.

"No fear, massa, if you and toder leetle man-of-war buccra only keep dem seat when we rise on de crest of de swell dere."

We sat quiet enough. Treenail was coolness itself, and I aped him as well as I could. The loud murmur, increasing to a roar, of the sea, was trying enough as we approached, buoyed on the last long undulation.

"Now sit still, massa, bote."

We sank down into the trough, and presently were hove forwards with a smooth sliding motion up on the beach—until grit, grit, we stranded on the cream-coloured sand, high and dry.

"Now, jomp, massa, jomp."

We leapt with all our strength, and thereby toppled down on our noses; the sea receded, and before the next billow approached we had run the canoe twenty yards beyond high-water mark.

It was the work of a very few minutes to haul the canoe across the sand-bank, and to launch it once more in the placid waters of the harbour of Kingston. We pulled across towards the town, until we landed at the bottom of Hanover Street; the lights from the cabin windows of the merchantmen glimmering as we passed, and the town only discernible from a solitary sparkle here and there. But the contrast when we landed was very striking. We had come through the darkness of the night in comparative quietness; and in two hours from the time we had left the old *Torch*, we were transferred from her orderly deck to the bustle of a crowded town.

One of our crew undertook to be the guide to the agent's house. We arrived before it. It was a large mansion, and we could see lights glimmering in the ground-floor; but it was gaily lit up aloft. The house itself stood back about twenty feet from the street, from which it was separated by an iron railing.

We knocked at the outer gate, but no one answered. At length our black guide found out a bell-pull, and presently the clang of a bell resounded throughout the mansion. Still no one answered. I pushed against the door, and found it was open, and Mr. Treenail and myself immediately ascended a flight of six marble steps, and stood in the lower piazza, with the hall, or vestibule, before us. We entered. A very well-dressed brown woman, who was sitting at her work at a small table, along with two young girls of the same complexion, instantly rose to receive us.

“Beg pardon,” said Mr. Treenail, “pray, is this Mr. -----’s house?”

“Yes, sir, it is.”

“Will you have the goodness to say if he be at home?”

“Oh yes, sir, he is dere upon dinner wid company,” said the lady.

“Well,” continued the lieutenant, “say to him, that an officer of his Majesty’s sloop *Torch* is below, with despatches for the admiral.”

“Surely, sir,—surely,” the dark lady continued; “Follow me, sir; and dat small gentleman [Thomas Cringle, Esquire, no less!]
—him will better follow me too.”

Page 36

We left the room, and turning to the right, landed in the lower piazza of the house, fronting the north. A large clumsy stair occupied the easternmost end, with a massive mahogany balustrade, but the whole affair below was very ill lighted. The brown lady preceded us; and, planting herself at the bottom of the staircase, began to shout to some one above—

“Toby!—Toby!—buccra gentlemen arrive, Toby.” But no Toby responded to the call.

“My dear madam,” said Treenail, “I have little time for ceremony. Pray usher us up into Mr. -----’s presence.”

“Den follow me, gentlemen, please.”

Forthwith we all ascended the dark staircase until we reached the first landing-place, when we heard a noise as of two negroes wrangling on the steps above us.

“You rascal!” sang out one, “take dat; larn you for teal my wittal!”—then a sharp crack, as if he had smote the culprit across the pate; whereupon, like a shot, a black fellow, in a handsome livery, trundled down, pursued by another servant with a large silver ladle in his hand, with which he was belabouring the fugitive over his flint-hard skull, right against our hostess, with the drumstick of a turkey in his hand, or rather in his mouth.

“Top, you tief!—top, you tief!—for me piece dat,” shouted the pursuer.

“You dam rascal!” quoth the dame. But she had no time to utter another word, before the fugitive pitched, with all his weight, against her; and at the very moment another servant came trundling down with a large tray full of all kinds of meats—and I especially remember that two large crystal stands of jellies composed part of his load—so there we were regularly capsized, and caught all of a heap in the dark landing-place, halfway up the stair; and down the other flight tumbled our guide, with Mr. Treenail and myself, and the two blackies on the top of her, rolling in our descent over, or rather into, another large mahogany tray which had just been carried out, with a tureen of turtle soup in it, and a dish of roast-beef, and platefuls of land-crabs, and the Lord knows what all besides.

The crash reached the ear of the landlord, who was seated at the head of his table in the upper piazza, a long gallery about fifty feet long by fourteen wide, and he immediately rose and ordered his butler to take a light. When he came down to ascertain the cause of the uproar. I shall never forget the scene.

There was, first of all, mine host, a remarkably neat personage, standing on the polished mahogany stair, three steps above his servant, who was a very well-dressed respectable elderly negro, with a candle in each hand; and beneath him, on the landing-



place, lay two trays of viands, broken tureens of soup, fragments of dishes, and fractured glasses, and a chaos of eatables and drinkables, and table gear scattered all about, amidst which lay scrambling my lieutenant and myself, the brown housekeeper, and the two negro servants, all

Page 37

more or less covered with gravy and wine dregs. However, after a good laugh, we gathered ourselves up, and at length we were ushered on the scene. Mine host, after stifling his laughter the best way he could, again sat down at the head of his table, sparkling with crystal and wax-lights, while a superb lamp hung overhead. The company was composed chiefly of naval and military men, but there was also a sprinkling of civilians, or *muftees*, to use a West India expression. Most of them rose as we entered, and after they had taken a glass of wine, and had their laugh at our mishap, our landlord retired to one side with Mr. Treenail, while I, poor little middy as I was, remained standing at the end of the room, close to the head of the stairs. The gentleman who sat at the foot of the table had his back towards me, and was not at first aware of my presence. But the guest at his right hand, a happy-looking, red-faced, well-dressed man, soon drew his attention towards me. The party to whom I was thus indebted seemed a very jovial-looking personage, and appeared to be well known to all hands, and indeed the life of the party, for, like Falstaff, he was not only witty in himself, but the cause of wit in others.

The gentleman to whom he had pointed me out immediately rose, made his bow, ordered a chair, and made room for me beside himself, where, the moment it was known that we were direct from home, such a volley of questions was fired off at me that I did not know which to answer first. At length, after Treenail had taken a glass or two of wine, the agent started him off to the admiral's pen in his own gig, and I was desired to stay where I was until he returned.

The whole party seemed very happy, my boon ally was fun itself, and I was much entertained with the mess he made when any of the foreigners at table addressed him in French or Spanish. I was particularly struck with a small, thin, dark Spaniard, who told very feelingly how the night before, on returning home from a party to his own lodgings, on passing through the piazza, he stumbled against something heavy that lay in his grass-hammock, which usually hung there. He called for a light, when, to his horror, he found the body of his old and faithful valet lying in it, *dead* and cold, with a knife sticking under his fifth rib—no doubt intended for his master. The speaker was Bolivar. About midnight, Mr. Treenail returned, we shook hands with Mr. -----, and once more shoved off; and, guided by the lights shown on board the *Torch* we were safe *home* again by three in the morning, when we immediately made sail, and nothing particular happened until we arrived within a day's sail of New Providence. It seemed that, about a week before, a large American brig, bound from Havana to Boston had been captured in this very channel by one of our men-of-war schooners, and carried into Nassau; out of which port, for their own security, the authorities

Page 38

had fitted a small schooner, carrying six guns and twenty-four men. She was commanded by a very gallant fellow—there is no disputing that—and he must needs emulate the conduct of the officer who had made the capture; for in a fine clear night, when all the officers were below rummaging in their kits for the killing things they should array themselves in on the morrow, so as to smite the Fair of New Providence to the heart at a blow—*Whiss*—a shot flew over our mast-head.

“A small schooner lying to right ahead, sir,” sang out the boatswain from the forecastle.

Before we could beat to quarters, another sang between our masts. We kept steadily on our course, and as we approached our pigmy antagonist, he bore up. Presently we were alongside of him.

“Heave to,” hailed the strange sail; “heave to, or I’ll sink you.” The devil you will, you midge, thought I.

The captain took the trumpet—“Schooner, ahoy”—no answer—“D—n your blood, sir, if you don’t let everything go by the run this instant, I’ll fire a broadside. Strike, sir, to his Britannic Majesty’s sloop *Torch*.”

The poor fellow commanding the schooner had by this time found out his mistake, and immediately came on board, where, instead of being lauded for his gallantry, I am sorry to say he was roundly rated for his want of discernment in mistaking his Majesty’s cruiser for a Yankee merchantman. Next forenoon we arrived at Nassau.

In a week after we again sailed for Bermuda, having taken on board ten American skippers, and several other Yankees, as prisoners of war.

For the first three days after we cleared the Passages, we had fine weather—wind at east-south-east; but after that it came on to blow from the north-west, and so continued without intermission during the whole of the passage to Bermuda. On the fourth morning after we left Nassau, we descried a sail in the south-east quarter, and immediately made sail in chase. We overhauled her about noon; she hove to, after being fired at repeatedly; and, on boarding her, we found she was a Swede from Charleston, bound to Havre-de-Grace. All the letters we could find on board were very unceremoniously broken open, and nothing having transpired that could identify the cargo as enemy’s property, we were bundling over the side, when a nautical-looking subject, who had attracted my attention from the first, put in his oar.

“Lieutenant,” said he, “will you allow me to put this barrel of New York apples into the boat as a present to Captain Deadeye, from Captain ----- of the United States navy?”

Mr. Treenail bowed, and said he would; and we shoved off and got on board again, and now there was the devil to pay, from the perplexity old Deadeye was thrown into, as to whether, here in the heat of the American war, he was bound to take this American captain prisoner or not. I was no party to the councils of my superiors, of course, but the foreign ship was finally allowed to continue her course.

Page 39

The next day I had the forenoon watch; the weather had lulled unexpectedly nor was there much sea, and the deck was all alive, to take advantage of the fine *blink*, when the man at the mast-head sang out—"Breakers right ahead, sir."

"Breakers!" said Mr. Splinter, in great astonishment. "Breakers!—why, the man must be mad! I say, Jenkins——"

"Breakers close under the bows," sang out the boatswain from forward.

"The devil!" quoth Splinter, and he ran along the gangway, and ascended the forecastle, while I kept close to his heels. We looked out ahead, and there we certainly did see a splashing, and boiling, and white foaming of the ocean, that unquestionably looked very like breakers. Gradually, this splashing and foaming appearance took a circular whisking shape, as if the clear green sea, for a space of a hundred yards in diameter, had been stirred about by a gigantic invisible *spurtle*, until everything hissed again; and the curious part of it was, that the agitation of the water seemed to keep ahead of us, as if the breeze which impelled us had also floated it onwards. At length the whirling circle of white foam ascended higher and higher, and then gradually contracted itself into a spinning black tube, which wavered about for all the world like a gigantic *loch-leech* held by the tail between the finger and thumb, while it was poking its vast snout about in the clouds in search of a spot to fasten on.

"Is the boat-gun on the forecastle loaded?" said Captain Deadeye.

"It is, sir."

"Then luff a bit—that will do—fire."

The gun was discharged, and down rushed the black wavering pillar in a watery *avalanche*, and in a minute after the dark heaving billows rolled over the spot whereout it arose, as if no such thing had ever been.

This said troubling of the waters was neither more nor less than a waterspout, which again is neither more nor less than a whirlwind at sea, which gradually whisks the water round and round, and up and up, as you see straws so raised, until it reaches a certain height, when it invariably breaks. Before this I had thought that waterspout was created by some next to supernatural exertion of the power of the Deity, in order to suck up water into the clouds, that they, like the wine-skins in Spain, might be filled with rain.

The morning after, the weather was clear and beautiful, although the wind blew half a gale. Nothing particular happened until about seven o'clock in the evening. I had been invited to dine with the gunroom officers this day, and every thing was going on smooth and comfortable, when Mr. Splinter spoke. "I say, master, don't you smell gunpowder?"

"Yes, I do," said the little master, "or something deuced like it."

To explain the particular comfort of our position, it may be right to mention that the magazine of a brig sloop is exactly under the gunroom. Three of the American skippers had been quartered on the gunroom mess, and they were all at table. Snuff, snuff, smelled one, and another sniffled,—“Gunpowder, I guess, and in a state of ignition.”

Page 40

"Will you not send for the gunner, sir?" said the third. Splinter did not like it, I saw, and this quailed me.

The captain's bell rang. "What smell of brimstone is that, steward?"

"I really can't tell," said the man, trembling from head to foot; "Mr. Splinter has sent for the gunner, sir."

"The devil!" said Deadeye, as he hurried on deck. We all followed. A search was made.

"Some matches have caught in the magazine," said one.

"We shall be up and away like sky-rockets," said another.

Several of the American masters ran out on the jib-boom, coveting the temporary security of being so far removed from the seat of the expected explosion, and all was alarm and confusion, until it was ascertained that two of the boys, little sky-larking vagabonds, had stolen some pistol cartridges, and had been making lightning, as it is called, by holding a lighted candle between the fingers, and putting some loose powder into the palm of the hand, then chucking it up into the flame. They got a sound flogging, on a very unpoetical part of their corpuses, and once more the ship subsided into her usual orderly discipline. The northwester still continued, with a clear blue sky, without a cloud overhead by day, and a bright cold moon by night. It blew so hard for the three succeeding days, that we could not carry more than close-reefed topsails to it, and a reefed foresail. Indeed, towards six bells in the forenoon watch of the third day, it came thundering down with such violence, and the sea increased so much, that we had to hand the foretopsail.

This was by no means an easy job. "Ease her a bit," said the first lieutenant,—*"there—shake the wind out of her sails for a moment, until the men get the canvas in"*—whirl, a poor fellow pitched off the lee foreyardarm into the sea. "Up with the helm—heave him the bight of a rope." We kept away, but all was confusion, until an American midshipman, one of the prisoners on board, hove the bight of a rope at him. The man got it under his arms, and after hauling him along for a hundred yards at the least—and one may judge of the velocity with which he was dragged through the water, by the fact that it took the united strain of ten powerful men to get him in—he was brought safely on board, pale and blue, when we found that the running of the rope had crushed in his broad chest, below his arms, as if it had been a girl's waist, indenting the very muscles of it and of his back half an inch deep. He had to be bled before he could breathe, and it was an hour before the circulation could be restored, by the joint exertions of the surgeon and gunroom steward, chafing him with spirits and camphor, after he had been stripped and stowed away between the blankets in his hammock.

Page 41

The same afternoon we fell in with a small prize to the squadron in the *Chesapeake*, a dismantled schooner, manned by a prize crew of a midshipman and six men. She had a signal of distress, an American ensign, with the union down, hoisted on the jury-mast, across which there was rigged a solitary lug-sail. It was blowing so hard that we had some difficulty in boarding her, when we found she was a Baltimore pilot-boat-built schooner, of about 70 tons burden, laden with flour, and bound for Bermuda. But three days before, in a sudden squall, they had carried away both masts short by the board, and the only spar which they had been able to rig, was a spare topmast which they had jammed into one of the pumps—fortunately she was as tight as a bottle—and stayed it the best way they could. The captain offered to take the little fellow who had charge of her, and his crew and cargo, on board, and then scuttle her; but no—all he wanted was a cask of water and some biscuit; and having had a glass of grog, he trundled over the side again, and returned to his desolate command. However, he afterwards brought his prize safe into Bermuda.

The weather still continued very rough, but we saw nothing until the second evening after this. The forenoon had been even more boisterous than any of the preceding, and we were all fagged enough with “make sail,” and “shorten sail,” and “all hands,” the whole day through; and as the night fell, I found myself, for the fourth time, in the maintop. The men had just lain in from the maintopsail yard, when we heard the watch called on deck,—“Starboard watch, ahoy!”—which was a cheery sound to us of the larboard, who were thus released from duty on deck, and allowed to go below.

The men were scrambling down the weather shrouds, and I was preparing to follow them, when I jammed my left foot in the grating of the top, and capsized on my nose. I had been up nearly the whole of the previous night, and on deck the whole of the day, and actively employed too, as during the greater part of it it blew a gale. I stooped down in some pain, to see what had bolted me to the grating; but I had no sooner extricated my foot, than, over-worked and over-fatigued as I was, I fell over in the soundest sleep that ever I have enjoyed before or since, the back of my neck resting on a coil of rope, so that my head hung down within it.

The rain all this time was beating on me, and I was drenched to the skin. I must have slept for four hours or so, when I was awakened by a rough thump on the side from the stumbling foot of the captain of the top, the word having been passed to shake a reef out of the topsails, the wind having rather suddenly gone down. It was done; and now broad awake, I determined not to be caught napping again, so I descended, and swung myself in on deck out of the main rigging, just as Mr. Treenail was mustering the crew at eight bells. When I landed on the quarterdeck, there he stood abaft the binnacle, with the light shining on his face, his glazed hat glancing, and the rain-drop sparkling at the brim of it. He had noticed me the moment I descended.

Page 42

“Heyday, Master Cringle, you are surely out of your watch. Why, what are you doing here, eh?”

I stepped up to him, and told him the truth, that, being overfatigued, I had fallen asleep in the top.

“Well, well, boy,” said he, “never mind, go below, and turn in; if you don’t take your rest, you never will be a sailor.”

“But what do you see aloft?” glancing his eye upwards, and all the crew on deck, as I passed them, looked anxiously up also amongst the rigging, as if wondering what I saw there, for I had been so chilled in my snooze, that my neck, from resting in the cold on the coil of rope, had become stiffened and rigid to an intolerable degree; and although, when I first came on deck, I had, by a strong exertion, brought my *caput* to its proper bearings, yet the moment I was dismissed by my superior officer, I for my own comfort was glad to conform to the contraction of the muscle, whereby I once more strayed along the deck, *glowering* up into the heavens, as if I had seen some wonderful sight there.

“What do you see aloft?” repeated Mr. Treenail, while the crew, greatly puzzled, continued to follow my eyes, as they thought, and to stare up into the rigging.

“Why, sir, I have thereby got a stiff neck—that’s all, sir.”

“Go and turn in at once, my good boy—make haste, now; tell our steward to give you a glass of hot grog, and mind your hand that you don’t get sick.”

I did as was desired, swallowed the grog, and turned in; but I could not have been in bed above an hour, when the drum beat to quarters, and I had once more to bundle out on the cold wet deck, where I found all excitement. At the time I speak of, we had been beaten by the Americans in several actions of single ships, and our discipline improved in proportion as we came to learn, by sad experience, that the enemy was not to be undervalued. I found that there was a ship in sight, right ahead of us—apparently carrying all sail. A group of officers were on the forecastle with night-glasses, the whole crew being stationed in dark clusters round the guns at quarters. Several of the American skippers were forward amongst us, and they were of opinion that the chase was a man-of-war, although our own people seemed to doubt this. One of the skippers insisted that she was the *Hornet*, from the unusual shortness of her lower masts, and the immense squareness of her yards. But the puzzle was, if it were the *Hornet*, why she did not shorten sail. Still this might be accounted for, by her either wishing to make out what we were before she engaged us, or she might be clearing for action. At this moment a whole cloud of studdingsails were blown from the yards as if the booms had been carrots; and to prove that the chase was keeping a bright look-out, she immediately kept away, and finally bore up dead before the wind, under the impression,

no doubt, that she would draw ahead of us, from her gear being entire, before we could rig out our light sails again.

Page 43

And so she did for a time, but at length we got within gunshot. The American masters were now ordered below, the hatches were clapped on, and the word passed to see all clear. Our shot was by this time flying over and over her, and it was evident she was not a man-of-war. We peppered away—she could not even be a privateer; we were close under her lee quarter, and yet she had never fired a shot; and her large swaggering Yankee ensign was now run up to the peak, only to be hauled down the next moment. Hurrah! a large cotton-ship from Charlestown to Bordeaux—prize to H.M.S. *Torch*!

She was taken possession of, and proved to be the *Natches*, of four hundred tons burden, fully loaded with cotton.

By the time we got the crew on board, and the second-lieutenant, with a prize crew of fifteen men, had taken charge, the weather began to lour again, nevertheless we took the prize in tow, and continued on our voyage for the next three days, without anything particular happening. It was the middle watch, and I was sound asleep, when I was startled by a violent jerking of my hammock, and a cry “that the brig was amongst the breakers.” I ran on deck in my shirt, where I found all hands, and a scene of confusion such as I never had witnessed before. The gale had increased, yet the prize had not been cast off, and the consequence was, that by some mismanagement or carelessness, the swag of the large ship had suddenly hove the brig in the wind, and taken the sails aback. We accordingly fetched stern way, and ran foul of the prize, and there we were, in a heavy sea, with our stern grinding against the cotton-ship’s high quarter.

The mainboom, by the first rasp that took place after I came on deck, was broken short off, and nearly twelve feet of it hove right in over the taffrail; the vessels then closed, and the next rub ground off the ship’s mizzen channel as clean as if it had been sawed away. Officers shouting, men swearing, rigging cracking, the vessels crashing and thumping together, I thought we were gone, when the first lieutenant seized his trumpet—“Silence, men; hold your tongues, you cowards, and mind the word of command!”

The effect was magical.—“Brace round the foreyard—round with it; set the jib—that’s it—fore-top-mast staysail—haul—never mind if the gale takes it out of the bolt-rope”—a thundering flap, and away it flew in truth down to leeward, like a puff of white smoke.—“Never mind, men, the jib stands. Belay all that—down with the helm, now—don’t you see she has stern way yet? Zounds! we shall be smashed to atoms if you don’t mind your hands, you lubbers—main-topsail sheets let fly—there she pays off, and has headway once more—that’s it: right your helm, now—never mind his spanker-boom, the fore-stay will stand it: there—up with helm, sir—we have cleared him—hurrah!” And a near thing it was too, but we soon had everything snug; and although the gale continued without any intermission for ten days, at length we ran in and anchored with our prize in Five-Fathom Hole, off the entrance to St. George’s Harbour.

Page 44

It was lucky for us that we got to anchor at the time we did, for that same afternoon one of the most tremendous gales of wind from the westward came on that I ever saw. Fortunately it was steady and did not veer about, and having good ground-tackle down, we rode it out well enough. The effect was very uncommon; the wind was howling over our mast-heads, and amongst the cedar bushes on the cliffs above, while on deck it was nearly calm, and there was very little swell, being a weather shore; but half a mile out at sea all was white foam, and the tumbling waves seemed to meet from north and south, leaving a space of smooth water under the lee of the island, shaped like the tail of a comet, tapering away, and gradually roughening and becoming more stormy, until the roaring billows once more owned allegiance to the genius of the storm.

There we rode, with three anchors ahead, in safety through the night; and next day, availing of a temporary lull, we ran up and anchored off the Tanks. Three days after this, the American frigate *President* was brought in by the *Endymion* and the rest of the squadron.

I went on board, in common with every officer in the fleet, and certainly I never saw a more superb vessel; her scantling was that of a seventy-four, and she appeared to have been fitted with great care. I got a week's leave at this time, and, as I had letters to several families, I contrived to spend my time pleasantly enough.

Bermuda, as all the world knows, is a cluster of islands in the middle of the Atlantic. There are Lord knows how many of them, but the beauty of the little straits and creeks which divide them no man can describe who has not seen them. The town of St. George's, for instance, looks as if the houses were cut out of chalk; and one evening the family where I was on a visit proceeded to the main island, Hamilton, to attend a ball there. We had to cross three ferries, although the distance was not above nine miles, if so far. The 'Mudian women are unquestionably beautiful—so thought Thomas Moore, a tolerable judge, before me. By the by, touching this 'Mudian ball, it was a very gay affair—the women pleasant and beautiful; but all the men, when they speak, or are spoken to, shut one eye and spit;—a lucid and succinct description of a community.

The second day of my sojourn was fine—the first fine day since our arrival—and with several young ladies of the family, I was prowling through the cedar wood above St. George's, when a dark good-looking man passed us; he was dressed in tight worsted net pantaloons and Hessian boots, and wore a blue frockcoat and two large epaulets, with rich French bullion, and a round hat. On passing, he touched his hat with much grace, and in the evening I met him in society. It was Commodore Decatur. He was very much a Frenchman in manner, or, I should rather say, in look, for although very well bred, he, for one ingredient, by no means possessed a Frenchman's volubility; still, he was an exceedingly agreeable and very handsome man.

Page 45

The following day we spent in a pleasure cruise amongst the three hundred and sixty-five Islands, many of them not above an acre in extent—fancy an island of an acre in extent!—with a solitary house, a small garden, a red-skinned family, a piggery, and all around clear deep pellucid water. None of the islands, or islets, rise to any great height, but they all shoot precipitously out of the water, as if the whole group had originally been one huge platform of rock, with numberless grooves subsequently chiselled out in it by art.

We had to wind our way amongst these manifold small channels for two hours, before we reached the gentleman's house where we had been invited to dine; at length, on turning a corner, with both lateen sails drawing beautifully, we ran bump on a shoal; there was no danger, and knowing that the 'Mudians were capital sailors, I sat still. Not so Captain K-----, a round plump little *homo*,--"Shove her off, my boys, shove her off." She would not move, and thereupon he, in a fever of gallantry, jumped overboard up to the waist in full fig; and one of the men following his example, we were soon afloat. The ladies applauded, and the captain sat in his wet *brecks* for the rest of the voyage, in all the consciousness of being considered a hero. Ducks and onions are the grand staple of Bermuda, but there was a fearful dearth of both at the time I speak of—a knot of young West India merchants, who, with heavy purses and large credits on England, had at this time domiciled themselves in St. George's, to batten on the spoils of poor Jonathan, having monopolised all the good things of the place. I happened to be acquainted with one of them, and thereby had less reason to complain; but many a poor fellow, sent ashore on duty, had to put up with but Lenten fare at the taverns. At length, having refitted, we sailed in company with the Rayo frigate, with a convoy of three transports, freighted with a regiment for New Orleans, and several merchantmen for the West Indies.

"The still vexed Bermoothes"—I arrived at them in a gale of wind, and I sailed from them in a gale of wind. What the climate may be in the summer I don't know; but during the time I was there it was one storm after another.

We sailed in the evening with the moon at full, and the wind at west-north-west. So soon as we got from under the lee of the land the breeze struck us, and it came on to blow like thunder, so that we were all soon reduced to our storm staysails; and there we were, transports, merchantmen, and men-of-war, rising on the mountainous billows one moment, and the next losing sight of everything but the water and sky in the deep trough of the sea, while the seething foam was blown over us in showers from the curling manes of the roaring waves. But overhead, all this while, it was as clear as a lovely winter moon could make it, and the stars shone brightly in the deep blue sky; there was not even a thin fleecy shred of cloud racking across the moon's disc. Oh, the glories of a northwester!

Page 46

But the devil seize such glory! Glory, indeed! with a fleet of transports, and a regiment of soldiers on board! Glory! why, I daresay five hundred rank and file, at the fewest, were all cascading at one and the same moment,—a thousand poor fellows turned outside in, like so many pairs of old stockings. Any glory in that? But to proceed.

Next morning the gale still continued, and when the day broke there was the frigate standing across our bows, rolling and pitching, as she tore her way through the boiling sea, under a close-reefed main-topsail and reefed foresail, with top-gallant-yards and royal masts, and everything that could be struck with safety in war-time, down on deck. There she lay, with her clear black bends, and bright white streak, and long tier of cannon on the maindeck, and the carronades on the quarterdeck and forecastle grinning through the ports in the black bulwarks, while the white hammocks, carefully covered by the hammock-cloths, crowned the defences of the gallant frigate fore and aft, as she delved through the green surge—one minute rolling and rising on the curling white crest of a mountainous sea, amidst a hissing snowstorm of spray, with her bright copper glancing from stem to stern, and her scanty white canvas swelling aloft, and twenty feet of her keel forward occasionally hove into the air and clean out of the water, as if she had been a sea-bird rushing to take wing—and the next, sinking entirely out of sight—hull, masts, and rigging—behind an intervening sea, that rose in hoarse thunder between us, threatening to overwhelm both us and her. As for the transports, the largest of the three had lost her foretopmast, and had bore up under her foresail; another was also scudding under a close-reefed fore-topsail; but the third or head-quarter ship was still lying to windward, under her storm staysails. None of the merchant vessels were to be seen, having been compelled to bear up in the night, and to run before it under bare poles.

At length, as the sun rose, we got before the wind, and it soon moderated so far that we could carry reefed topsails and foresail; and away we all bowled, with a clear, deep, cold, blue sky, and a bright sun overhead, and a stormy leaden-coloured ocean with whitish green-crested billows, below. The sea continued to go down, and the wind to slacken, until the afternoon, when the commodore made the signal for the *Torch* to send a boat's crew, the instant it could be done with safety, on board the dismasted ship to assist in repairing damages and in getting up a jury-foretopmast.

Page 47

The damaged ship was at this time on our weather-quarter; we accordingly handed the fore-topsail, and presently she was alongside. We hailed her, that we intended to send a boat on board, and desired her to heave-to, as we did, and presently she rounded to under our lee. One of the quarter-boats was manned, with three of the carpenter's crew, and six good men over and above her complement; but it was no easy matter to get on board of her, let me tell you, after she had been lowered, carefully watching the rolls, with four hands in. The moment she touched the water, the tackles were cleverly unhooked, and the rest of us tumbled on board, shin leather growing scarce, when we shoved off. With great difficulty, and not without wet jackets, we, the supernumeraries, got on board, and the boat returned to the *Torch*. The evening when we landed in the lobster-box, as Jack loves to designate a transport, was too far advanced for us to do anything towards refitting that night; and the confusion and uproar and numberless abominations of the crowded craft, were irksome to a greater degree than I expected, after having been accustomed to the strict and orderly discipline of a man-of-war. The following forenoon the *Torch* was ordered by signal to chase in the south-east quarter, and, hauling out from the fleet, she was soon out of sight.

THE MERCHANTMAN AND THE PIRATE

From "Hard Cash," BY CHARLES READE

North Latitude 23 1/2, Longitude East 113; the time March of this same year; the wind southerly; the port Whampoa in the Canton River. Ships at anchor reared their tall masts, here and there; and the broad stream was enlivened and colored by junks and boats of all sizes and vivid hues, propelled on the screw principle by a great scull at the stern, with projecting handles for the crew to work; and at times a gorgeous mandarin boat, with two great glaring eyes set in the bows, came flying, rowed with forty paddles by an armed crew, whose shields hung on the gunwale and flashed fire in the sunbeams; the mandarin, in conical and buttoned hat, sitting on the top of his cabin calmly smoking Paradise, alias opium, while his gong boomed and his boat flew fourteen miles an hour, and all things scuttled out of his celestial way. And there, looking majestically down on all these water ants, the huge *Agra*, cynosure of so many loving eyes and loving hearts in England, lay at her moorings; homeward bound.

Her tea not being yet on board, the ship's hull floated high as a castle, and to the subtle, intellectual, doll-faced, bolus-eyed people, that sculled to and fro, busy as bees, though looking forked mushrooms, she sounded like a vast musical shell: for a lusty harmony of many mellow voices vibrated in her great cavities, and made the air ring cheerily around her. The vocalists were the Cyclops, to judge by the tremendous thumps that kept clean time to their

Page 48

sturdy tune. Yet it was but human labor, so heavy and so knowing, that it had called in music to help. It was the third mate and his gang completing his floor to receive the coming tea chests. Yesterday he had stowed his dunnage, many hundred bundles of light flexible canes from Sumatra and Malacca; on these he had laid tons of rough saltpetre, in 200 lb. gunny-bags: and was now mashing it to music, bags and all. His gang of fifteen, naked to the waist, stood in line, with huge wooden beetles, called commanders, and lifted them high and brought them down on the nitre in cadence with true nautical power and unison, singing as follows, with ponderous bump on the last note in each bar:—

[Illustration: Song sung by labor gang.]

And so up to fifteen, when the stave was concluded with a shrill “Spell, oh!” and the gang relieved streaming with perspiration. When the saltpetre was well mashed, they rolled ton waterbutts on it, till the floor was like a billiard table. A fleet of chop boats then began to arrive, so many per day, with the tea chests. Mr. Grey proceeded to lay the first tier on his saltpetre floor, and then built the chests, tier upon tier, beginning at the sides, and leaving in the middle a lane somewhat narrower than a tea chest. Then he applied a screw jack to the chests on both sides, and so enlarged his central aperture, and forced the remaining tea chests in; and behold the enormous cargo packed as tight as ever shopkeeper packed a box—19,806 chests, 60 half chests, 50 quarter chests.

While Mr. Grey was contemplating his work with singular satisfaction, a small boat from Canton came alongside, and Mr. Tickell, midshipman, ran up the side, skipped on the quarter-deck, saluted it first, and then the first mate; and gave him a line from the captain, desiring him to take the ship down to Second Bar—for her water—at the turn of the tide.

Two hours after receipt of this order the ship swung to the ebb. Instantly Mr. Sharpe unmoored, and the *Agra* began her famous voyage, with her head at right angles to her course; for the wind being foul, all Sharpe could do was to set his topsails, driver, and jib, and keep her in the tide way, and clear of the numerous craft, by backing or filling as the case required; which he did with considerable dexterity, making the sails steer the helm for the nonce: he crossed the Bar at sunset, and brought to with the best bower anchor in five fathoms and a half. Here they began to take in their water, and on the fifth day the six-oared gig was ordered up to Canton for the captain. The next afternoon he passed the ship in her, going down the river, to Lin Tin, to board the Chinese admiral for his chop, or permission to leave China. All night the *Agra* showed three lights at her mizzen peak for him, and kept a sharp lookout. But he did not come: he was having a very serious talk with the Chinese admiral; at daybreak, however, the gig was reported

Page 49

in sight: Sharpe told one of the midshipmen to call the boatswain and man the side. Soon the gig ran alongside; two of the ship's boys jumped like monkeys over the bulwarks, lighting, one on the main channels, the other on the mid-ship port, and put the side ropes assiduously in the captain's hands; he bestowed a slight paternal smile on them, the first the imps had ever received from an officer, and went lightly up the sides. The moment his foot touched the deck, the boatswain gave a frightful shrill whistle; the men at the sides uncovered, the captain saluted the quarter-deck, and all the officers saluted him, which he returned, and stepping for a moment to the weather side of his deck, gave the loud command, "All hands heave anchor." He then directed Mr. Sharpe to get what sail he could on the ship, the wind being now westerly, and dived into his cabin.

The boatswain piped three shrill pipes, and "All hands up anchor" was thrice repeated forward, followed by private admonitions, "Rouse and bitt!" "Show a leg!" *etc.*, and up tumbled the crew with "homeward bound" written on their tanned faces.

(Pipe.) "Up all hammocks!"

In ten minutes the ninety and odd hammocks were all stowed neatly in the netting, and covered with a snowy hammock cloth; and the hands were active, unbitting the cable, shipping the capstan bars, *etc.*

"All ready below, sir," cried a voice.

"Man the bars," returned Mr. Sharpe from the quarter-deck. "Play up, fifer. Heave away!"

Out broke the merry fife with a rhythmical tune, and tramp, tramp, tramp went a hundred and twenty feet round and round, and, with brawny chests pressed tight against the capstan bars, sixty fine fellows walked the ship up to her anchor, drowning the fife at intervals with their sturdy song, as pat to their feet as an echo:

Heave with a will ye jolly boys,
Heave around:
We're off from Chainee, jolly boys,
Homeward bound.

"Short stay apeak, sir," roars the boatswain from forward.

"Unship the bars. Way aloft. Loose sails. Let fall!"

The ship being now over her anchor, and the topsails set, the capstan bars were shipped again, the men all heaved with a will, the messenger grinned, the anchor was



torn out of China with a mighty heave, and then run up with a luff tackle and secured; the ship's head cast to port:

"Up with a jib! man the topsail halyards! all hands make sail!" Round she came slow and majestically; the sails filled, and the good ship bore away for England.

She made the Bogue forts in three or four tacks, and there she had to come to again for another chop, China being a place as hard to get into as Heaven, and to get out of as —Chancery. At three P. M. she was at Macao, and hove to four miles from the land, to take in her passengers.

A gun was fired from the forecastle. No boats came off. Sharpe began to fret: for the wind, though light, had now got to the N.W., and they were wasting it. After a while the captain came on deck, and ordered all the carronades to be scaled. The eight heavy reports bellowed the great ship's impatience across the water, and out pulled two boats with the passengers. While they were coming, Dodd sent and ordered the gunner to load the carronades with shot, and secure and apron them. . . .

Page 50

The *Agra* had already shown great sailing qualities: the log was hove at sundown and gave eleven knots; so that with a good breeze abaft few fore-and-aft-rigged pirates could overhaul her. And this wind carried her swiftly past one nest of them at all events; the Ladrone Isles. At nine P. M. all the lights were ordered out. Mrs. Beresford had brought a novel on board, and refused to comply; the master-at-arms insisted; she threatened him with the vengeance of the Company, the premier, and the nobility and gentry of the British realm. The master-at-arms, finding he had no chance in argument, doused the glim—pitiable resource of a weak disputant—then basely fled the rhetorical consequences.

The northerly breeze died out, and light variable winds baffled the ship. It was the 6th April ere she passed the Macclesfield Bank in latitude 16. And now they sailed for many days out of sight of land; Dodd's chest expanded: his main anxiety at this part of the voyage lay in the state cabin; of all the perils of the sea none shakes a sailor like fire. He set a watch day and night on that spoiled child.

On the 1st of May they passed the great Nantuna, and got among the Bornese and Malay Islands: at which the captain's glass began to sweep the horizon again: and night and day at the dizzy foretop-gallant-masthead he perched an eye.

They crossed the line in longitude 107, with a slight breeze, but soon fell into the Doldrums. A dead calm, and nothing to do but kill time. . . .

After lying a week like a dead log on the calm but heaving waters came a few light puffs in the upper air and inflated the topsails only: the ship crawled southward, the crew whistling for wind.

At last, one afternoon, it began to rain, and after the rain came a gale from the eastward. The watchful skipper saw it purple the water to windward, and ordered the topsails to be reefed and the lee ports closed. This last order seemed an excess of precaution; but Dodd was not yet thoroughly acquainted with his ship's qualities: and the hard cash round his neck made him cautious. The lee ports were closed, all but one, and that was lowered. Mr. Grey was working a problem in his cabin, and wanted a little light and a little air, so he just dropped his port; but, not to deviate from the spirit of his captain's instructions, he fastened a tackle to it; that he might have mechanical force to close it with should the ship lie over.

Down came the gale with a whoo, and made all crack. The ship lay over pretty much, and the sea poured in at Mr. Grey's port. He applied his purchase to close it. But though his tackle gave him the force of a dozen hands, he might as well have tried to move a mountain: on the contrary, the tremendous sea rushed in and burst the port wide open. Grey, after a vain struggle with its might, shrieked for help; down tumbled the nearest hands, and hauled on the tackle in vain. Destruction was rushing

Page 51

on the ship, and on them first. But meantime the captain, with a shrewd guess at the general nature of the danger he could not see, had roared out, "Slack the main sheet!" The ship righted, and the port came flying to, and terror-stricken men breathed hard, up to their waists in water and floating boxes. Grey barred the unlucky port, and went aft, drenched in body, and wrecked in mind, to report his own fault. He found the captain looking grim as death. He told him, almost crying, what he had done, and how he had miscalculated the power of the water.

Dodd looked and saw his distress. "Let it be a lesson sir," said he, sternly. "How many ships have been lost by this in fair weather, and not a man saved to tell how the craft was fooled away?"

"Captain, bid me fling myself over the side, and I'll do it."

"Humph! I'm afraid I can't afford to lose a good officer for a fault he—will—never—repeat."

It blew hard all night and till twelve the next day. The *Agra* showed her weak point: she rolled abominably. A dirty night came on. At eight bells Mr. Grey touched by Dodd's clemency, and brimful of zeal, reported a light in Mrs. Beresford's cabin. It had been put out as usual by the master-at-arms; but the refractory one had relighted it.

"Go and take it away," said Dodd.

Soon screams were heard from the cabin. "Oh! mercy! mercy! I will not be drowned in the dark."

Dodd, who had kept clear of her so long, went down and tried to reassure her.

"Oh, the tempest! the tempest!" she cried. "AND TO BE DROWNED IN THE DARK!"

"Tempest? It is blowing half a gale of wind; that is all."

"Half a gale! Ah, that is the way you always talk to us ladies. Oh, pray give me my light, and send me a clergyman!"

Dodd took pity, and let her have her light, with a midshipman to watch it. He even made her a hypocritical promise that, should there be one grain of danger, he would lie to; but said he must not make a foul wind of a fair one for a few lurches. The *Agra* broke plenty of glass and crockery though with her fair wind and her lee lurches.

Wind down at noon next day, and a dead calm.

At two P.M. the weather cleared; the sun came out high in heaven's centre; and a balmy breeze from the west.

At six twenty-five, the grand orb set calm and red, and the sea was gorgeous with miles and miles of great ruby dimples: it was the first glowing smile of southern latitude. The night stole on so soft, so clear, so balmy, all were loth to close their eyes on it: the passengers lingered long on deck, watching the Great Bear dip, and the Southern Cross rise, and overhead a whole heaven of glorious stars most of us have never seen, and never shall see in this world. No belching smoke obscured, no plunging paddles deafened; all was musical; the soft air sighing among the sails; the phosphorescent water bubbling

Page 52

from the ship's bows; the murmurs from little knots of men on deck subdued by the great calm: home seemed near, all danger far; Peace ruled the sea, the sky, the heart: the ship, making a track of white fire on the deep, glided gently yet swiftly homeward, urged by snowy sails piled up like alabaster towers against a violet sky, out of which looked a thousand eyes of holy tranquil fire. So melted the sweet night away.

Now carmine streaks tinged the eastern sky at the water's edge: and that water blushed; now the streaks turned orange, and the waves below them sparkled. Thence splashes of living gold flew and settled on the ship's white sails, the deck, and the faces; and with no more prologue, being so near the line, up came majestically a huge, fiery, golden sun, and set the sea flaming liquid topaz.

Instantly the lookout at the foretop-gallant-masthead hailed the deck below.

"STRANGE SAIL! RIGHT AHEAD!"

The strange sail was reported to Captain Dodd, then dressing in his cabin. He came soon after on deck and hailed the lookout: "Which way is she standing?"

"Can't say, sir. Can't see her move any."

Dodd ordered the boatswain to pipe to breakfast; and taking his deck glass went lightly up to the foretop-gallant-mast-crosstrees. Thence, through the light haze of a glorious morning, he espied a long low schooner, lateen-rigged, lying close under Point Leat, a small island about nine miles distant on the weather bow; and nearly in the *Agra's* course then approaching the Straits of Gaspar, 4 Latitude S.

"She is hove to," said Dodd, very gravely.

At eight o'clock, the stranger lay about two miles to windward; and still hove to.

By this time all eyes were turned upon her, and half a dozen glasses. Everybody, except the captain, delivered an opinion. She was a Greek lying to for water: she was a Malay coming north with canes, and short of hands: she was a pirate watching the Straits.

The captain leaned silent and sombre with his arms on the bulwarks, and watched the suspected craft.

Mr. Fullalove joined the group, and levelled a powerful glass, of his own construction. His inspection was long and minute, and, while the glass was at his eye, Sharpe asked him half in a whisper, could he make out anything?

“Wal,” said he, “the varmint looks considerably snaky.” Then, without moving his glass, he let drop a word at a time, as if the facts were trickling into his telescope at the lens, and out at the sight. “One—two—four—seven, false ports.”

There was a momentary murmur among the officers all round. But British sailors are undemonstrative: Colonel Kenealy, strolling the deck with a cigar, saw they were watching another ship with maritime curiosity, and making comments; but he discerned no particular emotion nor anxiety in what they said, nor in the grave low tones they said it in. Perhaps a brother seaman would though.

Page 53

The next observation that trickled out of Fullalove's tube was this: "I judge there are too few hands on deck, and too many—white—eyeballs—glittering at the portholes."

"Confound it!" muttered Bayliss, uneasily; "how can you see that?"

Fullalove replied only by quietly handing his glass to Dodd. The captain, thus appealed to, glued his eye to the tube.

"Well, sir; see the false ports, and the white eyebrows?" asked Sharpe, ironically.

"I see this is the best glass I ever looked through," said Dodd doggedly, without interrupting his inspection.

"I think he is a Malay pirate," said Mr. Grey.

Sharpe took him up very quickly, and, indeed, angrily: "Nonsense! And if he is, he won't venture on a craft of this size."

"Says the whale to the swordfish," suggested Fullalove, with a little guttural laugh.

The captain, with the American glass at his eye, turned half round to the man at the wheel: "Starboard!"

"Starboard it is."

"Steer South South East."

"Ay, ay, sir." And the ship's course was thus altered two points.

This order lowered Dodd fifty per cent in Mr. Sharpe's estimation. He held his tongue as long as he could: but at last his surprise and dissatisfaction burst out of him, "Won't that bring him out on us?"

"Very likely, sir," replied Dodd.

"Begging your pardon, captain, would it not be wiser to keep our course, and show the blackguard we don't fear him?"

"When we *do*? Sharpe, he has made up his mind an hour ago whether to lie still, or bite; my changing my course two points won't change his mind; but it may make him declare it; and *I* must know what he does intend, before I run the ship into the narrows ahead."

"Oh, I see," said Sharpe, half convinced.



The alteration in the *Agra's* course produced no movement on the part of the mysterious schooner. She lay to under the land still, and with only a few hands on deck, while the *Agra* edged away from her and entered the straits between Long Island and Point Leat, leaving the schooner about two miles and a half distant to the N.W.

Ah! The stranger's deck swarms black with men.

His sham ports fell as if by magic, his guns grinned through the gaps like black teeth; his huge foresail rose and filled, and out he came in chase.

The breeze was a kiss from Heaven, the sky a vaulted sapphire, the sea a million dimples of liquid, lucid, gold. . . .

The way the pirate dropped the mask, showed his black teeth, and bore up in chase, was terrible: so dilates and bounds the sudden tiger on his unwary prey. There were stout hearts among the officers of the peaceful *Agra*; but danger in a new form shakes the brave; and this was their first pirate: their dismay broke out in ejaculations not loud but deep. . . .

Page 54

“Sharpe,” said Dodd, in a tone that conveyed no suspicion of the newcomer, “set the royals, and flying jib.—Port!”

“Port it is,” cried the man at the helm.

“Steer due South!” And, with these words in his mouth, Dodd dived to the gun deck.

By this time elastic Sharpe had recovered the first shock; and the order to crowd sail on the ship galled his pride and his manhood; he muttered, indignantly, “The white feather!” This eased his mind, and he obeyed orders briskly as ever. While he and his hands were setting every rag the ship could carry on that tack, the other officers, having unluckily no orders to execute, stood gloomy and helpless, with their eyes glued, by a sort of sombre fascination, on that coming fate. . . .

Realize the situation, and the strange incongruity between the senses and the mind in these poor fellows! The day had ripened its beauty; beneath a purple heaven shone, sparkled, and laughed a blue sea, in whose waves the tropical sun seemed to have fused his beams; and beneath that fair, sinless, peaceful sky, wafted by a balmy breeze over those smiling, transparent, golden waves, a bloodthirsty Pirate bore down on them with a crew of human tigers; and a lady babble babble babble babble babble babble babbled in their quivering ears.

But now the captain came bustling on deck, eyed the loftier sails, saw they were drawing well, appointed four midshipmen in a staff to convey his orders; gave Bayliss charge of the carronades, Grey of the cutlasses, and directed Mr. Tickell to break the bad news gently to Mrs. Beresford, and to take her below to the orlop deck; ordered the purser to serve out beef, biscuit, and grog to all hands, saying, “Men can’t work on an empty stomach: and fighting is hard work;” then beckoned the officers to come round him. “Gentlemen,” said he, confidentially, “in crowding sail on this ship I had no hope of escaping that fellow on this tack, but I was, and am, most anxious to gain the open sea, where I can square my yards and run for it, if I see a chance. At present I shall carry on till he comes up within range: and then, to keep the Company’s canvas from being shot to rags, I shall shorten sail; and to save ship and cargo and all our lives, I shall fight while a plank of her swims. Better to be killed in hot blood than walk the plank in cold.”

The officers cheered faintly: the captain’s dogged resolution stirred up theirs. . . .

“Shorten sail to the taupsles and jib, get the colors ready on the halyards, and then send the men aft. . . .”

Sail was no sooner shortened, and the crew ranged, than the captain came briskly on deck, saluted, jumped on a carronade, and stood erect. He was not the man to show the crew his forebodings.

(Pipe.) "Silence fore and aft."

Page 55

"My men, the schooner coming up on our weather quarter is a Portuguese pirate. His character is known; he scuttles all the ships he boards, dishonors the women, and murders the crew. We cracked on to get out of the narrows, and now we have shortened sail to fight this blackguard, and teach him not to molest a British ship. I promise, in the Company's name, twenty pounds prize money to every man before the mast if we beat him off or out manoeuvre him; thirty if we sink him; and forty if we tow him astern into a friendly port. Eight guns are clear below, three on the weather side, five on the lee; for, if he knows his business, he will come up on the lee quarter: if he doesn't, that is no fault of yours nor mine. The muskets are all loaded, the cutlasses ground like razors—"

"Hurrah!"

"We have got women to defend—"

"Hurrah!"

"A good ship under our feet, the God of justice overhead, British hearts in our bosoms, and British colors flying—run 'em up!—over our heads." (The ship's colors flew up to the fore, and the Union Jack to the mizzen peak.) "Now lads, I mean to fight this ship while a plank of her (stamping on the deck) swims beneath my foot and—WHAT DO YOU SAY?"

The reply was a fierce "hurrah!" from a hundred throats, so loud, so deep, so full of volume, it made the ship vibrate, and rang in the creeping-on pirate's ears. Fierce, but cunning, he saw mischief in those shortened sails, and that Union Jack, the terror of his tribe, rising to a British cheer; he lowered his mainsail, and crawled up on the weather quarter. Arrived within a cable's length, he double reefed his foresail to reduce his rate of sailing nearly to that of the ship; and the next moment a tongue of flame, and then a gash of smoke, issued from his lee bow, and the ball flew screaming like a seagull over the *Agra's* mizzen top. He then put his helm up, and fired his other bow-chaser, and sent the shot hissing and skipping on the water past the ship. This prologue made the novices wince. Bayliss wanted to reply with a carronade; but Dodd forbade him sternly, saying, "If we keep him aloof we are done for."

The pirate drew nearer, and fired both guns in succession, hulled the *Agra* amidships, and sent an eighteen pound ball through her foresail. Most of the faces were pale on the quarter-deck; it was very trying to be shot at, and hit, and make no return. The next double discharge sent one shot smash through the stern cabin window, and splintered the bulwark with another, wounding a seaman slightly.

"LIE DOWN FORWARD!" shouted Dodd, through his trumpet. "Bayliss, give him a shot."

The carronade was fired with a tremendous report, but no visible effect. The pirate crept nearer, steering in and out like a snake to avoid the carronades, and firing those two heavy guns alternately into the devoted ship. He hulled the *Agra* now nearly every shot.

Page 56

The two available carronades replied noisily, and jumped as usual; they sent one thirty-two pound shot clean through the schooner's deck and side; but that was literally all they did worth speaking of.

"Curse them!" cried Dodd; "load them with grape! They are not to be trusted with ball. And all my eighteen-pounders dumb! The coward won't come alongside and give them a chance."

At the next discharge the pirate chipped the mizzen mast, and knocked a sailor into dead pieces on the forecastle. Dodd put his helm down ere the smoke cleared, and got three carronades to bear, heavily laden with grape. Several pirates fell, dead or wounded, on the crowded deck, and some holes appeared in the foresail; this one interchange was quite in favor of the ship.

But the lesson made the enemy more cautious; he crept nearer, but steered so adroitly, now right astern, now on the quarter, that the ship could seldom bring more than one carronade to bear, while he raked her fore and aft with grape and ball.

In this alarming situation, Dodd kept as many of the men below as possible; but, for all he could do four were killed and seven wounded.

Fullalove's word came too true: it was the swordfish and the whale: it was a fight of hammer and anvil; one hit, the other made a noise. Cautious and cruel, the pirate hung on the poor hulking creature's quarters and raked her at point blank distance. He made her pass a bitter time. And her captain! To see the splintering hull, the parting shrouds, the shivered gear, and hear the shrieks and groans of his wounded; and he unable to reply in kind! The sweat of agony poured down his face. Oh, if he could but reach the open sea, and square his yards, and make a long chase of it; perhaps fall in with aid. Wincing under each heavy blow, he crept doggedly, patiently on, towards that one visible hope.

At last, when the ship was cloven with shot, and peppered with grape, the channel opened: in five minutes more he could put her dead before the wind.

No. The pirate, on whose side luck had been from the first, got half a broadside to bear at long musket shot, killed a midshipman by Dodd's side, cut away two of the *Agra's* mizzen shrouds, wounded the gaff: and cut the jib stay; down fell the powerful sail into the water, and dragged across the ship's forefoot, stopping her way to the open sea she panted for, the mates groaned; the crew cheered stoutly, as British tars do in any great disaster; the pirates yelled with ferocious triumph, like the devils they looked.

But most human events, even calamities, have two sides. The *Agra* being brought almost to a standstill, the pirate forged ahead against his will, and the combat took a new and terrible form. The elephant gun popped, and the rifle cracked, in the *Agra's*

mizzen top, and the man at the pirate's helm jumped into the air and fell dead: both Theorists claimed him. Then the three carronades peppered him hotly; and he hurled an iron shower back with fatal effect. Then at last the long 18-pounders on the gun-deck got a word in. The old Niler was not the man to miss a vessel alongside in a quiet sea; he sent two round shot clean through him; the third splintered his bulwark, and swept across his deck.

Page 57

"His masts! fire at his masts!" roared Dodd to Monk, through his trumpet; he then got the jib clear, and made what sail he could without taking all the hands from the guns.

This kept the vessels nearly alongside a few minutes, and the fight was hot as fire. The pirate now for the first time hoisted his flag. It was black as ink. His crew yelled as it rose: the Britons, instead of quailing, cheered with fierce derision: the pirate's wild crew of yellow Malays, black chinless Papuans, and bronzed Portuguese, served their side guns, 12-pounders, well and with ferocious cries; the white Britons, drunk with battle now, naked to the waist, grimed with powder, and spotted like leopards with blood, their own and their mates', replied with loud undaunted cheers, and deadly hail of grape from the quarterdeck; while the master gunner and his mates loading with a rapidity the mixed races opposed could not rival, hulled the schooner well between wind and water, and then fired chain shot at her masts, as ordered, and began to play the mischief with her shrouds and rigging. Meantime, Fullalove and Kenealy, aided by Vespasian, who loaded, were quietly butchering the pirate crew two a minute, and hoped to settle the question they were fighting for; smooth-bore v. rifle: but unluckily neither fired once without killing; so "there was nothing proven."

The pirate, bold as he was, got sick of fair fighting first; he hoisted his mainsail and drew rapidly ahead, with a slight bearing to windward, and dismounted a carronade and stove in the ship's quarter-boat, by way of a parting kick.

The men hurled a contemptuous cheer after him; they thought they had beaten him off. But Dodd knew better. He was but retiring a little way to make a more deadly attack than ever: he would soon wear, and cross the *Agra's* defenceless bows, to rake her fore and aft at pistol-shot distance; or grapple, and board the enfeebled ship two hundred strong.

Dodd flew to the helm, and with his own hands put it hard aweather, to give the deck guns one more chance, the last, of sinking or disabling the *Destroyer*. As the ship obeyed, and a deck gun bellowed below him, he saw a vessel running out from Long Island, and coming swiftly up on his lee quarter.

It was a schooner. Was she coming to his aid?

Horror! A black flag floated from her foremast head.

While Dodd's eyes were staring almost out of his head at this death-blow to hope, Monk fired again; and just then a pale face came close to Dodd's, and a solemn voice whispered in his ear: "Our ammunition is nearly done!"

Dodd seized Sharpe's hand convulsively, and pointed to the pirate's consort coming up to finish them; and said, with the calm of a brave man's despair, "Cutlasses! and die hard!"

Page 58

At that moment the master gunner fired his last gun. It sent a chain shot on board the retiring pirate, took off a Portuguese head and spun it clean into the sea ever so far to windward, and cut the schooner's foremast so nearly through that it trembled and nodded, and presently snapped with a loud crack, and came down like a broken tree, with the yard and sail; the latter overlapping the deck and burying itself, black flag and all, in the sea; and there, in one moment, lay the *Destroyer* buffeting and wriggling—like a heron on the water with its long wing broken—an utter cripple.

The victorious crew raised a stunning cheer.

"Silence!" roared Dodd, with his trumpet. "All hands make sail!"

He set his courses, bent a new jib, and stood out to windward close hauled, in hopes to make a good offing, and then put his ship dead before the wind, which was now rising to a stiff breeze. In doing this he crossed the crippled pirate's bows, within eighty yards; and sore was the temptation to rake him; but his ammunition being short, and his danger being imminent from the other pirate, he had the self-command to resist the great temptation.

He hailed the mizzen top: "Can you two hinder them from firing that gun?"

"I rather think we can," said Fullalove, "eh, colonel?" and tapped his long rifle.

The ship no sooner crossed the schooner's bows than a Malay ran forward with a linstock. Pop went the colonel's ready carbine, and the Malay fell over dead, and the linstock flew out of his hand. A tall Portuguese, with a movement of rage, snatched it up, and darted to the gun; the Yankee rifle cracked, but a moment too late. Bang! went the pirate's bow-chaser, and crashed into the *Agra's* side, and passed nearly through her.

"Ye missed him! Ye missed him!" cried the rival theorist, joyfully. He was mistaken: the smoke cleared, and there was the pirate captain leaning wounded against the mainmast with a Yankee bullet in his shoulder, and his crew uttering yells of dismay and vengeance. They jumped, and raged, and brandished their knives and made horrid gesticulations of revenge; and the white eyeballs of the Malays and Papuans glittered fiendishly; and the wounded captain raised his sound arm and had a signal hoisted to his consort, and she bore up in chase, and jamming her fore lateen flat as a board, lay far nearer the wind than the *Agra* could, and sailed three feet to her two besides. On this superiority being made clear, the situation of the merchant vessel, though not so utterly desperate as before Monk fired his lucky shot, became pitiable enough. If she ran before the wind, the fresh pirate would cut her off: if she lay to windward, she might postpone the inevitable and fatal collision with a foe as strong as that she had only escaped by a rare piece of luck; but this would give the crippled pirate time to refit and unite to destroy her. Add to this the failing ammunition, and the thinned crew!

Page 59

Dodd cast his eyes all around the horizon for help.

The sea was blank.

The bright sun was hidden now; drops of rain fell, and the wind was beginning to sing; and the sea to rise a little.

"Gentlemen," said he, "let us kneel down and pray for wisdom, in this sore strait."

He and his officers kneeled on the quarter-deck. When they rose, Dodd stood rapt about a minute; his great thoughtful eye saw no more the enemy, the sea, nor anything external; it was turned inward. His officers looked at him in silence.

"Sharpe," said he, at last, "there must be a way out of them with such a breeze as this is now; if we could but see it."

"Ay, *if*," groaned Sharpe.

Dodd mused again.

"About ship!" said he, softly, like an absent man.

"Ay, ay, sir!"

"Steer due north!" said he, still like one whose mind was elsewhere.

While the ship was coming about, he gave minute orders to the mates and the gunner, to ensure co-operation in the delicate and dangerous manoeuvres that were sure to be on hand.

The wind was W.N.W.: he was standing north: one pirate lay on his lee beam stopping a leak between wind and water, and hacking the deck clear of his broken masts and yards. The other fresh, and thirsting for the easy prey, came up to weather on him and hang on his quarter, pirate fashion.

When they were distant about a cable's length, the fresh pirate, to meet the ship's change of tactics, changed his own, luffed up, and gave the ship a broadside, well aimed but not destructive, the guns being loaded with ball.

Dodd, instead of replying immediately, put his helm hard up and ran under the pirate's stern, while he was jammed up in the wind, and with his five eighteen-pounders raked him fore and aft, then paying off, gave him three carronades crammed with grape and canister; the almost simultaneous discharge of eight guns made the ship tremble, and enveloped her in thick smoke; loud shrieks and groans were heard from the schooner; the smoke cleared; the pirate's mainsail hung on deck, his jib-boom was cut off like a

carrot and the sail struggling; his foresail looked lace, lanes of dead and wounded lay still or writhing on his deck and his lee scuppers ran blood into the sea. Dodd squared his yards and bore away.

The ship rushed down the wind, leaving the schooner staggered and all abroad. But not for long; the pirate wore and fired his bow chasers at the now flying *Agra*, split one of the carronades in two, and killed a Lascar, and made a hole in the foresail; this done, he hoisted his mainsail again in a trice, sent his wounded below, flung his dead overboard, to the horror of their foes, and came after the flying ship, yawning and firing his bow chasers. The ship was silent. She had no shot to throw away. Not only did she take these blows like a coward, but all signs of life disappeared on her, except two men at the wheel, and the captain on the main gangway.

Page 60

Dodd had ordered the crew out of the rigging, armed them with cutlasses, and laid them flat on the forecastle. He also compelled Kenealy and Fullalove to come down out of harm's way, no wiser on the smooth-bore question than they went up.

The great patient ship ran environed by her foes; one destroyer right in her course, another in her wake, following her with yells of vengeance, and pounding away at her—but no reply.

Suddenly the yells of the pirates on both sides ceased, and there was a moment of dead silence on the sea.

Yet nothing fresh had happened.

Yes, this had happened: the pirates to windward, and the pirates to leeward, of the *Agra*, had found out, at one and the same moment, that the merchant captain they had lashed, and bullied, and tortured, was a patient but tremendous man. It was not only to rake the fresh schooner he had put his ship before the wind, but also by a double, daring, master-stroke to hurl his monster ship bodily on the other. Without a foresail she could never get out of his way. Her crew had stopped the leak, and cut away and unshipped the broken foremast, and were stepping a new one, when they saw the huge ship bearing down in full sail. Nothing easier than to slip out of her way could they get the foresail to draw; but the time was short, the deadly intention manifest, the coming destruction swift. After that solemn silence came a storm of cries and curses, as their seamen went to work to fit the yard and raise the sail; while their fighting men seized their matchlocks and trained the guns. They were well commanded by an heroic able villian. Astern the consort thundered; but the *Agra's* response was a dead silence more awful than broadsides.

For then was seen with what majesty the enduring Anglo-Saxon fights.

One of the indomitable race on the gangway, one at the foremast, two at the wheel, conned and steered the great ship down on a hundred matchlocks, and a grinning broadside, just as they would have conned and steered her into a British harbor.

"Starboard!" said Dodd, in a deep calm voice, with a motion of his hand.

"Starboard it is."

The pirate wriggled ahead a little. The man forward made a silent signal to Dodd.

"Port!" said Dodd, quietly.

"Port it is."

But at this critical moment the pirate astern sent a mischievous shot, and knocked one of the men to atoms at the helm.

Dodd waved his hand without a word, and another man rose from the deck, and took his place in silence, and laid his unshaking hand on the wheel stained with that man's warm blood whose place he took.

The high ship was now scarce sixty yards distant: *she seemed to know*: she reared her lofty figurehead with great awful shoots into the air.

But now the panting pirates got their new foresail hoisted with a joyful shout: it drew, the schooner gathered way, and their furious consort close on the *Agra's* heels just then scourged her deck with grape.

Page 61

“Port!” said Dodd, calmly.

“Port it is.”

The giant prow darted at the escaping pirate. That acre of coming canvas took the wind out of the swift schooner’s foresail; it flapped: oh, then she was doomed! . . . CRASH! the Indiaman’s cut-water in thick smoke beat in the schooner’s broadside: down went her masts to leeward like fishing-rods whipping the water; there was a horrible shrieking yell; wild forms leaped off on the *Agra*, and were hacked to pieces almost ere they reached the deck—a surge, a chasm in the ear, filled with an instant rush of engulfing waves, a long, awful, grating, grinding noise, never to be forgotten in this world, all along under the ship’s keel—and the fearful majestic monster passed on over the blank she had made, with a pale crew standing silent and awestruck on her deck; a cluster of wild heads and staring eyeballs bobbing like corks in her foaming wake, sole relic of the blotted-out *Destroyer*; and a wounded man staggering on the gangway, with hands uplifted and staring eyes.

NARRATIVE OF THE MUTINY OF THE BOUNTY

From “Chamber’s Miscellany,” ANONYMOUS

About the year 1786, the merchants and planters interested in the West India Islands became anxious to introduce an exceedingly valuable plant, the bread-fruit tree, into these possessions, and as this could best be done by a government expedition, a request was preferred to the crown accordingly. The ministry at the time being favorable to the proposed undertaking, a vessel, named the *Bounty*, was selected to execute the desired object. To the command of this ship Captain W. Bligh was appointed, Aug. 16, 1787. The burden of the *Bounty* was nearly two hundred and fifteen tons. The establishment of men and officers for the ship was as follows:—1 lieutenant to command, 1 master, 1 boatswain, 1 gunner, 1 carpenter, 1 surgeon, 2 master’s mates, 2 midshipmen, 2 quarter-masters, 1 quarter-master’s mate, 1 boatswain’s mate, 1 gunner’s mate, 1 carpenter’s mate, 1 carpenter’s crew, 1 sailmaker, 1 armourer, 1 corporal, 1 clerk and steward, 23 able seamen—total, 44. The addition of two men appointed to take care of the plants, made the whole ship’s crew amount to 46. The ship was stored and victualled for eighteen months.

Thus prepared, the *Bounty* set sail on the 23d of December, and what ensued will be best told in the language of Captain Bligh.

Monday, 27th April 1789.—The wind being northerly in the evening, we steered to the westward, to pass to the south of Tofoa. I gave directions for this course to be continued during the night. The master had the first watch, the gunner the middle watch, and Mr. Christian the morning watch.

Page 62

Tuesday, 25th.—Just before sunrising, while I was yet asleep, Mr. Christian, with the master-at-arms, gunner's mate, and Thomas Burkitt, seaman, came into my cabin, and seizing me, tied my hands with a cord behind my back, threatening me with instant death if I spoke or made the least noise. I, however, called as loud as I could, in hopes of assistance; but they had already secured the officers who were not of their party, by placing sentinels at their doors. There were three men at my cabin door, besides the four within; Christian had only a cutlass in his hand, the others had muskets and bayonets. I was pulled out of bed, and forced on deck in my shirt, suffering great pain from the tightness with which they had tied my hands. I demanded the reason of such violence, but received no other answer than abuse for not holding my tongue. The master, the gunner, the surgeon, Mr. Elphinstone, master's mate, and Nelson, were kept confined below, and the fore-hatchway was guarded by sentinels. The boatswain and carpenter, and also the clerk, Mr. Samuel, were allowed to come upon deck. The boatswain was ordered to hoist the launch out, with a threat if he did not do it instantly to take care of himself.

When the boat was out, Mr. Hayward and Mr. Hallett, two of the midshipmen, and Mr. Samuel, were ordered into it. I demanded what their intention was in giving this order, and endeavored to persuade the people near me not to persist in such acts of violence; but it was to no effect. Christian changed the cutlass which he had in his hand for a bayonet that was brought to him, and holding me with a strong grip by the cord that tied my hands, he with many oaths threatened to kill me immediately if I would not be quiet; the villains round me had their pieces cocked and bayonets fixed. Particular people were called on to go into the boat, and were hurried over the side, whence I concluded that with these people I was to be set adrift. I therefore made another effort to bring about a change, but with no other effect than to be threatened with having my brains blown out.

The boatswain and seamen who were to go in the boat were allowed to collect twine, canvas, lines, sails, cordage, an eight-and-twenty-gallon cask of water, and Mr. Samuel got a hundred and fifty pounds of bread, with a small quantity of rum and wine, also a quadrant and compass; but he was forbidden, on pain of death, to touch either map, ephemeris, book of astronomical observations, sextant, time-keeper, or any of my surveys or drawings.

The officers were next called upon deck, and forced over the side into the boat, while I was kept apart from every one abaft the mizzen-mast.

Page 63

Isaac Martin, one of the guard over me, I saw had an inclination to assist me, and, as he fed me with shaddock (my lips being quite parched), we explained our wishes to each other by our looks; but this being observed, Martin was removed from me. He then attempted to leave the ship, for which purpose he got into the boat; but with many threats they obliged him to return. The armorer, Joseph Coleman, and two of the carpenters, M'Intosh and Norman, were also kept contrary to their inclination; and they begged of me, after I was astern in the boat, to remember that they declared that they had no hand in the transaction. Michael Byrne, I am told, likewise wanted to leave the ship.

It appeared to me that Christian was some time in doubt whether he should keep the carpenter or his mates; at length he determined on the latter, and the carpenter was ordered into the boat. He was permitted, but not without some opposition, to take his tool-chest. The officers and men being in the boat, they only waited for me, of which the master-at-arms informed Christian; who then said, "Come, Captain Bligh, your officers and men are now in the boat, and you must go with them; if you attempt to make the least resistance, you will instantly be put to death:" and without further ceremony, with a tribe of armed ruffians about me, I was forced over the side, where they untied my hands. Being in the boat, we were veered astern by a rope. A few pieces of pork were thrown to us, and some clothes, also four cutlasses; and it was then that the armorer and carpenters called out to me to remember that they had no hand in the transaction. After having undergone a great deal of ridicule, and having been kept some time to make sport for these unfeeling wretches, we were at length cast adrift in the open ocean.

I had eighteen persons with me in the boat. There remained on board the *Bounty* twenty-five hands, the most able men of the ship's company. Having little or no wind, we rowed pretty fast towards Tofoa, which bore northeast about ten leagues from us. While the ship was in sight, she steered to the west-north-west; but I considered this only as a feint; for when we were sent away, "Huzza for Otaheite!" was frequently heard among the mutineers.

It will very naturally be asked, What could be the reason for such a revolt? In answer to which, I can only conjecture that the mutineers had flattered themselves with the hopes of a more happy life among the Otaheitans than they could possibly enjoy in England; and this, joined to some female connections, most probably occasioned the whole transaction. The women at Otaheite are handsome, mild and cheerful in their manners and conversation, possessed of great sensibility, and have sufficient delicacy to make them admired and beloved. The chiefs were so much attached to our people, that they rather encouraged their stay among them than otherwise, and even made them promises of large possessions. Under these,

Page 64

and many other attendant circumstances equally desirable, it is now perhaps not so much to be wondered at, though scarcely possible to have been foreseen, that a set of sailors, most of them void of connections, should be led away: especially when, in addition to such powerful inducements, they imagined it in their power to fix themselves in the midst of plenty, on one of the finest islands in the world, where they need not labor, and where the allurements of dissipation are beyond anything that can be conceived.

FATE OF THE CASTAWAYS

My first determination was to seek a supply of breadfruit and water at Tofoa, and afterwards to sail for Tongataboo, and there risk a solicitation to Poulaho, the king, to equip our boat, and grant us a supply of water and provisions, so as to enable us to reach the East Indies. The quantity of provisions I found in the boat was a hundred and fifty pounds of bread, sixteen pieces of pork, each piece weighing two pounds, six quarts of rum, six bottles of wine, with twenty-eight gallons of water, and four empty barrecoes.

We got to Tofoa when it was dark, but found the shore so steep and rocky that we could not land. We were obliged, therefore, to remain all night in the boat, keeping it on the lee-side of the island, with two oars. Next day (Wednesday, April 29) we found a cove, where we landed. I observed the latitude of this cove to be 19 degrees 41 minutes south. This is the northwest part of Tofoa, the north-westernmost of the Friendly Islands. As I was resolved to spare the small stock of provisions we had in the boat, we endeavored to procure something towards our support on the island itself. For two days we ranged through the island in parties, seeking for water, and anything in the shape of provisions, subsisting, meanwhile, on morsels of what we had brought with us. The island at first seemed uninhabited, but on Friday, May 1, one of our exploring parties met with two men, a woman, and a child: the men came with them to the cove, and brought two cocoanut shells of water. I endeavored to make friends of these people, and sent them away for bread-fruit, plantains, and water. Soon after, other natives came to us; and by noon there were thirty about us, from whom we obtained a small supply. I was much puzzled in what manner to account to the natives for the loss of my ship: I knew they had too much sense to be amused with a story that the ship was to join me, when she was not in sight from the hills. I was at first doubtful whether I should tell the real fact, or say that the ship had overset and sunk, and that we only were saved: the latter appeared to be the most proper and advantageous for us, and I accordingly instructed my people, that we might all agree in one story. As I expected, inquiries were made about the ship, and they seemed readily satisfied with our account; but there did not appear the least symptom of joy or sorrow in their faces, although I

fancied I discovered some marks of surprise. Some of the natives were coming and going the whole afternoon.

Page 65

Towards evening, I had the satisfaction to find our stock of provisions somewhat increased; but the natives did not appear to have much to spare. What they brought was in such small quantities, that I had no reason to hope we should be able to procure from them sufficient to stock us for our voyage. At night, I served a quarter of a breadfruit and a cocoanut to each person for supper; and a good fire being made, all but the watch went to sleep.

Saturday, 2d.—As there was no certainty of our being supplied with water by the natives, I sent a party among the gullies in the mountains, with empty shells, to see what could be found. In their absence the natives came about us, as I expected, and in greater numbers; two canoes also came in from round the north side of the island. In one of them was an elderly chief, called Macca-ackavow. Soon after, some of our foraging party returned, and with them came a good-looking chief, called Egijeeefow, or Eefow.

Their affability was of short duration, for the natives began to increase in number, and I observed some symptoms of a design against us. Soon after, they attempted to haul the boat on shore, on which I brandished my cutlass in a threatening manner, and spoke to Eefow to desire them to desist: which they did, and everything became quiet again. My people, who had been in the mountains, now returned with about three gallons of water. I kept buying up the little bread-fruit that was brought to us, and likewise some spears to arm my men with, having only four cutlasses, two of which were in the boat. As we had no means of improving our situation, I told our people I would wait till sunset, by which time, perhaps, something might happen in our favor; for if we attempted to go at present, we must fight our way through, which we could do more advantageously at night; and that, in the meantime, we would endeavor to get off to the boat what we had bought. The beach was lined with the natives, and we heard nothing but the knocking of stones together, which they had in each hand. I knew very well this was the sign of an attack. At noon I served a cocoanut and a bread-fruit to each person for dinner, and gave some to the chiefs, with whom I continued to appear intimate and friendly. They frequently importuned me to sit down, but I as constantly refused; for it occurred both to Nelson and myself that they intended to seize hold of me, if I gave them such an opportunity. Keeping, therefore, constantly on our guard, we were suffered to eat our uncomfortable meal in some quietness.

After dinner, we began, by little and little, to get our things into the boat, which was a troublesome business, on account of the surf. I carefully watched the motions of the natives, who continued to increase in number; and found that, instead of their intention being to leave us, fires were made, and places fixed on for their stay during the night. Consultations were also held among them, and everything assured me we should be attacked. I sent orders to the master that, when he saw us coming down, he should keep the boat close to the shore, that we might the more readily embark.

Page 66

The sun was near setting when I gave the word, on which every person who was on shore with me boldly took up his proportion of things and carried them to the boat. The chiefs asked me if I would not stay with them all night. I said "No, I never sleep out of my boat; but in the morning we will again trade with you, and I shall remain till the weather is moderate, that we may go, as we have agreed, to see Poulaho, at Tongataboo." Macca-ackavow then got up and said, "You will not sleep on shore, then, Mattie?" (which directly signifies, we will kill you); and he left me. The onset was now preparing: every one, as I have described before, kept knocking stones together; and Eefow quitted me. All but two or three things were in the boat, when we walked down the beach, every one in a silent kind of horror. We all got into the boat, except one man, who, while I was getting on board, quitted it, and ran up the beach to cast the stern-fast off, notwithstanding the master and others called to him to return, while they were hauling me out of the water.

I was no sooner in the boat than the attack began by about two hundred men; the unfortunate poor man who had run up the beach was knocked down, and the stones flew like a shower of shot. Many Indians got hold of the stern rope, and were near hauling the boat on shore, which they would certainly have effected, if I had not had a knife in my pocket, with which I cut the rope. We then hauled off to the grapnel, every one being more or less hurt. At this time I saw five of the natives about the poor man they had killed, and two of them were beating him about the head with stones in their hands.

We had no time to reflect, for, to my surprise, they filled their canoes with stones, and twelve men came off after us to renew the attack; which they did so effectually, as to nearly disable us all. We were obliged to sustain the attack without being able to return it, except with such stones as lodged in the boat. I adopted the expedient of throwing overboard some clothes, which, as I expected, they stopped to pick up; and as it was by this time almost dark, they gave over the attack, and returned towards the shore, leaving us to reflect on our unhappy situation.

The poor man killed by the natives was John Norton: this was his second voyage with me as a quarter-master, and his worthy character made me lament his loss very much. He has left an aged parent, I am told, whom he supported.

We set our sails, and steered along shore by the west side of the island of Tofoa, the wind blowing fresh from the eastward. My mind was employed in considering what was best to be done, when I was solicited by all hands to take them towards home; and when I told them that no hopes of relief for us remained, except what might be found at New Holland, till I came to Timor, a distance of full twelve hundred leagues, where there was a Dutch settlement, but in what part of the Island

Page 67

I knew not, they all agreed to live on one ounce of bread and a quarter of a pint of water per day. Therefore, after examining our stock of provisions, and recommending to them, in the most solemn manner, not to depart from their promise, we bore away across a sea where the navigation is but little known, in a small boat, twenty-three feet long from stem to stern, deep laden with eighteen men. I was happy, however, to see that every one seemed better satisfied with our situation than myself.

Our stock of provisions consisted of about one hundred and fifty pounds of bread, twenty-eight gallons of water, twenty pounds of pork, three bottles of wine, and five quarts of rum. The difference between this and the quantity we had on leaving the ship was principally owing to our loss in the bustle and confusion of the attack. A few cocoanuts were in the boat, and some bread-fruit, but the latter was trampled to pieces.

Sunday, 3d.—At daybreak the gale increased; the sun rose very fiery and red—a sure indication of a severe gale of wind. At eight it blew a violent storm, and the sea ran very high, so that between the seas the sail was becalmed, and when on the top of the sea, it was too much to have set; but we could not venture to take in the sail, for we were in very imminent danger and distress, the sea curling over the stern of the boat, which obliged us to bail with all our might. A situation more distressing has perhaps seldom been experienced.

Our bread was in bags, and in danger of being spoiled by the wet: to be starved to death was inevitable, if this could not be prevented. I therefore began to examine what clothes there were in the boat, and what other things could be spared; and having determined that only two suits should be kept for each person, the rest was thrown overboard, with some rope and spare sails, which lightened the boat considerably, and we had more room to bail the water out.

Fortunately the carpenter had a good chest in the boat, in which we secured the bread the first favorable moment. His tool-chest also was cleared, and the tools stowed in the bottom of the boat, so that this became a second convenience.

I served a teaspoonful of rum to each person (for we were very wet and cold), with a quarter of a bread-fruit, which was scarce eatable, for dinner. Our engagement was now strictly to be carried into execution, and I was fully determined to make our provisions last eight weeks, let the daily proportion be ever so small.

Monday, 4th.—At daylight our limbs were so benumbed, that we could scarcely find the use of them. At this time I served a teaspoonful of rum to each person, from which we all found great benefit. Just before noon, we discovered a small flat island, of a moderate height, bearing west-south-west four or five leagues. I observed our latitude to be 18 degrees 58 minutes south; our longitude was, by account, 3 degrees 4 minutes

west from the island of Tofoa, having made a north 72 degrees west course, distance ninety-five miles, since yesterday noon, I divided five small cocoanuts for our dinner, and every one was satisfied. During the rest of that day we discovered ten or twelve other islands, none of which we approached. At night I served a few broken pieces of breadfruit for supper, and performed prayers.

Page 68

Tuesday, 5th.—The night having been fair, we awoke after a tolerable rest, and contentedly breakfasted on a few pieces of yams that were found in the boat. After breakfast we examined our bread, a great deal of which was damaged and rotten; this, nevertheless, we were glad to keep for use. We passed two islands in the course of the day. For dinner I served some of the damaged bread, and a quarter of a pint of water.

Wednesday, 6th.—We still kept our course in the direction of the North of New Holland, passing numerous islands of various sizes, at none of which I ventured to land. Our allowance for the day was a quarter of a pint of cocoanut milk, and the meat, which did not exceed two ounces to each person. It was received very contentedly, but we suffered great drought. To our great joy we hooked a fish, but we were miserably disappointed by its being lost in trying to get it into the boat.

As our lodgings were very miserable, and confined for want of room, I endeavored to remedy the latter defect by putting ourselves at watch and watch; so that one-half always sat up while the other lay down on the boat's bottom, or upon a chest, with nothing to cover us but the heavens. Our limbs were dreadfully cramped, for we could not stretch them out; and the nights were so cold, and we so constantly wet, that after a few hours' sleep, we could scarcely move.

Thursday, 7th.—Being very wet and cold, I served a spoonful of rum and a morsel of bread for breakfast. We still kept sailing among the islands, from one of which two large canoes put out in chase of us; but we left them behind. Whether these canoes had any hostile intention against us must remain a doubt: perhaps we might have benefited by an intercourse with them; but, in our defenceless situation, to have made the experiment would have been risking too much.

I imagine these to be the islands called Feejee, as their extent, direction, and distance from the Friendly Islands answer to the description given of them by those islanders. Heavy rain came on at four o'clock, when every person did their utmost to catch some water, and we increased our stock to thirty-four gallons, besides quenching our thirst for the first time since we had been at sea; but an attendant consequence made us pass the night very miserably, for, being extremely wet, and having no dry things to shift or cover us, we experienced cold shiverings scarcely to be conceived. Most fortunately for us, the forenoon, Friday 8th, turned out fair, and we stripped and dried our clothes. The allowance I issued to-day was an ounce and a half of pork, a teaspoonful of rum, half a pint of cocoanut milk, and an ounce of bread. The rum, though so small in quantity, was of the greatest service. A fishing-line was generally towing from the stern of the boat, but though we saw great numbers of fish, we could never catch one.

Page 69

In the afternoon we cleaned out the boat, and it employed us till sunset to get everything dry and in order. Hitherto I had issued the allowance by guess, but I now made a pair of scales with two cocoanut shells, and having accidentally some pistol-balls in the boat, twenty-five of which weighed one pound, or sixteen ounces, I adopted one ball as the proportion of weight that each person should receive of bread at the times I served it. I also amused all hands with describing the situation of New Guinea and New Holland, and gave them every information in my power, that, in case any accident happened to me, those who survived might have some idea of what they were about, and be able to find their way to Timor, which at present they knew nothing of more than the name, and some not even that. At night I served a quarter of a pint of water and half an ounce of bread for supper.

Saturday, 9th.—About nine in the evening the clouds began to gather, and we had a prodigious fall of rain, with severe thunder and lightning. By midnight we caught about twenty gallons of water. Being miserably wet and cold, I served to the people a teaspoonful of rum each, to enable them to bear with their distressed situation. The weather continued extremely bad, and the wind increased; we spent a very miserable night, without sleep, except such as could be got in the midst of rain. The day brought no relief but its light. The sea broke over us so much, that two men were constantly bailing; and we had no choice how to steer, being obliged to keep before the waves, for fear of the boat filling.

The allowance now regularly served to each person was 1-25th of a pound of bread, and a quarter of a pint of water, at eight in the morning, at noon, and at sunset. To-day I gave about half an ounce of pork for dinner, which, though any moderate person would have considered only as a mouthful, was divided into three or four.

All Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, the wet weather continued, with heavy seas and squalls. As there was no prospect of getting our clothes dried, my plan was to make every one strip, and wring them through the salt water, by which means they received a warmth that, while wet with rain, they could not have. We were constantly shipping seas and bailing, and were very wet and cold during the night. The sight of the islands which we were always passing served only to increase the misery of our situation. We were very little better than starving, with plenty in view; yet to attempt procuring any relief was attended with so much danger, that prolonging of life, even in the midst of misery, was thought preferable, while there remained hopes of being able to surmount our hardships. For my own part, I consider the general run of cloudy weather to be a blessing of Providence. Hot weather would have caused us to have died with thirst, and probably being so constantly covered with rain or sea protected us from that dreadful calamity.

Page 70

Saturday, 16th.—The sun breaking out through the clouds gave us hopes of drying our wet clothes; but the sunshine was of short duration. We had strong breezes at south-east by south, and dark gloomy weather, with storms of thunder, lightning, and rain. The night was truly horrible, and not a star to be seen, so that our steerage was uncertain.

Sunday, 17th.—At dawn of day I found every person complaining, and some of them solicited extra allowance, which I positively refused. Our situation was miserable; always wet, and suffering extreme cold during the night, without the least shelter from the weather. Being constantly obliged to bail, to keep the boat from filling, was perhaps not to be reckoned an evil as it gave us exercise.

The little rum we had was of great service. When our nights were particularly distressing, I generally served a teaspoonful or two to each person; and it was always joyful tidings when they heard of my intentions.

The night was dark and dismal, the sea constantly breaking over us, and nothing but the wind and waves to direct our steerage. It was my intention, if possible, to make to New Holland, to the southwest of Endeavor Straits, being sensible that it was necessary to preserve such a situation as would make a southerly wind a fair one; that we might range along the reefs till an opening should be found into smooth water, and we the sooner be able to pick up some refreshments.

Monday and Tuesday were terrible days, heavy rain with lightning. We were always bailing. On Wednesday the 20th, at dawn of day, some of my people seemed half dead. Our appearance was horrible, and I could look no way but I caught the eye of some one in distress. Extreme hunger was now too evident; but no one suffered from thirst, nor had we much inclination to drink—that desire, perhaps, being satisfied through the skin. The little sleep we got was in the midst of water, and we constantly awoke with severe cramps and pains in our bones.

Thursday, Friday and Saturday, we were in the same distressed condition, and I began to fear that such another night or two would put an end to us. On Saturday, however, the wind moderated in the evening, and the weather looked much better, which rejoiced all hands, so that they ate their scanty allowance with more satisfaction than for some time past. The night also was fair; but being always wet with the sea, we suffered much from the cold.

Sunday, 24th.—A fine morning, I had the pleasure to see produce some cheerful countenances; and the first time, for fifteen days past, we experienced comfort from the warmth of the sun. We stripped, and hung our clothes up to dry, which were by this time become so threadbare, that they would not keep out either wet or cold.

Page 71

This afternoon we had many birds about us which are never seen far from land, such as boobies and noddies. As the sea began to run fair, and we shipped but little water, I took the opportunity to examine into the state of our bread, and found that, according to the present mode of issuing, there was a sufficient quantity remaining for twenty-nine days' allowance, by which time I hoped we should be able to reach Timor; but as this was very uncertain, and it was possible that, after all, we might be obliged to go to Java, I determined to proportion the allowance so as to make our stock hold out six weeks. I was apprehensive that this would be ill received, and that it would require my utmost resolution to enforce it; for small as the quantity was which I intended to take away for our future good, yet it might appear to my people like robbing them of life; and some, who were less patient than their companions, I expected would very ill brook it. However, on my representing the necessity of guarding against delays that might be occasioned in our voyage by contrary winds or other causes, and promising to enlarge upon the allowance as we got on, they cheerfully agreed to my proposal. It was accordingly settled that every person should receive 1-25th of a pound of bread for breakfast, and the same quantity for dinner; so that, by omitting the proportion for supper, we had forty-three days' allowance.

Monday, 25th.—At noon some noddies came so near to us, that one of them was caught by hand. This bird was about the size of a small pigeon. I divided it, with its entrails, into eighteen portions and by a well-known method at sea, of "Who shall have this?" [1] it was distributed, with the allowance of bread and water for dinner, and ate up, bones and all, with salt water for sauce. I observed the latitude 13 degrees 32 minutes south; longitude made 35 degrees 19 minutes west, course north 89 degrees west, distance one hundred and eight miles.

In the evening, several boobies flying very near to us, we had the good fortune to catch one of them. This bird is as large as a duck. I directed the bird to be killed for supper, and the blood to be given to three of the people who were most distressed for want of food. The body, with the entrails, beak, and feet, I divided into eighteen shares, and, with an allowance of bread, which I made a merit of granting, we made a good supper, compared with our usual fare.

Sailing on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, I at length became satisfied that we were approaching New Holland. This was actually the case; and after passing the reefs which bound that part of the coast, we found ourselves in smooth water. Two islands lay about four miles to the west by north, and appeared eligible for a resting-place, if for nothing more; but on our approach to the nearest island, it proved to be only a heap of stones, and its size too inconsiderable to shelter the boat. We therefore proceeded

Page 72

to the next, which was close to it, and towards the main. We landed to examine if there were any signs of the natives being near us: we saw some old fireplaces, but nothing to make me apprehend that this would be an unsafe situation for the night. Every one was anxious to find something to eat and it was soon discovered that there were oysters on these rocks, for the tide was out; but it was nearly dark, and only a few could be gathered. I determined, therefore, to wait till the morning, when I should know better how to proceed.

Friday, 29th.—As there were no appearances to make me imagine that any of the natives were near us, I sent out parties in search of supplies, while others of the people were putting the boat in order. The parties returned, highly rejoiced at having found plenty of oysters and fresh water. I had also made a fire by the help of a small magnifying glass; and, what was still more fortunate, we found among a few things which had been thrown into the boat, and saved, a piece of brimstone and a tinder-box, so that I secured fire for the future.

One of the people had been so provident as to bring away with him from the ship a copper pot: by being in possession of this article, we were enabled to make a proper use of the supply we now obtained; for, with a mixture of bread, and a little pork, we made a stew that might have been relished by people of far more delicate appetites, and of which each person received a full pint. The general complaints of disease among us were a dizziness in the head, great weakness of the joints, and violent tenesmus.

The oysters which we found grew so fast to the rocks, that it was with difficulty they could be broken off, and at length we discovered it to be the most expeditious way to open them where they were fixed. They were of a good size, and well tasted. To add to this happy circumstance, in the hollow of the land there grew some wire-grass, which indicated a moist situation. On forcing a stick about three feet long into the ground, we found water, and with little trouble dug a well, which produced as much as our necessities required.

As the day was the anniversary of the restoration of King Charles II., I named the island Restoration Island. Our short stay there, with the supplies which it afforded us, made a visible alteration for the better in our appearance. Next day, Saturday the 30th, at four o'clock, we were preparing to embark, when about twenty of the natives appeared, running and hallooing to us, on the opposite shore. They were each armed with a spear or lance, and a short weapon which they carried in their left hand. They made signs for us to come to them, but I thought it prudent to make the best of our way. They were naked, and apparently black, and their hair or wool bushy and short.

Page 73

Sunday, 31st.—Many small islands were in sight to the northeast. We landed at one of a good height, bearing north one-half west. The shore was rocky, but the water was smooth, and we landed without difficulty. I sent two parties out, one to the northward, and the other to the southward, to seek for supplies, and others I ordered to stay by the boat. On this occasion fatigue and weakness so far got the better of their sense of duty, that some of the people expressed their discontent at having worked harder than their companions, and declared that they would rather be without their dinner than go in search of it. One person, in particular, went so far as to tell me, with a mutinous look, that he was as good a man as myself. It was not possible for me to judge where this might have an end, if not stopped in time; therefore, to prevent such disputes in future, I determined either to preserve my command, or die in the attempt; and seizing a cutlass, I ordered him to take hold of another and defend himself, on which he called out that I was going to kill him, and immediately made concessions. I did not allow this to interfere further with the harmony of the boat's crew and everything soon became quiet. We here procured some oysters and clams, also some dog-fish caught in the holes of the rocks, and a supply of water.

Leaving this island, which I named Sunday Island, we continued our course towards Endeavor Straits. During our voyage Nelson became very ill, but gradually recovered. Next day we landed at another island, to see what we could get. There were proofs that the island was occasionally visited by natives from New Holland. Encamping on the shore, I sent out one party to watch for turtle, and another to try to catch birds. About midnight the bird party returned, with only twelve noddies, birds which I have already described to be about the size of pigeons; but if it had not been for the folly and obstinacy of one of the party, who separated from the other two, and disturbed the birds, they might have caught a great number. I was so much provoked at my plans being thus defeated, that I gave this offender a good beating. This man afterwards confessed that, wandering away from his companions, he had eaten nine birds raw. Our turtling party had no success.

Tuesday and Wednesday we still kept our course northwest, touching at an island or two for oysters and clams. We had now been six days on the coast of New Holland, and but for the refreshment which our visit to its shore afforded us, it is all but certain that we must have perished. Now, however, it became clear that we were leaving it behind, and were commencing our adventurous voyage through the open sea to Timor.

Page 74

On Wednesday, June 3rd, at eight o'clock in the evening, we once more launched into the open ocean. Miserable as our situation was in every respect, I was secretly surprised to see that it did not appear to affect any one so strongly as myself. I encouraged every one with hopes that eight or ten days would bring us to a land of safety; and after praying to God for a continuance of His most gracious protection, I served an allowance of water for supper, and directed our course to the west-south-west, to counteract the southerly winds in case they should blow strong. For six days our voyage continued; a dreary repetition of those sufferings which we had experienced before reaching New Holland. In the course of the night we were constantly wet with the sea, and exposed to cold and shiverings; and in the daytime we had no addition to our scanty allowance, save a booby and a small dolphin that we caught, the former on Friday the 5th, and the latter on Monday the 8th. Many of us were ill, and the men complained heavily. On Wednesday the 10th, after a very comfortless night, there was a visible alteration for the worse in many of the people, which gave me great apprehensions. An extreme weakness, swelled legs, hollow and ghastly countenances, a more than common inclination to sleep, with an apparent debility of understanding, seemed to me the melancholy presages of an approaching dissolution.

Thursday, 11th.—Every one received the customary allowance of bread and water, and an extra allowance of water was given to those who were most in need. At noon I observed in latitude 9 degrees 41 minutes south; course south 77 degrees west, distance 109 miles; longitude made 13 degrees 49 minutes west. I had little doubt of having now passed the meridian of the eastern part of Timor, which is laid down in 128 degrees east. This diffused universal joy and satisfaction.

Friday, 12th.—At three in the morning, with an excess of joy, we discovered Timor bearing from west-south-west to west-north-west, and I hauled on a wind to the north-north-east till daylight, when the land bore from south-west by south to north-east by north; our distance from the shore two leagues. It is not possible for me to describe the pleasure which the blessing of the sight of this land diffused among us. It appeared scarcely credible to ourselves that, in an open boat, and so poorly provided, we should have been able to reach the coast of Timor in forty-one days after leaving Tofoa, having in that time run, by our log, a distance of 3,618 miles and that, notwithstanding our extreme distress, no one should have perished in the voyage.

I have already mentioned that I knew not where the Dutch settlement was situated, but I had a faint idea that it was at the south-west part of the island. I therefore, after daylight, bore away along shore to the south-south-west, which I was the more readily induced to do, as the wind would not suffer us to go towards the north-east without great loss of time.

Page 75

We coasted along the island in the direction in which I conceived the Dutch settlement to lie, and next day, about two o'clock, I came to a grapnel in a small sandy bay, where we saw a hut, a dog, and some cattle. Here I learned that the Dutch governor resided at a place called Coupang, which was some distance to the north-east. I made signs for one of the Indians who came to the beach to go in the boat and show us the way to Coupang, intimating that I would pay him for his trouble; the man readily complied, and came into the boat. The Indians, who were of a dark tawny color, brought us a few pieces of dried turtle and some ears of Indian corn. This last was the most welcome, for the turtle was so hard, that it could not be eaten without being first soaked in hot water. They offered to bring us some other refreshments, if I would wait; but, as the pilot was willing, I determined to push on. It was about half-past four when we sailed.

Sunday, 14th.—At one o'clock in the morning, after the most happy and sweet sleep that ever men enjoyed, we weighed, and continued to keep the east shore on board, in very smooth water. The report of two cannon that were fired gave new life to every one; and soon after, we discovered two square-rigged vessels and a cutter at anchor to the eastward. After hard rowing, we came to a grapnel near daylight, off a small fort and town, which the pilot told me was Coupang.

On landing, I was surrounded by many people, Indians and Dutch, with an English sailor among them. A Dutch captain, named Spikerman, showed me great kindness, and waited on the governor, who was ill, to know at what time I could see him. Eleven o'clock having been appointed for the interview, I desired my people to come on shore, which was as much as some of them could do, being scarce able to walk; they, however, were helped to Captain Spikerman's house, and found tea, with bread and butter, provided for their breakfast.

The abilities of a painter, perhaps, could seldom have been displayed to more advantage than in the delineation of the two groups of figures which at this time presented themselves to each other. An indifferent spectator would have been at a loss which most to admire—the eyes of famine sparkling at immediate relief, or the horror of their preservers at the sight of so many spectres, whose ghastly countenances, if the cause had been unknown, would rather have excited terror than pity. Our bodies were nothing but skin and bone, our limbs were full of sores, and we were clothed in rags: in this condition, with tears of joy and gratitude flowing down our cheeks, the people of Timor beheld us with a mixture of horror, surprise, and pity.

The governor, Mr. William Adrian Van Este, notwithstanding extreme ill health, became so anxious about us, that I saw him before the appointed time. He received me with great affection, and gave me the fullest proofs that he was possessed of every feeling of a humane and good man. Though his infirmity was so great that he could not do the office of a friend himself, he said he would give such orders as I might be certain would procure us every supply we wanted. A house should be immediately prepared for me,

and with respect to my people, he said that I might have room for them either at the hospital or on board of Captain Spikerman's ship, which lay in the road. . . .

Page 76

FATE OF THE MUTINEERS—COLONY OF PITCAIRN'S ISLAND

The intelligence of the mutiny, and the sufferings of Bligh and his companions, naturally excited a great sensation in England. Bligh was immediately promoted to the rank of commander, and Captain Edwards was despatched to Otaheite, in the *Pandora* frigate, with instructions to search for the *Bounty* and her mutinous crew, and bring them to England. The *Pandora* reached Matavai Bay on the 23d of March, 1791; and even before she had come to anchor, Joseph Coleman, formerly armorer of the *Bounty*, pushed off from shore in a canoe, and came on board. In the course of two days afterwards, the whole of the remainder of the *Bounty's* crew (in number sixteen) then on the island surrendered themselves, with the exception of two, who fled to the mountains where, as it afterwards appeared, they were murdered by the natives.

Nearly twenty years elapsed after the period of the above occurrences, and all recollection of the *Bounty* and her wrecked crew had passed away, when an accidental discovery, as interesting as unexpected, once more recalled public attention to that event. The captain of an American schooner having, in 1808, accidentally touched at an island up to that time supposed to be uninhabited, called Pitcairn's Island, found a community speaking English, who represented themselves as the descendants of the mutineers of the *Bounty*, of whom there was still one man, of the name of Alexander Smith, alive amongst them. Intelligence of this singular circumstance was sent by the American captain (Folger) to Sir Sydney Smith at Valparaiso, and by him transmitted to the Lords of the Admiralty. But the government was at that time perhaps too much engaged in the events of the continental war to attend to the information, nor was anything further heard of this interesting little society until 1814. In that year two British men-of-war, cruising in the Pacific, made Pitcairn's Island, and on nearing the shore, saw plantations regularly and orderly laid out. Soon afterwards they observed a few natives coming down a steep descent, with their canoes on their shoulders, and in a few minutes perceived one of these little vessels darting through a heavy surf, and paddling off towards the ships. But their astonishment may be imagined when, on coming alongside, they were hailed in good English with, "Wont you heave us a rope now?" This being done, a young man sprang up the side with extraordinary activity, and stood on the deck before them. In answer to the question "Who are you?" he replied that his name was Thursday October Christian, son of the late Fletcher Christian, by an Otaheitan mother; that he was the first born on the island, and was so named because he was born on a Thursday in October. All this sounded singular and incredible in the ears of the British captains, Sir Thomas Staines and Mr.

Page 77

Pipon; but they were soon satisfied of its truth. Young Christian was at this time about twenty-four years old, a tall handsome youth, fully six feet high, with black hair, and an open interesting English countenance. As he wore no clothes, except a piece of cloth round his loins, and a straw-hat ornamented with black cock's feathers, his fine figure and well-shaped muscular limbs were displayed to great advantage, and attracted general admiration. His body was much tanned by exposure to the weather; but although his complexion was somewhat brown, it wanted that tinge of red peculiar to the natives of the Pacific. He spoke English correctly both in grammar and pronunciation; and his frank and ingenuous deportment excited in every one the liveliest feelings of compassion and interest. His companion was a fine handsome youth, of seventeen or eighteen years of age, named George Young, son of one of the *Bounty's* midshipmen.

The youths expressed great surprise at everything they saw, especially a cow, which they supposed to be either a huge goat or a horned sow, having never seen any other quadrupeds. When questioned concerning the *Bounty*, they referred the captains to an old man on shore, the only surviving Englishman, whose name, they said, was John Adams, but who proved to be the identical Alexander Smith before-mentioned, having changed his name from some caprice or other. The officers went ashore with the youths, and were received by old Adams (as we shall now call him), who conducted them to his house, and treated them to an elegant repast of eggs, fowl, yams, plantains, bread-fruit, *etc.* They now learned from him an account of the fate of his companions, who, with himself, preferred accompanying Christian in the *Bounty* to remaining at Otaheite—which account agreed with that he afterwards gave at greater length to Captain Beechey in 1828. Our limits will not permit us to detail all the interesting particulars at length, as we could have wished, but they are in substance as follows:—

It was Christian's object, in order to avoid the vengeance of the British law, to proceed to some unknown and uninhabited island, and the Marquesas Islands were first fixed upon. But Christian, on reading Captain Cartaret's account of Pitcairn's Island, thought it better adapted for the purpose, and shaped his course thither. Having landed and traversed it, they found it every way suitable to their wishes, possessing water, wood, a good soil, and some fruits. Having ascertained all this, they returned on board, and having landed their hogs, goats, and poultry, and gutted the ship of everything that could be useful to them, they set fire to her, and destroyed every vestige that might lead to the discovery of their retreat. This was on the 23d of January 1790. The island was then divided into nine equal portions amongst them a suitable spot of neutral ground being reserved for a village.

Page 78

The poor Otaheitans now found themselves reduced to the condition of mere slaves; but they patiently submitted, and everything went on peacefully for two years. About that time Williams, one of the seamen, having the misfortune to lose his wife, forcibly took the wife of one of the Otaheitans, which, together with their continued ill-usage, so exasperated the latter that they formed a plan for murdering the whole of their oppressors. The plot, however, was discovered, and revealed by the Englishmen's wives, and two of the Otaheitans were put to death. But the surviving natives soon afterwards matured a more successful conspiracy, and in one day murdered five of the Englishmen, including Christian. Adams and Young were spared at the intercession of their wives, and the remaining two, M'Koy and Quintal (two desperate ruffians), escaped to the mountains, whence, however, they soon rejoined their companions. But the further career of these two villains was short. M'Koy, having been bred up in a Scottish distillery, succeeded in extracting a bottle of ardent spirits from the *tee root*; from which time he and Quintal were never sober, until the former became delirious, and committed suicide by jumping over a cliff. Quintal being likewise almost insane with drinking, made repeated attempts to murder Adams and Young, until they were absolutely compelled, for their own safety, to put him to death, which they did by felling him with a hatchet.

Adams and Young were at length the only surviving males who had landed on the island, and being both of a serious turn of mind and having time for reflection and repentance, they became extremely devout. Having saved a Bible and prayer-book from the *Bounty*, they now performed family worship morning and evening, and addressed themselves to training up their own children and those of their unfortunate companions in piety and virtue. Young, however, was soon carried off by an asthmatic complaint, and Adams was thus left to continue his pious labors alone. At the time Captains Staines and Pipon visited the island, this interesting little colony consisted of about forty-six persons, mostly grown-up young people, all living in harmony and happiness together; and not only professing, but fully understanding and practicing, the precepts and principles of the Christian religion. Adams had instituted the ceremony of marriage, and he assured his visitors that not one instance of debauchery and immoral conduct had occurred amongst them.

The visitors having supplied these interesting people with some tools, kettles, and other articles, took their leave. The account which they transmitted home of this newly-discovered colony was, strange to say, as little attended to by government as that of Captain Folger, and nothing more was heard of Adams and his family for nearly twelve years, when, in 1825, Captain Beechey, in the *Blossom*, bound on a voyage of discovery to Behring Strait, touched at

Page 79

Pitcairn's Island. On the approach of the *Blossom*, a boat came off under all sail towards the ship, containing old Adams and ten of the young men of the island. After requesting and obtaining leave to come on board, the young men sprung up the side, and shook every officer cordially by the hand. Adams, who was grown very corpulent, followed more leisurely. He was dressed in a sailor's shirt and trousers, with a low-crowned hat, which he held in his hand in sailor fashion, while he smoothed down his bald forehead when addressed by the officers of the *Blossom*. The little colony had now increased to about sixty-six, including an English sailor of the name of John Buffett, who, at his own earnest desire, had been left by a whaler. In this man the society luckily found an able and willing schoolmaster. He instructed the children in reading, writing, and arithmetic, and devoutly co-operated with old Adams in affording religious instruction to the community. The officers of the *Blossom* went ashore, and were entertained with a sumptuous repast at young Christian's, the table being spread with plates, knives and forks. Buffett said grace in an emphatic manner; and so strict were they in this respect, that it was not deemed proper to touch a morsel of bread without saying grace both before and after it. The officers slept in the house all night, their bedclothing and sheets consisting of the native cloth made of the native mulberry-tree. The only interruption to their repose was the melody of the evening hymn, which was chanted together by the whole family after the lights were put out; and they were awakened at early dawn by the same devotional ceremony. On Sabbath the utmost decorum was attended to, and the day was passed in regular religious observances.

In consequence of a representation made by Captain Beechey, the British government sent out Captain Waldegrave in 1830, in the *Seringapatam*, with a supply of sailors' blue jackets and trousers, flannels, stockings and shoes, women's dresses, spades, mattocks, shovels, pick-axes, trowels, rakes, *etc.* He found their community increased to about seventy-nine, all exhibiting the same unsophisticated and amiable characteristics as we have before described. Other two Englishmen had settled amongst them; one of them, called Nobbs, a low-bred, illiterate man, a self-constituted missionary, who was endeavoring to supersede Buffett in his office of religious instruction. The patriarch Adams, it was found, had died in March, 1829, aged sixty-five. While on his deathbed, he had called the heads of families together, and urged upon them to elect a chief; which, however, they had not yet done; but the greatest harmony still prevailed amongst them, notwithstanding Nobb's exertions to form a party of his own. Captain Waldegrave thought that the island, which is about four miles square, might be able to support a thousand persons, upon reaching which number they would naturally emigrate to other Islands.

Page 80

Such is the account of this most singular colony, originating in crime and bloodshed. Of all the repentant criminals on record, the most interesting, perhaps, is John Adams; nor do we know where to find a more beautiful example of the value of early instruction than in the history of this man, who, having run the full career of nearly all kinds of vice, was checked by an interval of leisurely reflection, and the sense of new duties awakened by the power of natural affections.

[1] One person turns his back on the object that is to be divided; another then points separately to the portions, at each of them asking aloud, "Who shall have this?" to which the first answers by naming somebody. This impartial method of division gives every man an equal chance of the best share.

THE WRECK OF THE ROYAL CAROLINE

From "The Red Rover," BY JAMES FENNIMORE COOPER

Our watchful adventurer captain was not blind to these sinister omens. No sooner did the peculiar atmosphere by which the mysterious image that he so often examined was suddenly surrounded, catch his eye, than his voice was raised in the clear, powerful, and exciting notes of warning.

"Stand by," he called aloud, "to in-all-studding-sails! Down with them!" he added, scarcely giving his former words time to reach the ears of his subordinates. "Down with every rag of them, fore and aft the ship! Man the top-gallant clew-lines, Mr. Earing. Clew up, and clew down! In with every thing, cheerily, men!—In!"

This was a language to which the crew of the *Caroline* were no strangers, and it was doubly welcome, since the meanest seaman amongst them had long thought that his unknown commander had been heedlessly trifling with the safety of the vessel, by the hardy manner in which he disregarded the wild symptoms of the weather. But they undervalued the keen-eyed vigilance of Wilder. He had certainly driven the Bristol trader through the water at a rate she had never been known to go before; but, thus far, the facts themselves gave evidence in his favour, since no injury was the consequence of what they deemed temerity. At the quick sudden order just given, however, the whole ship was in an uproar. A dozen seamen called to each other, from different parts of the vessel, each striving to lift his voice above the roaring ocean; and there was every appearance of a general and inextricable confusion; but the same authority which had so unexpectedly aroused them into activity, produced order from their ill-directed though vigorous efforts.

Page 81

Wilder had spoken, to awaken the drowsy and to excite the torpid. The instant he found each man on the alert, he resumed his orders with a calmness that gave a direction to the powers of all, and yet with an energy that he well knew was called for by the occasion. The enormous sheets of duck, which had looked like so many light clouds in the murky and threatening heavens, were soon seen fluttering wildly, as they descended from their high places, and, in a few minutes, the ship was reduced to the action of her more secure and heavier canvas. To effect this object, every man in the ship exerted his powers to the utmost, under the guidance of the steady but rapid mandates of their commander. Then followed a short and apprehensive pause. All eyes were turned towards the quarter where the ominous signs had been discovered; and each individual endeavored to read their import, with an intelligence correspondent to the degree of skill he might have acquired, during his particular period of service on that treacherous element which was now his home.

The dim tracery of the stranger's form had been swallowed by the flood of misty light, which, by this time, rolled along the sea like drifting vapour, semi-pellucid, preternatural, and seemingly tangible. The ocean itself appeared admonished that a quick and violent change was nigh. The waves ceased to break in their former foaming and brilliant crests, and black masses of the water lifted their surly summits against the eastern horizon, no longer shedding their own peculiar and lucid atmosphere around them. The breeze which had been so fresh, and which had even blown with a force that nearly amounted to a gale, was lulling and becoming uncertain, as it might be awed by the more violent power that was gathering along the borders of the sea, in the direction of the neighbouring continent. Each moment, the eastern puffs of air lost their strength, becoming more and more feeble, until, in an incredibly short period, the heavy sails were heard flapping against the masts. A frightful and ominous calm succeeded. At this instant, a gleam flashed from the fearful obscurity of the ocean, and a roar, like that of a sudden burst of thunder, bellowed along the waters. The seamen turned their startled looks on each other, standing aghast, as if a warning of what was to follow had come out of the heavens themselves. But their calm and more sagacious commander put a different construction on the signal. His lip curled, in high professional pride, and he muttered with scorn,—

“Does he imagine that we sleep? Ay, he has got it himself, and would open our eyes to what is coming? What does he conjecture we have been about, since the middle watch was set?”

Wilder made a swift turn or two on the quarter-deck, turning his quick glances from one quarter of the heavens to another; from the black and lulling water on which his vessel was rolling, to the sails; and from his silent and profoundly expectant crew, to the dim lines of spars that were waving above his head, like so many pencils tracing their curvilinear and wanton images over the murky volumes of the superincumbent clouds.

Page 82

"Lay the after-yards square!" he said, in a voice which was heard by every man on deck, though his words were apparently spoken but little above his breath. The creaking of the blocks, as the spars came slowly and heavily round to the indicated position, contributed to the imposing character of the moment, sounding like notes of fearful preparation.

"Haul up the courses!" resumed Wilder with the same eloquent calmness of manner. Then, taking another glance at the threatening horizon, he added slowly but with emphasis, "Furl them—furl them both. Away aloft, and hand your courses!" he continued in a shout; "roll them up, cheerily; in with them, boys, cheerily; in!"

The conscious seamen took their impulses from the tones of their commander. In a moment, twenty dark forms were leaping up the rigging, with the alacrity of so many quadrupeds. In another minute, the vast and powerful sheets of canvas were effectually rendered harmless, by securing them in tight rolls to their respective spars. The men descended as swiftly as they had mounted to the yards; and then succeeded another breathing pause. At this appalling moment, a candle would have sent its flame perpendicularly towards the heavens. The ship, missing the steadying power of the wind, rolled heavily in the troughs of the seas, which began to lessen at each instant, as if the startled element was recalling into the security of its own vast bosom that portion of its particles which had so lately been permitted to gambol madly over its surface. The water washed sullenly along the side of the ship, or, as she labouring rose from one of her frequent falls into the hollows of the waves, it shot back into the ocean from her decks in glittering cascades. Every hue of the heavens, every sound of the element, and each dusky and anxious countenance, helped to proclaim the intense interest of the moment. In this brief interval of expectation and inactivity, the mates again approached their commander.

"It is an awful night, Captain Wilder!" said Earing, presuming on his rank to be the first to speak.

"I have known far less notice given of a shift of wind," was the answer.

"We have had time to gather in our kites, 'tis true, sir; but there are signs and warnings that come with this change which the oldest seaman must dread!"

"Yes," continued Knighthead, in a voice that sounded hoarse and powerful, even amid the fearful accessories of that scene; "yes, it is no trifling commission that can call people that I shall not name out upon the water in such a night as this. It was in just such weather that I saw the *Vesuvius* ketch go to a place so deep, that her own mortar would not have been able to have sent a bomb into the open air, had hands and fire been there fit to let it off!"

“Ay; and it was in such a time that the *Greenlandman* was cast upon the Orkneys, in as flat a calm as ever lay on the sea.”

Page 83

"Gentlemen," said Wilder, with a peculiar and perhaps an ironical emphasis on the word, "what would ye have? There is not a breath of air stirring and the ship is naked to her topsails!"

It would have been difficult for either of the two malcontents to give a very satisfactory answer to this question. Both were secretly goaded by mysterious and superstitious apprehensions, that were powerfully aided by the more real and intelligible aspect of the night; but neither had so far forgotten his manhood, and his professional pride, as to lay bare the full extent of his own weakness, at a moment when he was liable to be called upon for the exhibition of qualities of a more positive and determined character. The feeling that was uppermost betrayed itself in the reply of Earing, though in an indirect and covert manner.

"Yes, the vessel is snug enough now," he said, "though eyesight has shown us it is no easy matter to drive a freighted ship through the water as fast as one of those flying craft aboard which no man can say who stands at the helm, by what compass she steers, or what is her draught!"

"Ay," resumed Knighthead, "I call the *Caroline* fast for an honest trader. There are few square-rigged boats who do not wear the pennants of the king, that can eat her out of the wind on a bowline, or bring her into their wake with studding-sails set. But this is a time and an hour to make a seaman think. Look at yon hazy light, here in with the land, that is coming so fast down upon us, and then tell me whether it comes from the coast of America, or whether it comes from out of the stranger who has been so long running under our lee, but who has got, or is fast getting, the wind of us at last, while none here can say how, or why. I have just this much, and no more, to say: give me for consort a craft whose captain I know, or give me none!"

"Such is your taste, Mr. Knighthead," said Wilder, coldly; "mine may, by some accident, be different."

"Yes, yes," observed the more cautious and prudent Earing, "in time of war, and with letters of marque aboard, a man may honestly hope the sail he sees should have a stranger for her master; or otherwise he would never fall in with an enemy. But, though an Englishman born myself, I should rather give the ship in that mist a clear sea, seeing that I neither know her nation nor her cruise. Ah, Captain Wilder, this is an awful sight for the morning watch! Often and often have I seen the sun rise in the east, and no harm done; but little good can come of a day when the light first breaks in the west. Cheerfully would I give the owners the last month's pay, hard as it has been earned, did I but know under what flag the stranger sails."

"Frenchman, Don, or Devil, yonder he comes!" cries Wilder. Then, turning towards the attentive crew, he shouted, in a voice that was appalling by its vehemence and warning, "Let run the after-halyards! round with the fore-yard; round with it, men, with a will!"

Page 84

These were cries that the startled crew but too well understood. Every nerve and muscle were exerted to execute the orders, to be in readiness for the tempest. No man spoke; but each expended the utmost of his power and skill in direct and manly efforts. Nor was there, in verity, a moment to lose, or a particle of human strength expended here, without a sufficient object.

The lurid and fearful-looking mist, which, for the last quarter of an hour, had been gathering in the north-west, was driving down upon them with the speed of a race-horse. The air had already lost the damp and peculiar feeling of an easterly breeze; and little eddies were beginning to flutter among the masts—precursors of the coming squall. Then, a rushing, roaring sound was heard moaning along the ocean, whose surface was first dimpled, next ruffled, and finally covered with a sheet of clear, white, and spotless foam. At the next moment, the power of the wind fell upon the inert and labouring Bristol trader.

While the gust was approaching, Wilder had seized the slight opportunity afforded by the changeful puffs of air to get the ship as much as possible before the wind; but the sluggish movement of the vessel met neither the wishes of his own impatience nor the exigencies of the moment. Her bows slowly and heavily fell off from the north, leaving her precisely in a situation to receive the first shock on her broadside. Happy it was, for all who had life at risk in that defenceless vessel, that she was not fated to receive the whole weight of the tempest at a blow. The sails fluttered and trembled on their massive yards, bellying and collapsing alternately for a minute, and then the rushing wind swept over them in a hurricane.

The *Caroline* received the blast like a stout and buoyant ship as she was, yielding to its impulse until her side lay nearly incumbent on the element; and then, as if the fearful fabric were conscious of its jeopardy, it seemed to lift its reclining masts again, struggling to work its way through the water.

“Keep the helm a-weather! Jam it a-weather, for your life!” shouted Wilder, amid the roar of the gust.

The veteran seaman at the wheel obeyed the order with steadiness, but in vain did he keep his eyes on the margin of his head sail, to watch the manner in which the ship would obey its power. Twice more, in as many moments, the giddy masts fell towards the horizon, waving as often gracefully upward, and then they yielded to the mighty pressure of the wind, until the whole machine lay prostrate on the water.

“Be cool!” said Wilder, seizing the bewildered Earing by the arm, as the latter rushed madly up the steep of the deck; “it is our duty to be calm; bring hither an axe.”

Quick as the thought which gave the order, the admonished mate complied, jumping into the mizzen-channels of the ship, to execute with his own hands the mandate that he knew must follow.

Page 85

"Shall I cut?" he demanded, with uplifted arms, and in a voice that atoned for his momentary confusion, by its steadiness and force.

"Hold!—Does the ship mind her helm at all?"

"Not an inch, sir."

"Then cut," Wilder clearly and calmly added.

A single blow sufficed for the discharge of this important duty. Extended to the utmost powers of endurance, by the vast weight it upheld, the lanyard struck by Earing no sooner parted, than each of its fellows snapped in succession, leaving the mast dependent on its wood for the support of all the ponderous and complicated hamper it upheld. The cracking of the spar came next; and the whole fell, like a tree that had been snapped at its foundation.

"Does she fall off?" called Wilder, to the observant seaman at the wheel.

"She yielded a little, sir; but this new squall is bringing her up again."

"Shall I cut?" shouted Earing from the main-rigging, whither he had leaped, like a tiger who had bounded on his prey.

"Cut."

A louder and more imposing crash succeeded this order, though not before several heavy blows had been struck into the massive mast itself. As before, the sea received the tumbling maze of spars, rigging, and sails; the vessel surging at the same instant, from its recumbent position, and rolling far and heavily to windward.

"She rights! she rights!" exclaimed twenty voices which had been mute, in a suspense that involved life and death.

"Keep her dead away!" added the calm but authoritative voice of the young commander. "Stand by to furl the fore-top-sail—let it hang a moment to drag the ship clear of the wreck—cut, cut—cheerily, men—hatchets and knives—cut *with* all, and cut *off* all!"

As the men now worked with the vigour of hope, the ropes that still confined the fallen spars to the vessel were quickly severed; and the *Caroline*, by this time dead before the gale, appeared barely to touch the foam that covered the sea. The wind came over the waste in gusts that rumbled like distant thunder, and with a power that seemed to threaten to lift the ship from its proper element. As a prudent and sagacious seaman had let fly the halyards, of the solitary sail that remained, at the moment the squall approached, the loosened but lowered topsail was now distended in a manner that

threatened to drag after it the only mast which still stood. Wilder saw the necessity of getting rid of the sail, and he also saw the utter impossibility of securing it. Calling Earing to his side, he pointed out the danger, and gave the necessary order.

“The spar cannot stand such shocks much longer,” he concluded; “should it go over the bows, some fatal blow might be given to the ship at the rate she is moving. A man or two must be sent aloft to cut the sail from the yards.”

“The stick is bending like a willow whip,” returned the mate, “and the lower mast itself is sprung. There would be great danger in trusting a hand in that top, while these wild squalls are breathing around us.”

Page 86

"You may be right," returned Wilder, with a sudden conviction of the truth of what the other had said. "Stay you then here; if any thing befall me, try to get the vessel into port as far north as the Capes of Virginia, at least;—on no account attempt Hatteras, in the present condition of——"

"What would you do, Captain Wilder?" interrupted the mate, laying his hand on the shoulder of his commander, who had already thrown his sea-cap on the deck, and was preparing to divest himself of some of his outer garments.

"I go aloft to ease the mast of that topsail, without which we lose the spar, and possibly the ship."

"I see that plain enough; but, shall it be said that another did the duty of Edward Earing? It is your business to carry the vessel into the Capes of Virginia, and mine to cut the topsail adrift. If harm comes to me, why, put it in the log, with a word or two about the manner in which I played my part. That is the most proper epitaph for a sailor."

Wilder made no resistance. He resumed his watchful and reflecting attitude, with the simplicity of one who had been too long trained to the discharge of certain obligations himself, to manifest surprise that another should acknowledge their imperative character. In the mean time, Earing proceeded steadily to perform what he had just promised. Passing into the waist of the ship, he provided himself with a suitable hatchet, and then, without speaking a syllable to any of the mute but attentive seamen, he sprang into the fore-rigging, every strand and rope-yarn of which was tightened by the strain nearly to snapping. The understanding eyes of his observers comprehended his intention; and with precisely the same pride of station as had urged him to the dangerous undertaking four or five of the oldest mariners jumped upon the rattlings, to mount into an air that apparently teemed with a hundred hurricanes.

"Lie down out of that fore-rigging," shouted Wilder, through a deck trumpet; "lie down; all, but the mate, lie down!" His words were borne past the inattentive ears of the excited and mortified followers of Earing, but for once they failed of their effect. Each man was too earnestly bent on his purpose to listen to the sounds of recall. In less than a minute, the whole were scattered along the yards, prepared to obey the signal of their officer. The mate cast a look about him; perceiving that the time was comparatively favorable, he struck a blow upon the large rope that confined one of the lower angles of the distended and bursting sail to the yard. The effect was much the same as would be produced by knocking away the key-stone of an ill-cemented arch. The canvas broke from its fastenings with a loud explosion, and, for an instant, it was seen sailing in the air ahead of the ship, as if it were sustained on wings. The vessel rose on a sluggish wave—the lingering remains of the former breeze—and settled heavily over the rolling surge, borne down alike by its own weight and the renewed violence of the gusts. At this critical instant, while the seamen aloft were still gazing in the direction in which the

little cloud of canvas had disappeared, a lanyard of the lower rigging parted, with a crack that reached the ears of Wilder.

Page 87

“Lie down!” he shouted wildly through his trumpet; “down by the backstays; down for your lives; every man of you, down!”

A solitary individual profited by the warning gliding to the deck with the velocity of the wind. But rope parted after rope, and the fatal snapping of the wood followed. For a moment, the towering maze tottered, seeming to wave towards every quarter of the heavens; and then, yielding to the movements of the hull, the whole fell, with a heavy crash, into the sea. Cord, lanyard, and stay snapped like thread, as each received in succession the strain of the ship, leaving the naked and despoiled hull of the *Caroline* to drive before the tempest, as if nothing had occurred to impede its progress.

A mute and eloquent pause succeeded the disaster. It seemed as if the elements themselves were appeased by their work, and something like a momentary lull in the awful rushing of the winds might have been fancied. Wilder sprang to the side of the vessel, and distinctly beheld the victims, who still clung to their frail support. He even saw Earing waving his hand in adieu with a seaman’s heart, like a man who not only felt how desperate was his situation, but who knew how to meet it with resignation. Then the wreck of spars, with all who clung to it, was swallowed up in the body of the frightful, preternatural-looking mist which extended on every side of them, from the ocean to the clouds.

“Stand by, to clear away a boat!” shouted Wilder, without pausing to think of the impossibility of one’s swimming, or of effecting the least good, in so violent a tornado.

But the amazed and confounded seamen who remained needed no instruction in this matter. Not a man moved, nor was the smallest symptom of obedience given. The mariners looked wildly around them, each endeavouring to trace in the dusky countenance of some shipmate his opinion of the extent of the evil; but not a mouth opened among them all.

“It is too late—it is too late!” murmured Wilder; “human skill and human efforts could not save them!”

“Sail, ho!” Knighthead shouted in a voice that was teeming with superstitious awe.

“Let him come on,” returned his young commander, bitterly; “the mischief is ready done to his hands!”

“Should this be a true ship, it is our duty to the owners and the passengers to speak her, if a man can make his voice heard in this tempest,” the second mate continued, pointing, through the haze, at the dim object that was certainly at hand.

“Speak her!—passengers!” muttered Wilder, involuntarily repeating his words. “No; any thing is better than speaking her. Do you see the vessel that is driving down upon us so

fast?" he sternly demanded of the watchful seaman who still clung to the wheel of the *Caroline*.

"Ay, ay, sir."

"Give her a berth—sheer away hard to port—perhaps he may pass us in the gloom, now we are no higher than our decks. Give the ship a broad sheer, I say, sir."

Page 88

The usual laconic answer was given; and, for a few moments, the Bristol trader was seen diverging a little from the line in which the other approached; but a second glance assured Wilder that the attempt was useless. The strange ship (every man on board felt certain it was the same that had so long been seen hanging in the north-western horizon) came on through the mist, with a swiftness that nearly equalled the velocity of the tempestuous winds themselves. Not a thread of canvas was seen on board her. Each line of spars, even to the tapering and delicate top-gallant masts, was in its place, preserving the beauty and symmetry of the whole fabric; but nowhere was the smallest fragment of a sail opened to the gale. Under her bows rolled a volume of foam that was even discernible amid the universal agitation of the ocean; and, as she came within sound, the sullen roar of the water might have been likened to the noise of a cascade. At first, the spectators on the decks of the *Caroline* believed they were not seen, and some of the men called madly for lights, in order that the disasters of the night might not terminate in an encounter.

"Too many see us there already!" said Wilder.

"No, no," muttered Knighthead; "no fear but we are seen; and by such eyes, too, as never yet looked out of mortal head!"

The seamen paused. In another instant, the long-seen and mysterious ship was within a hundred feet of them. The very power of that wind, which was wont usually to raise the billows, now pressed the element, with the weight of mountains, into its bed. The sea was every where a sheet of froth, but the water did not rise above the level of the surface. The instant a wave lifted itself from the security of the vast depths, the fluid was borne away before the tornado in glittering spray. Along this frothy but comparatively motionless surface, then, the stranger came booming with the steadiness and grandeur with which a cloud is seen sailing in the hurricane. No sign of life was discovered about her. If men looked out from their secret places, upon the straitened and discomfited wreck of the Bristol trader, it was covertly, and as darkly as the tempest before which they drove. Wilder held his breath, for the moment the stranger was nighest, in the very excess of suspense, but, as he saw no signal of recognition, no human form, nor any intention to arrest, if possible, the furious career of the other, a smile gleamed across his countenance, and his lips moved rapidly, as if he found pleasure in being abandoned to his distress. The stranger drove by, like a dark vision; and, ere another minute, her form was beginning to grow less distinct, in the body of spray to leeward.

"She is going out of sight in the mist!" exclaimed Wilder, when he drew his breath, after the fearful suspense of the few last moments.

"Ay, in mist or clouds," responded Knighthead, who now kept obstinately at his elbow, watching with the most jealous distrust, the smallest movement of his unknown commander.

Page 89

"In the heavens, or in the sea, I care not, provided he be gone."

"Most seamen would rejoice to sec a strange sail, from the hull of a vessel shaved to the deck like this."

"Men often court their destruction, from ignorance of their own interests. Let him drive on, say I, and pray I! He goes four feet to our one; and I ask no better favour than that this hurricane may blow until the sun shall rise."

Knighthouse started, and cast an oblique glance, which resembled denunciation, at his companion. To his superstitious mind, there was profanity in thus invoking the tempest, at a moment when the winds seemed already to be pouring out their utmost wrath.

"This is a heavy squall, I will allow," he said, "and such a one as many mariners pass whole lives without seeing; but he knows little of the sea who thinks there is not more wind where this comes from."

"Let it blow!" cried the other, striking his hands together a little wildly; "I pray for wind!"

All the doubts of Knighthouse, as to the character of the young stranger who had so unaccountably got possession of the office of Nicholas Nichols, if any remained, were now removed. He walked forward among the silent and thoughtful crew, with the air of a man whose opinion was settled. Wilder, however, paid no attention to the movements of his subordinate, but continued pacing the deck for hours; now casting his eyes at the heavens, and now sending frequent and anxious glances around the limited horizon, while the *Royal Caroline* still continued drifting before the wind, a shorn and naked wreck.

THE CAPTURE OF THE GREAT WHITE WHALE

From "Moby Dick," BY HERMAN MELVILLE

That night, in the mid-watch, when the old man—as his wont at intervals—stepped forth from the scuttle in which he leaned, and went to his pivot-hole, he suddenly thrust out his face fiercely, snuffing up the sea air as a sagacious ship's dog will, in drawing nigh to some barbarous isle. He declared that a whale must be near. Soon that peculiar odor, sometimes to a great distance given forth by the living sperm whale, was palpable to all the watch; nor was any mariner surprised when, after inspecting the compass, and then the dog-vane, and then ascertaining the precise bearing of the odor as nearly as possible, Ahab rapidly ordered the ship's course to be slightly altered, and the sail to be shortened.

The acute policy dictating these movements was sufficiently vindicated at daybreak, by the sight of a long sleek on the sea directly and lengthwise ahead, smooth as oil, and

resembling in the pleated watery wrinkles bordering it, the polished metallic-like marks of some swift tide-rip, at the mouth of a deep, rapid stream.

“Man the mast-heads! Call all hands!”

Thundering with the butts of three clubbed handspikes on the forecastle deck, Daggoo roused the sleepers with such judgment claps that they seemed to exhale from the scuttle, so instantaneously did they appear with their clothes in their hands.

Page 90

"What d'ye see?" cried Ahab, flattening his face to the sky.

"Nothing, nothing, sir!" was the sound hailing down in reply.

"T'gallant sails!—stunsails! alow and aloft, and on both sides!"

All sail being set, he now cast loose the life-line, reserved for swaying him to the main royal-mast head; and in a few moments they were hoisting him thither, when, while but two-thirds of the way aloft, and while peering ahead through the horizontal vacancy between the main-top-sail and top-gallant-sail, he raised a gull-like cry in the air, "There she blows!—there she blows! A hump like a snow-hill! It is Moby Dick!"

Fired by the cry which seemed simultaneously taken up by the three look-outs, the men on deck rushed to the rigging to behold the famous whale they had so long been pursuing. Ahab had now gained his final perch, some feet above the other look-outs, Tashtego standing just beneath him on the cap of the top-gallant-mast, so that the Indian's head was almost on a level with Ahab's heel. From this height the whale was now seen some mile or so ahead, at every roll of the sea revealing his high sparkling hump, and regularly jetting his silent spout into the air. To the credulous mariners it seemed the same silent spout they had so long ago beheld in the moon-lit Atlantic and Indian Oceans.

"And did none of ye see it before?" cried Ahab, hailing the perched men all around him.

"I saw him almost that same instant, sir, that Captain Ahab did, and I cried out," said Tashtego.

"Not the same instant; not the same—no, the doubloon is mine, Fate reserved the doubloon for me. I only; none of ye could have raised the White Whale first. There she blows! there she blows!—there she blows! There again—there again!" he cried, in long-drawn, lingering, methodic tones, attuned to the gradual prolongings of the whale's visible jets. "He's going to sound! In stunsails! Down top-gallant-sails! Stand by three boats. Mr. Starbuck, remember, stay on board, and keep the ship. Helm there! Luff, luff a point! So; steady, man, steady! There go flukes! No, no; only black water! All ready the boats there? Stand by, stand by! Lower me, Mr. Starbuck; lower, lower,—quick, quicker!" and he slid through the air to the deck.

"He is heading straight to leeward, sir," cried Stubb, "right away from us; cannot have seen the ship yet."

"Be dumb, man! Stand by the braces! Hard down the helm!—brace up! Shiver her!—shiver her! So; well that! Boats, boats!"

Soon all the boats but Starbuck's were dropped; all the boat-sails set—all the paddles plying; with rippling swiftness, shooting to leeward; and Ahab heading the onset. A pale, death-glimmer lit up Fedallah's sunken eyes; a hideous motion gnawed his mouth.

Page 91

Like noiseless nautilus shells, their light prows sped through the sea; but only slowly they neared the foe. As they neared him, the ocean grew still more smooth; seemed drawing a carpet over its waves; seemed a noon-meadow, so serenely it spread. At length the breathless hunter came so nigh his seemingly unsuspecting prey, that his entire dazzling hump was distinctly visible, sliding along the sea as if an isolated thing, and continually set in a revolving ring of finest, fleecy, greenish foam. He saw the vast, involved wrinkles of the slightly projecting head beyond. Before it, far out on the soft Turkish-rugged waters, went the glistening white shadow from his broad, milky forehead, a musical rippling playfully accompanying the shade; and behind, the blue waters interchangeably flowed over into the moving valley of his steady wake; and on either hand bright bubbles arose and danced by his side. But these were broken again by the light toes of hundreds of gay fowl softly feathering the sea, alternate with their fitful flight; and like to some flag-staff rising from the painted hull of an argosy, the tall but shattered pole of a recent lance projected from the white whale's back; and at intervals one of the cloud of soft-toed fowls hovering, and to and fro skimming like a canopy over the fish, silently perched and rocked on this pole, the long tail feathers streaming like pennons.

A gentle joyousness—a mighty mildness of repose in swiftness, invested the gliding whale. Not the white bull Jupiter swimming away with ravished Europa clinging to his graceful horns; his lovely, leering eyes sideways intent upon the maid; with smooth bewitching fleetness, rippling straight for the nuptial bower in Crete; not Jove, not that great majesty Supreme! did surpass the glorified White Whale as he so divinely swam.

On each soft side—coincident with the parted swell, that but once leaving him, then flowed so wide away—on each bright side, the whale shed off enticings. No wonder there had been some among the hunters who namelessly transported and allured by all this serenity, had ventured to assail it; but had fatally found that quietude but the vesture of tornadoes. Yet calm, enticing calm, oh, whale! thou glidest on, to all who for the first time eye thee, no matter how many in that same way thou may'st have bejuggled and destroyed before.

And thus, through the serene tranquillities of the tropical sea, among waves whose hand-clappings were suspended by exceeding rapture, Moby Dick moved on, still withholding from sight the full terrors of his submerged trunk, entirely hiding the wrenched hideousness of his jaw. But soon the fore part of him slowly rose from the water; for an instant his whole marbleized body formed a high arch, like Virginia's Natural Bridge, and warningly waving his bannered flukes in the air, the grand god revealed himself, sounded, and went out of sight. Hoveringly, halted, and dipping on the wing, the white sea-fowls longingly lingered over the agitated pool that he left.

Page 92

With oars apeak, and paddles down, the sheets of their sails adrift, the three boats now stilly floated, awaiting Moby Dick's reappearance.

"An hour," said Ahab, standing rooted in his boat's stern; and he gazed beyond the whale's place, toward the dim blue spaces and wide wooing vacancies to leeward. It was only an instant; for again his eyes seemed whirling round in his head as he swept the watery circle. The breeze now freshened; the sea began to swell.

"The birds!—the birds!" cried Tashtego.

In long Indian file, as when herons take wing, the white birds were now all flying towards Ahab's boat; and when within a few yards began fluttering over the water there, wheeling round and round, with joyous, expectant cries. Their vision was keener than man's; Ahab could discover no sign in the sea. But suddenly as he peered down and down into its depths, he profoundly saw a white living spot no bigger than a white weasel, with wonderful celerity uprising, and magnifying as it rose, till it turned, and then there were plainly revealed two long crooked rows of white, glistening teeth, floating up from the undiscoverable bottom. It was Moby Dick's open mouth and scrolled jaw; his vast, shadowed bulk still half blending with the blue of the sea. The glittering mouth yawned beneath the boat like an open-doored marble tomb; and giving one sidelong sweep with his steering oar, Ahab whirled the craft aside from this tremendous apparition. Then, calling upon Fedallah to change places with him, went forward to the bows, and seizing Perth's harpoon, commanded his crew to grasp their oars and stand by to stern.

Now, by reason of this timely spinning round the boat upon its axis, its bow, by anticipation, was made to face the whale's head while yet under water. But as if perceiving this stratagem, Moby Dick, with that malicious intelligence ascribed to him, sidelingly transplanted himself, at it were, in an instant, shooting his pleated head lengthwise beneath the boat.

Through and through; through every plank and each rib, it thrilled for an instant, the whale obliquely lying on his back, in the manner of a biting shark, slowly and feelingly taking its bows full within his mouth, so that the long, narrow, scrolled lower jaw curled high up into the open air, and one of the teeth caught in a row-lock. The bluish pearl-white of the inside of the jaw was within six inches of Ahab's head, and reached higher than that. In this attitude the White Whale now shook the slight cedar as a mildly cruel cat her mouse. With unastonished eyes Fedallah gazed, and crossed his arms; but the tiger-yellow crew were tumbling over each other's heads to gain the uttermost stern.

Page 93

And now, while both elastic gunwales were springing in and out, as the whale dallied with the doomed craft in this devilish way; and from his body being submerged beneath the boat, he could not be darted at from the bows, for the bows were almost inside of him, as it were; and while the other boats involuntarily paused, as before a quick crisis impossible to withstand, then it was that monomaniac Ahab, furious with this tantalizing vicinity of his foe, which placed him all alive and helpless in the very jaws he hated; frenzied with all this, he seized the long bone with his naked hands, and wildly strove to wrench it from its gripe. As now he thus vainly strove, the jaw slipped from him; the frail gunwales bent in, collapsed, and snapped, as both jaws, like an enormous shears, sliding further aft, bit the craft completely in twain, and locked themselves fast again in the sea, midway between the two floating wrecks. These floated aside, the broken ends drooping, the crew at the stern-wreck clinging to the gunwales, and striving to hold fast to the oars to lash them across.

At that preluding moment, ere the boat was yet snapped, Ahab, the first to perceive the whale's intent, by the crafty upraising of his head, a movement that loosed his hold for the time; at that moment his hand had made one final effort to push the boat out of the bite. But only slipping further into the whale's mouth, and tilting over sideways as it slipped, the boat had shaken off his hold on the jaw; spilled him out of it, as he leaned to the push; and so he fell flat-faced upon the sea.

Rippingly withdrawing from his prey, Moby Dick now lay at a little distance, vertically thrusting his oblong white head up and down in the billows; and at the same time slowly revolving his whole spindled body; so that when his vast wrinkled forehead rose—some twenty or more feet out of the water—the now rising swells, with all their confident waves, dazzlingly broke against it; vindictively tossing their shivered spray still higher into the air.[1] So, in a gale, the but half baffled Channel billows only recoil from the base of the Eddy-stone, triumphantly to overleap its summit with their scud.

But soon resuming his horizontal attitude, Moby Dick swam swiftly round and round the wrecked crew; sideways churning the water in his vengeful wake, as if lashing himself up to still another and more deadly assault. The sight of the splintered boat seemed to madden him, as the blood of grapes and mulberries cast before Antiochus's elephants in the book of Maccabees. Meanwhile Ahab half smothered in the foam of the whale's insolent tail, and too much of a cripple to swim,—though he could still keep afloat, even in the heart of such a whirlpool as that; helpless Ahab's head was seen, like a tossed bubble which the least chance shock might burst. From the boat's fragmentary stern, Fedallah incuriously and mildly eyed him; the clinging crew, at the other

Page 94

drifting end, could not succor him; more than enough was it to look to themselves. For so revoltingly appalling was the White Whale's aspect, and so planetarily swift the ever-contracting circles he made, that he seemed horizontally swooping upon them. And though the other boats unharmed, still hovered hard by; still they dared not pull into the eddy to strike, lest that should be the signal for the instant destruction of the jeopardized castaways, Ahab and all; nor in that case could they themselves hope to escape. With straining eyes, then, they remained on the outer edge of the direful zone, whose centre had now become the old man's head.

Meantime, from the beginning all this had been descried from the ship's mast heads; and squaring her yards, she had borne down upon the scene; and was now so nigh, that Ahab in the water hailed her:—"Sail on the"—but that moment a breaking sea dashed on him from Moby Dick, and whelmed him for the time. But struggling out of it again, and chancing to rise on a towering crest, he shouted,—“Sail on the whale!—Drive him off!”

The *Pequod's* prows were pointed; and breaking up the charmed circle, she effectually parted the whale from his victim. As he suddenly swam off, the boats flew to the rescue.

Dragged into Stubb's boat with blood-shot, blinded eyes, the white brine caking in his wrinkles; the long tension of Ahab's bodily strength did crack, and helplessly he yielded to his body's doom: for a long time, lying all crushed in the bottom of Stubb's boat, like one trodden under foot of herds of elephants. Far inland, nameless wails came from him, as desolate sounds from out ravines.

But this intensity of his physical prostration did but so much the more abbreviate it. In an instant's compass, great hearts sometimes condense to one deep pang, the sum total of those shallow pains kindly diffused through feebler men's whole lives. And so, such hearts, though summary in each one suffering; still, if the gods decree it, in their life-time aggregate a whole age of woe, wholly made up of instantaneous intensities; for even in their pointless centres, those noble natures contain the entire circumferences of inferior souls.

“The harpoon,” said Ahab, half way rising, and draggingly leaning on one bended arm —“is it safe!”

“Aye, sir, for it was not darted; this is it,” said Stubb, showing it.

“Lay it before me;—any missing men!”

“One, two, three, four, five;—there were five oars, sir, and here are five men.”



“That’s good.—Help me, man; I wish to stand. So, so, I see him! there! there! going to leeward still; what a leaping spout!—Hands off from me! The eternal sap runs up in Ahab’s bones again! Set the sail; out oars; the helm!”

Page 95

It is often the case that when a boat is stove, its crew, being picked up by another boat, help to work that second boat; and the chase is thus continued with what is called double-banked oars. It was thus now. But the added power of the boat did not equal the added power of the whale, for he seemed to have treble-banked his every fin; swimming with a velocity which plainly showed, that if now, under these circumstances, pushed on, the chase would prove an indefinitely prolonged, if not a hopeless one; nor could any crew endure for so long a period, such an unintermitted, intense straining at the oar; a thing barely tolerable only in some one brief vicissitude. The ship itself, then, as it sometimes happens, offered the most promising intermediate means of overtaking the chase. Accordingly, the boats now made for her, and were soon swayed up to their cranes—the two parts of the wrecked boat having been previously secured by her—and then hoisting everything to her side, and stacking her canvas high up, and sideways outstretching it with stun-sails, like the double-jointed wings of an albatross; the *Pequod* bore down in the leeward wake of Moby Dick. At the well known, methodic intervals, the whale's glittering spout was regularly announced from the manned mast-heads; and when he would be reported as just gone down, Ahab would take the time, and then pacing the deck, binnacle-watch in hand, so soon as the last second of the allotted hour expired, his voice was heard.—“Whose is the doubloon now? D'ye see him?” and if the reply was, No, sir! straightway he commanded them to lift him to his perch. In this way the day wore on; Ahab, now aloft and motionless; anon, unrestingly pacing the planks.

As he was thus walking, uttering no sound, except to hail the men aloft, or to bid them hoist a sail still higher, or to spread one to a still greater breadth—thus to and fro pacing, beneath his slouched hat, at every turn he passed his own wrecked boat, which had been dropped upon the quarter-deck, and lay there reversed; broken bow to shattered stern. At last he paused before it; and as in an already over-clouded sky fresh troops of clouds will sometimes sail across, so over the old man's face there now stole some such added gloom as this.

Stubb saw him pause; and perhaps intending, not vainly, though, to evince his own unabated fortitude, and thus keep up a valiant place in his Captain's mind, he advanced, and eyeing the wreck exclaimed—“The thistle the ass refused; it pricked his mouth too keenly, sir; ha! ha!”

“What soulless thing is this that laughs before a wreck? Man, man! did I not know thee brave as fearless fire (and as mechanical) I could swear thou wert a poltroon. Groan nor laugh should be heard before a wreck.”

“Aye, sir,” said Starbuck drawing near, “’tis a solemn sight; an omen, and an ill one.”

Page 96

"Omen? omen?—the dictionary! If the gods think to speak outright to man, they will honorably speak outright; not shake their heads, and give an old wives' darkling hint.—Begone! Ye two are the opposite poles of one thing; Starbuck is Stubb reversed, and Stubb is Starbuck; and ye two are all mankind; and Ahab stands alone among the millions of the peopled earth, nor gods nor men his neighbors! Cold, cold—I shiver!—How now? Aloft there! D'ye see him? Sing out for every spout, though he spout ten times a second!"

The day was nearly done; only the hem of his golden robe was rustling. Soon, it was almost dark, but the look-out men still remained unset.

"Can't see the spout now, sir;—too dark"—cried a voice from the air.

"How heading when last seen?"

"As before, sir,—straight to leeward."

"Good! he will travel slower now 'tis night. Down royals and top-gallant stun-sails, Mr. Starbuck. We must not run over him before morning; he's making a passage now, and may heave-to a while. Helm there! keep her full before the wind!—Aloft! come down!—Mr. Stubb, send a fresh hand to the fore-mast head, and see it manned till morning."—Then advancing towards the doubloon in the main-mast—"Men, this gold is mine, for I earned it; but I shall let it abide here till the White Whale is dead; and then, whosoever of ye first raises him, upon the day he shall be killed, this gold is that man's; and if on that day I shall again raise him, then, ten times its sum shall be divided among all of ye! Away now!—the deck is thine, sir."

And so saying, he placed himself half way within the scuttle, and slouching his hat, stood there till dawn, except when at intervals rousing himself to see how the night wore on.

SECOND DAY.

At day-break, the three mast-heads were punctually manned afresh.

"D'ye see him?" cried Ahab, after allowing a little space for the light to spread.

"See nothing, sir."

"Turn up all hands and make sail! he travels faster than I thought for;—the top-gallant sails!—aye, they should have been kept on her all night. But no matter—'tis but resting for the rush."



Here be it said, that this pertinacious pursuit of one particular whale, continued through day into night, and through night into day, is a thing by no means unprecedented in the South sea fishery. For such is the wonderful skill, prescience of experience, and invincible confidence acquired by some great natural geniuses among the Nantucket commanders; that from the simple observation of a whale when last descried, they will, under certain given circumstances, pretty accurately foretell both the direction in which he will continue to swim for a time, while out of sight, as well as his probable rate of progression during that period. And, in these cases, somewhat as a pilot, when about losing sight of a coast, whose

Page 97

general trending he well knows, and which he desires shortly to return to again, but at some further point; like as this pilot stands by his compass, and takes the precise bearing of the cape at present visible, in order the more certainly to hit aright the remote, unseen headland, eventually to be visited: so does the fisherman, at his compass, with the whale; for after being chased, and diligently marked, through several hours of daylight, then, when night obscures the fish, the creature's future wake through the darkness is almost as established to the sagacious mind of the hunter, as the pilot's coast is to him. So that to this hunter's wondrous skill, the proverbial evanescence of a thing writ in water, a wake, is to all desired purposes well-nigh as reliable as the steadfast land. And as the mighty iron Leviathan of the modern railway is so familiarly known in its every pace, that, with watches in their hands, men time his rate, as doctors that of a baby's pulse; and lightly say of it, the up train or the down train will reach such or such a spot, at such or such an hour; even so, almost, there are occasions when these Nantucketers time that other Leviathan of the deep, according to the observed humor of his speed; and say to themselves, so many hours hence this whale will have gone two hundred miles, will have about reached this or that degree of latitude or longitude. But to render this acuteness at all successful in the end, the wind and the sea must be the whaleman's allies; for of what present avail to the becalmed or windbound mariner is the skill that assures him he is exactly ninety-three leagues and a quarter from his port? Inferable from these statements, are many collateral subtle matters touching the chase of whales.

The ship tore on; leaving such a furrow in the sea as when a cannon-ball, missent, becomes a ploughshare and turns up the level field.

"By salt and hemp!" cried Stubb, "but this swift motion of the deck creeps up one's legs and tingles at the heart. This ship and I are two brave fellows!—Ha! ha! Some one take me up, and launch me, spine-wise, on the sea,—for by live-oaks! my spine's a keel. Ha, ha! we go the gait that leaves no dust behind!"

"There she blows—she blows!—she blows!—right ahead!" was now the mast-head cry.

"Aye, aye!" cried Stubb, "I knew it—ye can't escape—blow on and split your spout, O whale! the mad fiend himself is after ye! blow your trump—blister your lungs!—Ahab will dam off your blood, as a miller shuts his water-gate upon the stream!"

And Stubb did but speak out for well-nigh all that crew. The frenzies of the chase had by this time worked them bubblingly up, like old wine worked anew. Whatever pale fears and forebodings some of them might have felt before; these were not only now kept out of sight through the growing awe of Ahab, but they were broken up, and on all sides routed, as timid prairie hares that scatter before the bounding

Page 98

bison. The hand of Fate had snatched all their souls; and by the stirring perils of the previous day; the rack of the past night's suspense; the fixed, unfearing, blind, reckless way in which their wild craft went plunging towards its flying mark; by all these things, their hearts were bowled along. The wind that made great bellies of their sails, and rushed the vessel on by arms invisible as irresistible; this seemed the symbol of that unseen agency which so enslaved them to the race.

They were one man, not thirty. For as the one ship that held them all; though it was put together of all contrasting things—oak, and maple, and pine wood; iron, and pitch, and hemp—yet all these ran into each other in the one concrete hull, which shot on its way, both balanced and directed by the long central keel; even so, all the individualities of the crew, this man's valor, that man's fear; guilt and guiltiness, all varieties were welded into oneness, and were all directed to that fatal goal which Ahab their one lord and keel did point to.

The rigging lived. The mast-heads, like the tops of tall palms, were outspreadingly tufted with arms and legs. Clinging to a spar with one hand, some reached forth the other with impatient wavings; others, shading their eyes from the vivid sunlight, sat far out on the rocking yards; all the spars in full bearing of mortals, ready and ripe for their fate. Ah! how they still strove through that infinite blueness to seek out the thing that might destroy them!

"Why sing ye not out for him, if ye see him?" cried Ahab, when, after the lapse of some minutes since the first cry, no more had been heard. "Sway me up, men; ye have been deceived; not Moby Dick casts one odd jet that way, and then disappears."

It was even so; in their headlong eagerness, the men had mistaken some other thing for the whale-spout, as the event itself soon proved; for hardly had Ahab reached his perch; hardly was the rope belayed to its pin on deck, when he struck the keynote to an orchestra, that made the air vibrate as with the combined discharge of rifles. The triumphant halloo of thirty buckskin lungs was heard, as—much nearer to the ship than the place of the imaginary jet, less than a mile ahead—Moby Dick bodily burst into view! For not by any calm and indolent spoutings! not by the peaceable gush of that mystic fountain in his head, did the White Whale now reveal his vicinity; but by the far more wondrous phenomenon of breaching. Rising with his utmost velocity from the furthest depths, the Sperm Whale thus booms his entire bulk into the pure element of air, and piling up a mountain of dazzling foam, shows his place to the distance of seven miles and more. In those moments, the torn, enraged waves he shakes off, seem his mane; in some cases, this breaching is his act of defiance.

"There she breaches! there she breaches!" was the cry, as in his immeasurable bravadoes the White Whale tossed himself salmon-like to Heaven. So suddenly seen in

the blue plain of the sea, and relieved against the still bluer margin of the sky, the spray that he raised, for the moment, intolerably glittered and glared like a glacier; and stood there gradually fading and fading away from its first sparkling intensity, to the dim mistiness of an advancing shower in a vale.

Page 99

"Aye, breach your last to the sun, Moby Dick!" cried Ahab, "thy hour and thy harpoon are at hand!—Down! down all of ye, but one man at the fore. The boats!—stand by!"

Unmindful of the tedious rope-ladders of the shrouds, the men, like shooting stars, slid to the deck, by the isolated backstays and halyards; while Ahab, less dartingly, but still rapidly was dropped from his perch.

"Lower away," he cried, so soon as he had reached his boat—a spare one, rigged the afternoon previous. "Mr. Starbuck, the ship is thine—keep away from the boats, but keep near them. Lower, all!"

As if to strike a quick terror into them, by this time being the first assailant himself, Moby Dick had turned, and was now coming for the three crews. Ahab's boat was central; and cheering his men, he told them he would take the whale head-and-head,—that is, pull straight up to his forehead,—a not uncommon thing; for when within a certain limit, such a course excludes the coming onset from the whale's sidelong vision. But ere that close limit was gained, and while yet all three boats were plain as the ship's three masts to his eye; the White Whale churning himself into furious speed, almost in an instant as it were, rushing among the boats with open jaws, and a lashing tail, offered appalling battle on every side; and heedless of the irons darted at him from every boat, seemed only intent on annihilating each separate plank of which those boats were made. But skillfully manoeuvred, incessantly wheeling like trained charges in the field; the boats for a while eluded him; though, at times, but by a plank's breadth; while all the time, Ahab's unearthly slogan tore every other cry but his to shreds.

But at last in his untraceable evolutions, the White Whale so crossed and recrossed, and in a thousand ways entangled the clack of the three lines now fast to him, that they foreshortened, and, of themselves, warped the devoted boats towards the planted irons in him; though now for a moment the whale drew aside a little, as if to rally for a more tremendous charge. Seizing that opportunity, Ahab first paid out more line: and then was rapidly hauling and jerking in upon it again—hoping that way to disencumber it of some snarls—when lo!—a sight more savage than the embattled teeth of sharks!

Caught and twisted—corkscrewed in the mazes of the line, loose harpoons and lances, with all their bristling barbs and points, came flashing and dripping up to the chocks in the bows of Ahab's boat. Only one thing could be done. Seizing the boat-knife, he critically reached within—through—and then, without—the rays of steel; dragged in the line beyond, passed it inboard, to the bowsman, and then, twice sundering the rope near the chocks—dropped the intercepted fagot of steel into the sea; and was all fast again. That instant, the White Whale made a sudden rush among the remaining tangles of the other lines; by so doing, irresistibly dragged the more involved boats of Stubb and Flack towards his flukes; dashed them together like two rolling husks on a surf-beaten beach, and then, diving down into the sea, disappeared in a boiling maelstrom, in which,

for a space, the odorous cedar chips of the wrecks danced round and round, like grated nutmeg in a swiftly stirred bowl of punch.

Page 100

While the two crews were yet circling in the waters, reaching out after the revolving line-tubs, oars, and other floating furniture, while aslope little Flask bobbed up and down like an empty vial, twitching his legs upwards to escape the dreaded jaws of sharks; and Stubb was lustily singing out for some one to ladle him up; and while the old man's line—now parting—admitted of his pulling into the creamy pool to rescue whom he could;—in that wild simultaneousness of a thousand concreted perils,—Ahab's yet unstricken boat seemed drawn up towards Heaven by invisible wires,—as, arrow-like, shooting perpendicularly from the sea, the White Whale dashed his broad forehead against its bottom, and sent it, turning over and over, into the air; till it fell again—gunwale downwards—and Ahab and his men struggled out from under it, like seals from a sea-side cave.

The first uprising momentum of the whale—modifying its direction as he struck the surface—involuntarily launched him along it, to a little distance from the centre of the destruction he had made; and with his back to it, he now lay for a moment slowly feeling with his flukes from side to side; and whenever a stray oar, bit of plank, the least chip or crumb of the boats touched his skin, his tail swiftly drew back, and came sideways smiting the sea. But soon, as if satisfied that his work for that time was done, he pushed his pleated forehead through the ocean, and trailing after him the intertangled lines, continued his leeward way at a traveller's methodic pace.

As before, the attentive ship having descried the whole fight, again came bearing down to the rescue, and dropping a boat, picked up the floating mariners, tubs, oars, and whatever else could be caught at, and safely landed them on her decks. Some sprained shoulders, wrists, and ankles; livid contusions; wrenched harpoons and lances; inextricable intricacies of rope; shattered oars and planks; all these were there; but no fatal or even serious ill seemed to have befallen any one. As with Fedallah the day before, so Ahab was now found grimly clinging to his boat's broken half, which afforded a comparatively easy float; nor did it so exhaust him as the previous day's mishap.

But when he was helped to the deck, all eyes were fastened upon him; as instead of standing by himself he still half-hung upon the shoulder of Starbuck, who had thus far been the foremost to assist him. His ivory leg had been snapped off, leaving but one short sharp splinter.

"Aye aye, Starbuck, 'tis sweet to lean sometimes, be the leaner who he will; and would old Ahab had leaned oftener than he has."

"The ferrule has not stood, sir," said the carpenter, now coming up; "I put good work into that leg."

"But no bones broken, sir, I hope," said Stubb with true concern.



“Aye! and all splintered to pieces, Stubb!—d’ye see it.—But even with a broken bone, old Ahab is untouched; and I account no living bone of mine one jot more me, than this dead one that’s lost. Nor white whale, nor man, nor fiend, can so much as graze old Ahab in his own proper and inaccessible being. Can any lead touch yonder floor, any mast scrape yonder roof?—Aloft there! which way?”

Page 101

"Dead to leeward, sir."

"Up helm, then; pile on the sail again, ship keepers! down the rest of the spare boats and rig them—Mr. Starbuck away, and muster the boat's crews."

"Let me first help thee towards the bulwarks, sir."

"Oh, oh, oh! how this splinter gores me now! Accursed fate! that the unconquerable captain in the soul should have such a craven mate!"

"Sir?"

"My body, man, not thee. Give me something for a cane—there, that shivered lance will do. Muster the men. Surely I have not seen him yet. By heaven it cannot be!—missing?—quick! call them all."

The old man's hinted thought was true. Upon mustering the company, the Parsee was not there.

"The Parsee!" cried Stubb—"he must have been caught in——"

"The black vomit wrench thee!—run all of ye above, aloft, cabin, forecabin—find him—not gone—not gone!"

But quickly they returned to him with the tidings that the Parsee was nowhere to be found.

"Aye, sir," said Stubb—"caught among the tangles of your line—I thought I saw him dragging under."

"My line! my line? Gone?—gone? What means that little word?—What death-knell rings in it, that old Ahab shakes as if he were the belfry. The harpoon, too!—toss over the litter there,—d'ye see it?—the forged iron, men, the white whale's—no, no, no,—blistered fool! this hand did dart it!—'tis in the fish!—Aloft there! Keep him nailed—Quick!—all hands to the rigging of the boats—collect the oars—harpooners! the irons, the irons! hoist the royals higher—a pull on all the sheets! helm there! steady, steady for your life! I'll ten-times girdle the unmeasured globe; yea and dive straight through it, but I'll slay him yet!"

"Great God! but for one single instant show thyself," cried Starbuck; "never, never will thou capture him, old man—In Jesus' name no more of this, that's worse than devil's madness. Two days chased; twice stove to splinters; thy very leg once more snatched from under thee; thy evil shadow gone—all good angles mobbing thee with warnings:—what more wouldst thou have?—Shall we keep chasing this murderous fish till he swamps the last man? Shall we be dragged by him to the bottom of the sea? Shall we

be towed by him to the infernal world? Oh, oh,—Impiety and blasphemy to hunt him more!”

“Starbuck, of late I’ve felt strangely moved to thee; ever since that hour we both saw—- thou know’st what, in one another’s eyes. But in this matter of the whale, be the front of thy face to me as the palm of this hand—a lipless, unfeatured blank. Ahab is for ever Ahab, man. This whole act’s immutably decreed. ’Twas rehearsed by thee and me a billion years before this ocean rolled. Fool! I am the Fates’ lieutenant; I act under orders. Look thou, underling! that thou obeyest mine.—Stand round me, men. Ye see an old man cut down to the stump; leaning on a shivered lance; propped up

Page 102

on a lonely foot. 'Tis Ahab—his body's part; but Ahab's soul's a centipede, that moves upon a hundred legs. I feel strained, half-stranded, as ropes that tow dismasted frigates in a gale; and I may look so. But ere I break, ye'll hear me crack; and till ye hear that, know that Ahab's hawser tows his purpose yet. Believe ye, men, in the things called omens? Then laugh aloud, and cry encore! For ere they drown, drowning things will twice rise to the surface; then rise again, to sink for evermore. So with Moby Dick—two days he's floated—to-morrow will be the third. Aye, men, he'll rise once more,—but only to spout his last! D'ye feel brave men, brave?"

"As fearless fire," cried Stubb.

"And as mechanical," muttered Ahab. Then as the men went forward, he muttered on:—"The things called omens! And yesterday I talked the same to Starbuck there, concerning my broken boat. Oh! how valiantly I seek to drive out of others' hearts what's clinched so fast in mine!—The Parsee—the Parsee!—gone, gone? and he was to go before:—but still was to be seen again ere I could perish—How's that?—There's a riddle now might baffle all the lawyers backed by the ghosts of the whole line of judges:—like a hawk's beak it pecks my brain. *I'll, I'll* solve it, though!"

When dusk descended, the whale was still in sight to leeward.

So once more the sail was shortened, and everything passed nearly as on the previous night; only, the sound of hammers, and the hum of the grindstone was heard till nearly daylight, as the men toiled by lanterns in the complete and careful rigging of the spare boats and sharpening their fresh weapons for the morrow. Meantime, of the broken keel of Ahab's wrecked craft the carpenter made him another leg; while still as on the night before, slouched Ahab stood fixed within his scuttle; his hid, heliotrope glance anticipatigly gone backward on its dial; sat due eastward for the earliest sun.

THIRD DAY.

The morning of the third day dawned fair and fresh, and once more the solitary night-man at the fore-masthead was relieved by crowds of the daylight lookouts, who dotted every mast and almost every spar.

"D'ye see him?" cried Ahab; but the whale was not yet in sight.

"In his infallible wake, though; but follow that wake, that's all. Helm there; steady, as thou goest, and hast been going. What a lovely day again! were it a new-made world, and made for a summer-house to the angels, and this morning the first of its throwing open to them, a fairer day could not dawn upon that world. Here's food for thought, had



Ahab time to think; but Ahab never thinks; he only feels, feels, feels; *that's* tingling enough for mortal man! to think's audacity. God only has that right and privilege. Thinking is, or ought to be, a coolness and a calmness; and our poor hearts throb, and our poor brains beat too

Page 103

much for that. And yet, I've sometimes thought my brain was very calm—frozen calm, this old skull cracks so, like a glass in which the contents turned to ice, and shiver it. And still this hair is growing now; this moment growing, and the heat must breed it; but no, it's like that sort of common grass that will grow anywhere, between the earthly clefts of Greenland ice or in Vesuvius lava. How the wild winds blow; they whip about me as the torn shreds of split sails lash the tossed ship they cling to. A vile wind that has no doubt blown ere this through prison corridors and cells, and wards of hospitals, and ventilated them, and now comes blowing hither as innocent as fleeces. Out upon it!—it's tainted. Were I the wind, I'd blow no more on such a wicked, miserable world. I'd crawl somewhere to a cave, and slink there. And yet, 'tis a noble and heroic thing, the wind! who ever conquered it? In every fight it has the last and bitterest blow. Run tilting at it, and you but run through it. Ha! a coward wind that strikes stark naked men, but will not stand to receive a single blow. Even Ahab is a braver thing—a nobler thing than *that*. Would now the wind but had a body; but all the things that most exasperate and outrage mortal man, all these things are bodiless, but only bodiless as objects, not as agents. There's a most special, a most cunning, oh, a most malicious difference! And yet, I say again, and swear it now, that there's something all glorious and gracious in the wind. These warm Trade Winds, at least, that in the clear heavens blow straight on, in strong and steadfast, vigorous mildness; and veer not from their mark, however the baser currents of the sea may turn and tack, and mightiest Mississippies of the land swift and swerve about, uncertain where to go at last. And by the eternal Poles! these same Trades that so directly blow my good ship on; these Trades, or something like them—something so unchangeable, and full as strong, blow my keeled soul along! To it! Aloft there! What d'ye see?"

"Nothing, sir."

"Nothing! and noon at hand! The doubloon goes a-begging! See the sun! Aye, aye, it must be so. I've oversailed him. How, got the start? Aye, he's chasing *me* now; not I, *him*—that's bad; I might have known it, too. Fool! the lines—the harpoons he's towing. Aye, aye, I have run him by last night. About! about! Come down, all of ye, but the regular lookouts! Man the braces!"

Steering as she had done, the wind had been somewhat on the *Pequod's* quarter, so that now being pointed in the reverse direction, the braced ship sailed hard upon the breeze as she rechurned the cream in her own white wake.

"Against the wind he now steers for the open jaw," murmured Starbuck to himself, as he coiled the new-hauled mainbrace upon the rail. "God keep us, but already my bones feel damp within me, and from the inside wet my flesh. I misdoubt me that I disobey my God in obeying him!"

Page 104

“Stand by to sway me up!” cried Ahab, advancing to the hempen basket. “We should meet him soon.”

“Aye, aye, sir,” and straightway Starbuck did Ahab’s bidding, and once more Ahab swung on high.

A whole hour now passed; gold-beaten out to ages. Time itself now held long breaths with keen suspense. But at last, some three points off the weather bow, Ahab descried the spout again, and instantly from the three mast-heads three shrieks went up as if the tongues of fire had voiced it.

“Forehead to forehead I meet thee, this third time, Moby Dick! On deck there!—brace sharper up; crowd her into the wind’s eye. He’s too far off to lower yet, Mr. Starbuck. The sails shake! Stand over that helmsman with a top-maul! So, so; he travels fast, and I must down. But let me have one more good round look aloft here at the sea; there’s time for that. An old, old sight, and yet somehow so young; aye, and not changed a wink since I first saw it, a boy, from the sand-hills of Nantucket! The same!—the same!—the same to Noah as to me. There’s a soft shower to leeward. Such lovely leewardings! They must lead somewhere—to something else than common land, more palmy than the palms. Leeward! the white whale goes that way; look to windward, then; the better if the bitterer quarter. But good bye, good bye, old mast-head! What’s this?—green? aye, tiny mosses in these warped cracks. No such green weather stains on Ahab’s head! There’s the difference now between man’s old age and matter’s. But aye, old mast, we both grow old together; sound in our hulls, though, are we not my ship? Aye, minus a leg, that’s all. By heaven this dead wood has the better of my live flesh every way. I can’t compare with it; and I’ve known some ships made of dead trees outlast the lives of men made of the most vital stuff of vital fathers. What’s that he said? he should still go before me, my pilot; and yet to be seen again? But where? Will I have eyes at the bottom of the sea, supposing I descend those endless stairs? and all night I’ve been sailing from him, wherever he did sink to. Aye, aye, like many more thou told’st direful truth as touching thyself, O Parsee; but, Ahab, there thy shot fell short. Good by, mast-head—keep a good eye upon the whale, the while I’m gone. We’ll talk to-morrow, nay, to-night, when the white whale lies down there, tied by head and tail.”

He gave the word! and still gazing round him, was steadily lowered through the cloven blue air to the deck.

In due time the boats were lowered; but as standing in his shallop’s stern, Ahab just hovered upon the point of the descent, he waved to the mate,—who held one of the tackle-ropes on deck—and bade him pause.

“Starbuck!”

“Sir?”

“For the third time my soul’s ship starts upon this voyage, Starbuck.”

“Aye, sir, thou wilt have it so.”

“Some ships sail from their ports, and ever afterwards are missing, Starbuck!”

Page 105

"Truth, sir: saddest truth."

"Some men die at ebb tide; some at low water; some at the full of the flood;—and I feel now like a billow that's all one crested comb, Starbuck. I am old;—shake hands with me, man."

Their hands met; their eyes fastened; Starbuck's tears the glue.

"Oh, my captain, my captain!—noble heart—go not—go not!—see, it's a brave man that weeps; how great the agony of the persuasion then!"

"Lower away!"—cried Ahab, tossing the mate's arm from him. "Stand by the crew!"

In an instant the boat was pulling round close under the stern.

"The sharks! the sharks!" cried a voice from the low cabin-window there; "O master, my master, come back!"

But Ahab heard nothing; for his own voice was high-lifted then; and the boat leaped on.

Yet the voice spake true; for scarce had he pushed from the ship, when numbers of sharks, seemingly rising from out the dark waters beneath the hull, maliciously snapped at the blades of the oars, every time they dipped in the water; and in this way accompanied the boat with their bites. It is a thing not uncommonly happening to the whale-boats in those swarming seas; the sharks at times apparently following them in the same prescient way that vultures hover over the banners of marching regiments in the east. But these were the first sharks that had been observed by the *Pequod* since the White Whale had been first descried; and whether it was that Ahab's crew were all such tiger-yellow barbarians, and therefore their flesh more musky to the senses of the sharks—a matter sometimes well known to affect them, however it was, they seemed to follow that one boat without molesting the others.

"Heart of wrought steel!" murmured Starbuck, gazing over the side and following with his eyes the receding boat—"canst thou yet ring boldly to that sight?—lowering thy keel among ravening sharks, and followed by them, open-mouthed to the chase; and this the critical third day?—For when three days flow together in one continuous intense pursuit; be sure the first is the morning, the second the noon, and the third the evening and the end of that thing—be that end what it may. Oh! my God! what is this that shoots through me, and leaves me so deadly calm, yet expectant,—fixed at the top of a shudder! Future things swim before me, as in empty outlines and skeletons; all the past is somehow grown dim. Mary, girl! thou fadest in pale glories behind me; boy! I seem to see but thy eyes grown wondrous blue. Strangest problems of life seem clearing; but clouds sweep between—Is my journey's end coming? My legs feel faint; like his who has footed it all day. Feel thy heart,—beats it yet?—Stir thyself, Starbuck!—stave it off



—move, move! speak aloud!—Mast-head there. See ye my boy's hand on the hill?—Crazed;—aloft there!—keep thy keenest eye upon the boats:—mark well the whale!—Ho! again!—drive off that hawk! see! he pecks—he tears the vane”—pointing to the red flag flying at the main-truck—“Ha! he soars away with it!—Where's the old man now? sees't thou that sight, oh Ahab!—shudder, shudder!”

Page 106

The boats had not gone very far, when by a signal from the mast-heads—a downward pointed arm, Ahab knew that the whale had sounded; but intending to be near him at the next rising, he held on his way a little sideways from the vessel; the becharmed crew maintaining the profoundest silence, as the head-beat waves hammered and hammered against the opposing bow.

“Drive, drive in your nails, oh ye waves! to their utter-most heads drive them in! ye but strike a thing without a lid; and no coffin and no hearse can be mine:—and hemp only can kill me! Ha! ha!”

Suddenly the waters around them slowly swelled in broad circles; then quickly upheaved, as if sideways sliding from a submerged berg of ice, swiftly rising to the surface. A low rumbling sound was heard; a subterraneous hum; and then all held their breaths; as bedraggled with trailing ropes, and harpoons, and lances, a vast form shot lengthwise, but obliquely from the sea. Shrouded in a thin drooping veil of mist, it hovered for a moment in the rainbowed air; and then fell swamping back into the deep. Crushed thirty feet upwards, the waters flashed for an instant like heaps of fountains, then brokenly sank in a shower of flakes, leaving the circling surface creamed like new milk round the marble trunk of the whale.

“Give way!” cried Ahab to the oarsmen, and the boats darted forward to the attack; but maddened by yesterday’s fresh irons that corroded in him, Moby Dick seemed combinedly possessed by all the angels that fell from heaven. The wide tiers of welded tendons overspreading his broad white forehead, beneath the transparent skin, looked knitted together; as head on, he came churning his tail among the boats; and once more flailed them apart; spilling out the irons and lances from the two mates’ boats, and dashing in one side of the upper part of their bows, but leaving Ahab’s almost without a scar.

While Daggoo and Queequeg were stopping the strained planks; and as the whale swimming out from them, turned, and showed one entire flank as he shot by them again; at that moment a quick cry went up. Lashed round and round to the fish’s back; pinioned in the turns upon turns in which, during the past night, the whale had reeled the involutions of the lines around him, the half torn body of the Parsee was seen; his sable raiment frayed to shreds; his distended eyes turned full upon old Ahab.

The harpoon dropped from his hand.

“Befooled, befooled!”—drawing in a long lean breath—“Aye, Parsee! I see thee again. —Aye, and thou goest before; and this, this then is the hearse that thou didst promise. But I hold thee to the last letter of thy word. Where is the second hearse? Away, mates, to the ship! those boats are useless now; repair them if ye can in time, and return to me; if not, Ahab is enough to die—Down, men! the first thing that but offers to jump from this

boat I stand in, that thing I harpoon. Ye are not other men, but my arms and my legs; and so obey me.—Where's the whale? gone down again?"

Page 107

But he looked too nigh the boat; for as if bent upon escaping with the corpse he bore, and as if the particular place of the last encounter had been but a stage in his leeward voyage, Moby Dick was now again steadily swimming forward; and had almost passed the ship,—which thus far had been sailing in the contrary direction to him, though for the present her headway had been stopped. He seemed swimming with his utmost velocity, and now only intent upon pursuing his own straight path in the sea.

“Oh! Ahab,” cried Starbuck, “not too late is it, even now, the third day, to desist. See! Moby Dick seeks thee not. It is thou, thou, that madly seekest him!”

Setting sail to the rising wind, the lonely boat was swiftly impelled to leeward, by both oars and canvas. And at last when Ahab was sliding by the vessel, so near as plainly to distinguish Starbuck’s face as he leaned over the rail, he hailed him to turn the vessel about, and follow him, not too swiftly, at a judicious interval. Glancing upwards, he saw Tashtego, Queequeg, and Daggoo, eagerly mounting to the three mast-heads; while the oarsmen were rocking in the two staved boats which had but just been hoisted to the side, and were busily at work in repairing them. One after the other, through the portholes, as he sped, he also caught flying glimpses of Stubb and Flack, busying themselves on deck among bundles of new irons and lances. As he saw all this; as he heard the hammers in the broken boats! far other hammers seemed driving a nail into his heart. But he rallied. And now marking that the vane or flag was gone from the mainmast-head, he shouted to Tashtego, who had just gained that perch, to descend again for another flag, and a hammer and nails, and so nail it to the mast.

Whether fagged by the three days’ running chase, and the resistance to his swimming in the knotted hamper he bore; or whether it was some latent deceitfulness and malice in him: whichever was true, the White Whale’s way now began to abate, as it seemed, from the boat so rapidly nearing him once more; though indeed the whale’s last start had not been so long a one as before. And still as Ahab glided over the waves the unpitying sharks accompanied him; and so pertinaciously stuck to the boat; and so continually bit at the plying oars, that the blades became jagged and crunched, and left small splinters in the sea, at almost every dip.

“Heed them not! those teeth but give new rowlocks to your oars. Pull on! ’tis the better rest, the shark’s jaw than the yielding water.”

“But at every bite, sir, the thin blades grow smaller and smaller!”

“They will last long enough! pull on!—But who can tell”—he muttered—“whether these sharks swim to feast on the whale or on Ahab?—But pull on! Aye, all alive, now—we near him. The helm! take the helm; let me pass,”—and so saying, two of the oarsmen helped him forward to the bows of the still flying boat.

Page 108

At length as the craft was cast to one side, and ran ranging along with the White Whale's flank, he seemed strangely oblivious of its advance—as the whale sometimes will—and Ahab was fairly within the smoky mountain mist, which, thrown off from the whale's spout, curled round his great, Monadnock rump; he was even thus close to him; when, with body arched back, and both arms lengthwise high-lifted to the poise, he darted his fierce iron, and his far fiercer curse into the hated whale. As both steel and curse sank to the socket, as if sucked into a morass, Moby Dick sideways writhed; spasmodically rolled his nigh flank against the bow, and, without staving a hole in it, so suddenly canted the boat over, that had it not been for the elevated part of the gunwale to which he then clung, Ahab would once more have been tossed into the sea. As it was, three of the oarsmen—who foreknew not the precise instant of the dart, and were therefore unprepared for its effects—these were flung out; but so fell, that, in an instant two of them clutched the gunwale again, and rising to its level on a combining wave, hurled themselves bodily inboard again; the third man helplessly dropping astern, but still afloat and swimming.

Almost simultaneously, with a mighty volition of ungraduated, instantaneous swiftness, the White Whale darted through the weltering sea. But when Ahab cried out to the steersman to take new turns with the line, and hold it so; and commanded the crew to turn round on their seats, and tow the boat up to the mark; the moment the treacherous line felt that double strain and tug, it snapped in the empty air!

"What breaks in me? Some sinew cracks!—'tis whole again; oars! oars! Burst in upon him!"

Hearing the tremendous rush of the sea-crashing boat, the whale wheeled round to present his blank forehead at bay; but in that evolution, catching sight of the nearing black hull of the ship; seemingly seeing in it the source of all his persecutions; bethinking it—it may be—a larger and nobler foe; of a sudden, he bore down upon its advancing prow, smiting his jaws amid fiery showers of foam.

Ahab staggered; his hand smote his forehead. "I grow blind; hands! stretch out before me that I may yet grope my way. Is't night?"

"The whale! The ship!" cried the cringing oarsmen.

"Oars! oars! Slope downwards to thy depths, O sea, that ere it be forever too late, Ahab may slide this last, last time upon his mark! I see: the ship! the ship! Dash on, my men! Will ye not save my ship?"

But as the oarsmen violently forced their boat through the sledge-hammering seas, the before whale-smitten bow-ends of two planks burst through, and in an instant almost, the temporarily disabled boat lay nearly level with the waves; its halfwading, splashing crew, trying hard to stop the gap and bale out the pouring water.



Meantime, for that one beholding instant, Tashtego's mast-head hammer remained suspended in his hand; and the red flag, half-wrapping him as with a plaid, then streamed itself straight out from him, as his own forward-flowing heart; while Starbuck and Stubb, standing upon the bowsprit beneath, caught sight of the down-coming monster just as soon as he.

Page 109

"The whale, the whale! Up helm, up helm! Oh, all ye sweet powers of air, now hug me close! Let not Starbuck die, if die he must, in a woman's fainting fit. Up helm, I say—ye fools, the jaw! the jaw! Is this the end of all my bursting prayers? all my life-long fidelities? Oh, Ahab, Ahab, lo, thy work. Steady! helmsman, steady. Nay, nay! Up helm again! He turns to meet us! Oh, his unappeasable brow drives on towards one, whose duty tells him he cannot depart. My God, stand by me now!"

"Stand not by me, but stand under me, whoever you are that will now help Stubb; for Stubb, too, sticks here. I grin at thee, thou grinning whale! Who ever helped Stubb, or kept Stubb awake, but Stubb's own unwinking eye? And now poor Stubb goes to bed upon a mattress that is all too soft; would it were stuffed with brushwood! I grin at thee, thou grinning whale! Look ye, sun, moon, and stars! I call ye assassins of as good a fellow as ever spouted up his ghost. For all that, I would yet ring glasses with ye, would ye but hand the cup! Oh, oh! oh, oh! thou grinning whale, but there'll be plenty of gulping soon! Why fly ye not, O Ahab! For me, off shoes and jacket to it; let Stubb die in his drawers! A most mouldy and over-salted death, though;—cherries! cherries! cherries! Oh, Flask, for one red cherry ere we die!"

"Cherries? I only wish that we were where they grow. Oh, Stubb, I hope my poor mother's drawn my part-pay ere this; if not, few coppers will now come to her, for the voyage is up."

From the ship's bows, nearly all the seamen now hung inactive; hammers, bits of plank, lances, and harpoons, mechanically retained in their hands, just as they had darted from their various employments; all their enchanted eyes intent upon the whale, which from side to side strangely vibrating his predestinating head, sent a broad band of overspreading semicircular foam before him as he rushed. Retribution, swift vengeance, eternal malice were in his whole aspect, and spite of all that mortal man could do, the solid white buttress of his forehead smote the ship's starboard bow, till men and timbers reeled. Some fell flat upon their faces. Like dislodged trucks, the heads of the harpooners aloft shook on their bull-like necks. Through the breach, they heard the waters pour, as mountain torrents down a flume.

"The ship! The hearse!—the second hearse!" cried Ahab from the boat; "its wood could only be American!"

Diving beneath the settling ship, the whale ran quivering along its keel; but turning under water, swiftly shot to the surface again, far off the other bow, but within a few yards of Ahab's boat, where, for a time, he lay quiescent.

Page 110

"I turn my body from the sun. What ho, Tashtego! let me hear thy hammer. Oh! ye three unsundered spires of mine; thou uncracked keel; and only god-bullied hull; thou firm deck, and haughty helm, and Pole-pointed prow,—death-glorious ship! must ye then perish, and without me? Am I cut off from the last fond pride of meanest shipwrecked captains? Oh, lonely death on lonely life! Oh, now I feel my topmost greatness lies in my topmost grief. Ho, ho! from all your furthest bounds, pour ye now in, ye bold billows of my whole fore-gone life, and top this one piled comber of my death! Towards thee I roll, thou all-destroying but unconquering whale; to the last I grapple with thee; from hell's heart I stab at thee; for hate's sake I spit my last breath at thee. Sink all coffins and all hearses to one common pool! and since neither can be mine, let me then tow to pieces, while still chasing thee, though tied to thee, thou damned whale! *Thus*, I give up the spear!"

The harpoon was darted; the stricken whale flew forward; with igniting velocity the line ran through the groove;—ran foul. Ahab stooped to clear it; he did clear it! but the flying turn caught him round the neck, and voicelessly as Turkish mutes bowstring their victim, he was shot out of the boat, ere the crew knew he was gone. Next instant, the heavy eye-splice in the rope's final end flew out of the stark-empty tub, knocked down an oarsmen, and smiting the sea, disappeared in its depths.

For an instant, the tranced boat's crew stood still; then turned. "The ship! Great God, where is the ship?" Soon they through dim, bewildering mediums saw her sidelong fading phantom, as in the gaseous *Fata Morgana*; only the uppermost masts out of water; while fixed by infatuation, or fidelity, or fate, to their once lofty perches, the pagan harpooners still maintained their sinking lookouts on the sea. And now, concentric circles seized the lone boat itself, and all its crew, and each floating oar, and every lance-pole, and spinning, animate and inanimate, all round and round in one vortex, carried the smallest chip of the *Pequod* out of sight.

But as the last whelmings intermixingly poured themselves over the sunken head of the Indian at the mainmast, leaving a few inches of the erect spar yet visible, together with long streaming yards of the flag, which calmly undulated, with ironical coincidings, over the destroying billows they almost touched;—at that instant, a red arm and a hammer hovered backwardly uplifted in the open air, in the act of nailing the flag faster and yet faster to the subsiding spar. A sky-hawk that tauntingly had followed the main-truck downwards from its natural home among the stars, pecking at the flag, and incommoding Tashtego there; this bird now chanced to intercept its broad fluttering wing between the hammer and the wood; and simultaneously feeling that ethereal thrill, the submerged savage beneath, in his death-gasp, kept his hammer frozen there; and so the bird of heaven, with arch-angelic shrieks, and his imperial beak thrust upwards, and his whole captive form folded in the flag of Ahab, went down with his ship, which, like Satan, would not sink to hell till she had dragged a living part of heaven along with her, and helmeted herself with it.

Page 111

Now small fowls flew screaming over the yet yawning gulf; a sullen white surf beat against its steep sides; then all collapsed, and the great shroud of the sea rolled on as it rolled five thousand years ago.

[1] This motion is peculiar to the sperm whale. It receives its designation (pitchpoling) from its being likened to that preliminary up-and-down poise of the whale-lance, in the exercise called pitchpoling previously described. By this motion the whale must best and most comprehensively view whatever objects may be encircling him.

THE CORVETTE CLAYMORE

From "Ninety-three," BY VICTOR HUGO

The corvette, instead of sailing south, in the direction of St. Catherine, headed to the north, then, veering towards the west, had boldly entered that arm of the sea between Sark and Jersey called the Passage of the Deroute. There was then no lighthouse at any point on either coast. It had been a clear sunset; the night was darker than summer nights usually are; it was moonlight, but large clouds, rather of the equinox than of the solstice overspread the sky, and, judging by appearances, the moon would not be visible until she reached the horizon at the moment of setting. A few clouds hung low near the surface of the sea and covered it with vapor.

All this darkness was favorable. Gacquoil, the pilot, intended to leave Jersey on the left, Guernsey on the right, and by boldly sailing between Hanois and Dover, to reach some bay on the coast near St. Malo, a longer but safer route than the one through Minquiers; for the French coaster had standing orders to keep an unusually sharp lookout between St. Helier and Granville.

If the wind were favorable, and nothing happened, by dint of setting all sail Gacquoil hoped to reach the coast of France at daybreak.

All went well. The corvette had just passed Gros Nez. Towards nine o'clock the weather looked sullen, as the sailors express it, both wind and sea rising; but the wind was favorable, and the sea was rough, yet not heavy, the waves now and then dashing over the bow of the corvette. "The peasant" whom Lord Balcarras had called general, and whom the Prince de La Tour d'Auvergne had addressed as cousin, was a good sailor, and paced the deck of the corvette with calm dignity. He did not seem to notice that she rocked considerably. From time to time he took out of his waistcoat pocket a cake of chocolate, and breaking off a piece, munched it. Though his hair was gray, his teeth were sound.

He spoke to no one, except that from time to time he made a few concise remarks in an undertone to the captain, who listened to him deferentially, apparently regarding his

passenger as the commander, rather than himself. Unobserved in the fog, and skilfully piloted, the *Claymore* coasted along the steep shore to the north of Jersey, hugging the land to avoid the formidable reef of Pierres-de-Leeq, which lies in the middle of the strait between Jersey and Sark. Gacquoil, at the helm, sighting in turn Greve de Leeq, Gros Nez, and Plermont, making the corvette glide in among those chains of reefs, felt his way along to a certain extent but with the self-confidence of one familiar with the ways of the sea.

Page 112

The corvette had no light forward, fearing to betray its passage through these guarded waters. They congratulated themselves on the fog. The Grande Etape was reached; the mist was so dense that the lofty outlines of the Pinnacle were scarcely visible. They heard it strike ten from the belfry of Saint-Ouen,—a sign that the wind was still aft. All was going well; the sea grew rougher, because they were drawing near La Corbiere.

A little after ten, the Count Boisberthelot and the Chevalier de la Vieuville escorted the man in the peasant garb to the door of his cabin, which was the captain's own room. As he was about to enter, he remarked, lowering his voice:—

“You understand the importance of keeping the secret, gentlemen. Silence up to the moment of explosion. You are the only ones here who know my name.”

“We will carry it to the grave,” replied Boisberthelot.

“And for my part, I would not reveal it were I face to face with death,” remarked the old man.

And he entered his stateroom.

The commander and the first officer returned on deck, and began to pace up and down side by side, talking as they walked. The theme was evidently their passenger; and this was the substance of the conversation which the wind wafted through the darkness. Boisberthelot grumbled half audibly to La Vieuville,—

“It remains to be seen whether or no he is a leader.”

La Vieuville replied,—

“Meanwhile he is a prince.”

“Almost.”

“A nobleman in France, but a prince in Brittany.”

“Like the Tremouilles and the Rohans.”

“With whom he is connected.”

Boisberthelot resumed,—

“In France and in the carriages of the king he is a marquis,—as I am a count, and you a chevalier.”

"The carriages are far away!" exclaimed Vieuville. "We are living in the time of the tumbil."

A silence ensued.

Boisberthelot went on,—

"For lack of a French prince we take one from Brittany."

"For lack of thrushes—No: since an eagle is not to be found, we take a crow."

"I should prefer a vulture," remarked Boisberthelot.

La Vieuville replied,—

"Yes, indeed, with a beak and talons."

"We shall see."

"Yes," replied Vieuville, "it is time there was a leader. I agree with Tinteniach,—a leader and gunpowder! See here, commander, I know nearly all the possible and impossible leaders,—those of yesterday, those of to-day, and those of to-morrow. Not one of them has the head required for war. In this cursed Vendee a general is needed who would be a lawyer as well as a leader. He must harass the enemy, dispute every bush, ditch, and stone; he must force unlucky quarrels upon him, and take advantage of everything; vigilant and pitiless, he must watch incessantly, slaughter freely, and make examples.

Page 113

Now, in this army of peasants there are heroes, but no captains. D'Elbee is a nonentity, Lescure an invalid; Bonchamps is merciful,—he is kind, and that implies folly; La Rochejaquelein is a superb sub-lieutenant; Silz is an officer good for the open field, but not suited for a war that needs a man of expedients; Cathelineau is a simple teamster; Stofflet is a crafty game-keeper; Berard is inefficient; Boulainvillers is absurd; Charette is horrible. I make no mention of Gaston the barber. Mordemonbleu! what is the use of opposing revolution, and what is the difference between ourselves and the republicans, if we set barbers over the heads of noblemen! The fact is, that this beastly revolution has contaminated all of us."

"It is the itch of France."

"It is the itch of the Tiers etat," rejoined Boisberthelot. "England alone can help us."

"And she will, captain, undoubtedly."

"Meanwhile it is an ugly state of affairs."

"Yes,—rustics everywhere. A monarchy that has Stofflet, the game-keeper of M. de Maulevrier, for a commander has no reason to envy a republic whose minister is Pache, the son of the Duke de Castries' porter. What men this Vendean war brings face to face.—on one side Santerre the brewer; on the other Gaston the hairdresser!"

"My dear La Vieuville, I feel some respect for this Gaston. He behaved well in his command of Guemenee. He had three hundred Blues neatly shot after making them dig their own graves."

"Well enough done; but I could have done quite as well as he."

"Pardieu, to be sure; and I too."

"The great feats of war," said Vieuville, "require noble blood in those who perform them. These are matters for knights, and not for hairdressers."

"But yet there are estimable men in this 'Third Estate,'" rejoined Vieuville. "Take that watchmaker, Joly, for instance. He was formerly a sergeant in a Flanders regiment; he becomes a Vendean chief and commander of a coast band. He has a son, a republican; and while the father serves in the ranks of the Whites, the son serves in those of the Blues. An encounter, a battle: the father captures the son and blows out his brains."

"He did well," said La Vieuville.

“A royalist Brutus,” answered Boisberthelot. “Nevertheless, it is unendurable to be under the command of a Coquereau, a Jean-Jean, a Moulin, a Focart, a Bouju, a Chouppes!”

“My dear chevalier, the opposite party is quite as indignant. We are crowded with plebeians; they have an excess of nobles. Do you think the sansculottes like to be commanded by the Count de Canclaux, the Viscount de Miranda, the Viscount de Beauharnais, the Count de Valence, the Marquis de Custine, and the Duke de Biron?”

“What a combination!”

“And the Duke de Chartres!”

“Son of Egalite. By the way, when will he be king?”

“Never!”

Page 114

"He aspires to the throne, and his very crimes serve to promote his interests."

"And his vices will injure his cause," said Boisberthelot.

Then, after another pause, he continued,—

"Nevertheless, he was anxious to be reconciled. He came to see the king. I was at Versailles when some one spit on his back."

"From the top of the grand staircase?"

"Yes."

"I am glad of it."

"We called him Bourbon le Bourbeaux."

"He is bald-headed; he has pimples; he is a regicide. Poh!"

And La Vieuville added:—

"I was with him at Ouessant."

"On the *Saint Esprit*?"

"Yes."

"Had he obeyed Admiral d'Orvillier's signal to keep to the windward, he would have prevented the English from passing."

"True."

"Was he really hidden in the bottom of the hold?"

"No; but we must say so all the same."

And La Vieuville burst out laughing.

Boisberthelot continued:—

"Fools are plentiful. Look here, I have known this Boulainvilliers of whom you were speaking; I knew him well. At first the peasants were armed with pikes; would you believe it, he took it into his head to form them into pike-men. He wanted to drill them in crossing pikes and repelling a charge. He dreamed of transforming these barbarians into regular soldiers. He undertook to teach them how to round in the corners of their squares, and to mass battalions with hollow squares. He jabbered the antiquated

military dialect to them; he called the chief of a squad a *cap d'escade*,—which was what corporals under Louis XIV, were called. He persisted in forming a regiment of all those poachers. He had regular companies whose sergeants ranged themselves in a circle every evening, and, receiving the sign and countersign from the colonel's sergeant, repeated it in a whisper to the lieutenant's sergeant, who repeated it to his next neighbor, who in his turn transmitted it to the next man, and so on from ear to ear until it reached the last man. He cashiered an officer for not standing bareheaded to receive the watchword from the sergeant. You may imagine how he succeeded. This simpleton could not understand that peasants have to be led peasant fashion, and that it is impossible to transform rustics into soldiers. Yes, I have known Boulainvilliers."

They walked along a few steps, each one engrossed in his own thoughts.

Then the conversation was resumed:—

"By the way, has the report of Dampierre's death been confirmed?"

"Yes, commander."

"Before Conde?"

"At the camp of Pamars; he was hit by a cannonball."

Boisberthelot sighed.

"Count Dampierre,—another of our men, who took sides with them."

"May he prosper wherever he may be!" said Vieuville.

"And the ladies,—where are they?"

Page 115

"At Trieste."

"Still there?"

"Yes."

"Ah, this republic!" exclaimed La Vieuville. "What havoc from so slight a cause! To think that this revolution was the result of a deficit of only a few millions!"

"Insignificant beginnings are not always to be trusted."

"Everything goes wrong," replied La Vieuville.

"Yes; La Rouarie is dead. Du Dresnay is an idiot. What wretched leaders are all those bishops,—this Coucy, bishop of La Rochelle; Beaupoll Saint-Aulaire, bishop of Poitiers; Mercy, bishop of Luzon, a lover of Madame de l'Eschasserie——"

"Whose name is Servanteau, you know, commander. Eschasserie is the name of an estate."

"And that false bishop of Agra, who is a cure of I know not what!"

"Of Dol. His name is Guillot de Folleville. But then he is brave, and knows how to fight."

"Priests when one needs soldiers! bishops who are no bishops at all! generals who are no generals!"

La Vieuville interrupted Boisberthelot.

"Have you the *Moniteur* in your stateroom, commander?"

"Yes."

"What are they giving now in Paris?"

"'Adele and Pauline' and 'La Caverne.'"

"I should like to see that."

"You may. We shall be in Paris in a month."

Boisberthelot thought a moment, and then added:

"At the latest,—so Mr. Windham told Lord Hood."

"Then, commander, I take it affairs are not going so very badly?"



"All would go well, provided that the Breton war were well managed."

De Vieuville shook his head.

"Commander," he said, "are we to land the marines?"

"Certainly, if the coast is friendly, but not otherwise. In some cases war must force the gates; in others it can slip through them. Civil war must always keep a false key in its pocket. We will do all we can; but one must have a chief."

And Boisberthelot added thoughtfully,—

"What do you think of the Chevalier de Dieuzie, La Vieuville?"

"Do you mean the younger?"

"Yes."

"For a commander?"

"Yes."

"He is only good for a pitched battle in the open field. It is only the peasant who knows the underbrush."

"In that case, you may as well resign yourself to Generals Stofflet and Cathelineau."

La Vieuville mediated for a moment; then he said,—

"What we need is a prince,—a French prince, a prince of the blood, a real prince."

"How can that be? He who says 'prince'——"

"Says 'coward.' I know it, commander. But we need him for the impression he would produce upon the herd."

"My dear chevalier, the princes don't care to come."

"We will do without them."

Boisberthelot pressed his hand mechanically against his forehead, as if striving to evoke an idea. He resumed,—

Page 116

"Then let us try this general."

"He is a great nobleman."

"Do you think he will do?"

"If he is one of the right sort," said La Vieuville.

"You mean relentless?" said Boisberthelot.

The count and the chevalier looked at each other.

"Monsieur Boisberthelot, you have defined the meaning of the word. Relentless,—yes, that's what we need. This is a war that shows no mercy. The blood-thirsty are in the ascendant. The regicides have beheaded Louis XVI; we will quarter the regicides. Yes, the general we need is General Relentless. In Anjou and Upper Poitou the leaders play the magnanimous; they trifle with generosity, and they are always defeated. In the Marais and the country of Retz, where the leaders are ferocious, everything goes bravely forward. It is because Charette is fierce that he stands his ground against Parrein,—hyena pitted against hyena."

Boisberthelot had no time to answer. Vieuville's words were suddenly cut short by a desperate cry, and at the same instant they heard a noise unlike all other sounds. This cry and the unusual sounds came from the interior of the vessel.

The captain and the lieutenant rushed to the gun-deck, but were unable to enter. All the gunners came running up, beside themselves with terror.

A frightful thing had just happened.

One of the carronades of the battery, a twenty-four pound cannon, had become loose.

This is perhaps the most dreadful thing that can take place at sea. Nothing more terrible can happen to a man-of-war under full sail.

A cannon that breaks loose from its fastenings is suddenly transformed into a supernatural beast. It is a monster developed from a machine. This mass runs along on its wheels as easily as a billiard ball; it rolls with the rolling, pitches with the pitching, comes and goes, stops, seems to meditate, begins anew, darts like an arrow from one end of the ship to the other, whirls around, turns aside, evades, rears, hits out, crushes, kills, exterminates. It is a ram battering a wall at its own pleasure. Moreover, the battering-ram is iron, the wall is wood. It is matter set free; one might say that this eternal slave is wreaking its vengeance; it would seem as though the evil in what we call inanimate objects had found vent and suddenly burst forth; it has the air of having lost its patience, and of taking a mysterious, dull revenge; nothing is so inexorable as the

rage of the inanimate. The mad mass leaps like a panther; it has the weight of an elephant, the agility of a mouse, the obstinacy of the axe; it takes one by surprise, like the surge of the sea; it flashes like lightning; it is deaf as the tomb; it weighs ten thousand pounds, and it bounds like a child's ball; it whirls as it advances, and the circles it describes are intersected by right angles. And what help is there? How can it be overcome?

Page 117

A calm succeeds the tempest, a cyclone passes over, a wind dies away, we replace the broken mass, we check the leak, we extinguish the fire; but what is to be done with this enormous bronze beast? How can it be subdued? You can reason with a mastiff, take a bull by surprise, fascinate a snake, frighten a tiger, mollify a lion; but there is no resource with the monster known as a loosened gun. You cannot kill it,—it is already dead; and yet it lives. It breathes a sinister life bestowed on it by the Infinite. The plank beneath sways it to and fro; it is moved by the ship; the sea lifts the ship, and the wind keeps the sea in motion. This destroyer is a toy. Its terrible vitality is fed by the ship, the waves, and the wind, each lending its aid. What is to be done with this complication? How fetter this monstrous mechanism of shipwreck? How foresee its coming and goings, its recoils, its halts, its shocks? Any one of those blows may stave in the side of the vessel. How can one guard against these terrible gyrations? One has to do with a projectile that reflects, that has ideas, and changes its direction at any moment. How can one arrest an object in its course, whose onslaught must be avoided? The dreadful cannon rushes about, advances, recedes, strikes to right and to left, flies here and there, baffles their attempts at capture, sweeps away obstacles, crushing men like flies.

The extreme danger of the situation comes from the unsteadiness of the deck. How is one to cope with the caprices of an inclined plane? The ship had within its depths, so to speak, imprisoned lightning struggling for escape; something like the rumbling of thunder during an earthquake. In an instant the crew was on its feet. It was the chief gunner's fault, who had neglected to fasten the screw-nut of the breeching chain, and had not thoroughly chocked the four trucks of the carronade, which allowed play to the frame and the bottom of the gun-carriage, thereby disarranging the two platforms and parting the breeching. The lashings were broken, so that the gun was no longer firm on its carriage. The stationary breeching which prevents the recoil was not in use at that time. As a wave struck the ship's side the cannon, insufficiently secured, had receded, and having broken its chain, began to wander threateningly over the deck. In order to get an idea of this strange sliding, fancy a drop of water sliding down a pane of glass.

When the fastening broke, the gunners were in the battery, singly and in groups, clearing the ship for action. The carronade, thrown forward by the pitching, dashed into a group of men, killing four of them at the first blow; then, hurled back by the rolling, it cut in two an unfortunate fifth man, and struck and dismounted one of the guns of the larboard battery. Hence the cry of distress which had been heard. All the men rushed to the ladder. The gun-deck was empty in the twinkling of an eye.

Page 118

The monstrous gun was left to itself. It was its own mistress, and mistress of the ship. It could do with it whatsoever it wished. This crew, accustomed to laugh in battle, now trembled. It would be impossible to describe their terror.

Captain Boisberthelot and Lieutenant la Vieuville, brave men though they were, paused at the top of the ladder, silent, pale, and undecided, looking down on the deck. Some one pushed them aside with his elbow, and descended. It was their passenger, the peasant, the man about whom they were talking a moment ago.

Having reached the bottom of the ladder he halted.

* * * * *

The cannon was rolling to and fro on the deck. It might have been called the living chariot of the Apocalypse. A dim wavering of lights and shadows was added to this spectacle by the marine lantern, swinging under the deck. The outlines of the cannon were indistinguishable, by reason of the rapidity of its motion; sometimes it looked black when the light shone upon it, then again it would cast pale, glimmering reflections in the darkness.

It was still pursuing its work of destruction. It had already shattered four other pieces, and made two breaches in the ship's side, fortunately above the waterline, but which would leak in case of rough weather. It rushed frantically against the timbers; the stout riders resisted,—curved timbers have great strength; but one could hear them crack under this tremendous assault brought to bear simultaneously on every side, with a certain omnipresence truly appalling.

A bullet shaken in a bottle could not produce sharper or more rapid sounds. The four wheels were passing and repassing over the dead bodies, cutting and tearing them to pieces, and the five corpses had become five trunks rolling hither and thither; the heads seemed to cry out; streams of blood flowed over the deck, following the motion of the ship. The ceiling, damaged in several places, had begun to give way. The whole ship was filled with a dreadful tumult.

The captain, who had rapidly recovered his self-possession, had given orders to throw down the hatchway all that could abate the rage and check the mad onslaught of this infuriated gun; mattresses, hammocks, spare sails, coils of rope, the bags of the crew, and bales of false assignats, with which the corvette was laden,—that infamous stratagem of English origin being considered a fair trick in war.

But what availed these rags? No one dared to go down to arrange them, and in a few moments they were reduced to lint.

There was just sea enough to render this accident as complete as possible. A tempest would have been welcome. It might have upset the cannon, and which its four wheels once in the air, it could easily have been mastered. Meanwhile the havoc increased. There were even incisions and fractures in the masts, that stood like pillars grounded firmly in the keel, and piercing the several decks of the vessel. The mizzen-mast was split, and even the main-mast was damaged by the convulsive blows of the cannon. The destruction of the battery still went on. Ten out of the thirty pieces were useless. The fractures in the side increased, and the corvette began to leak.

Page 119

The old passenger, who had descended to the gun-deck, looked like one carved in stone as he stood motionless at the foot of the stairs and glanced sternly over the devastation. It would have been impossible to move a step upon the deck.

Each bound of the liberated carronade seemed to threaten the destruction of the ship. But a few moments longer, and shipwreck would be inevitable.

They must either overcome this calamity or perish; some decisive action must be taken. But what?

What a combatant was this carronade!

Here was this mad creature to be arrested, this flash of lightning to be seized, this thunderbolt to be crushed. Boisberthelot said to Vieuville:—

“Do you believe in God, chevalier?”

“Yes and no, sometimes I do!” replied La Vieuville.

“In a tempest?”

“Yes, and in moments like these.”

“Truly God alone can save us,” said Boisberthelot.

All were silent, leaving the carronade to its horrible uproar.

The waves beating the ship from without answered the blows of the cannon within, very much like a couple of hammers striking in turn.

Suddenly in the midst of this inaccessible circus, where the escaped cannon was tossing from side to side, a man appeared, grasping an iron bar. It was the author of the catastrophe, the chief gunner, whose criminal negligence had caused the accident,—the captain of the gun. Having brought about the evil, his intention was to repair it. Holding a handspike in one hand, and in the other a tiller rope with the slip-noose in it, he had jumped through the hatchway to the deck below.

Then began a terrible struggle; a titanic spectacle; a combat between cannon and cannoneer; a contest between mind and matter; a duel between man and the inanimate. The man stood in one corner in an attitude of expectancy, leaning on the rider and holding in his hands the bar and the rope; calm, livid, and tragic, he stood firmly on his legs, that were like two pillars of steel.

He was waiting for the cannon to approach him.

The gunner knew his piece, and he felt as though it must know him. They had lived together a long time. How often had he put his hand in its mouth. It was his domestic monster. He began to talk to it as he would to a dog. "Come," said he. Possibly he loved it.

He seemed to wish for its coming, and yet its approach meant sure destruction for him. How to avoid being crushed was the question. All looked on in terror.

Not a breath was drawn freely, except perhaps by the old man, who remained on the gun-deck gazing sternly on the two combatants.

He himself was in danger of being crushed by the piece; still he did not move.

Beneath them the blind sea had command of the battle. When, in the act of accepting this awful hand-to-hand struggle, the gunner approached to challenge the cannon, it happened that the surging sea held the gun motionless for an instant, as though stupefied. "Come on!" said the man. It seemed to listen.

Page 120

Suddenly it leaped towards him. The man dodged. Then the struggle began,—a contest unheard of; the fragile wrestling with the invulnerable; the human warrior attacking the brazen beast; blind force on the one side, soul on the other.

All this was in the shadow. It was like an indistinct vision of a miracle.

A soul!—strangely enough it seemed as if a soul existed within the cannon, but one consumed with hate and rage. The blind thing seemed to have eyes. It appeared as though the monster were watching the man. There was, or at least one might have supposed it, cunning in this mass. It also chose its opportunity. It was as though a gigantic insect of iron was endowed with the will of a demon. Now and then this colossal grass-hopper would strike the low ceiling of the gun-deck, then falling back on its four wheels, like a tiger on all fours, rush upon the man. He—supple, agile, adroit—writhed like a serpent before these lightning movements. He avoided encounters; but the blows from which he escaped fell with destructive force upon the vessel. A piece of broken chain remained attached to the carronade. This bit of chain had twisted in some incomprehensible way around the breech button.

One end of the chain was fastened to the gun-carriage; the other end thrashed wildly around, aggravating the danger with every bound of the cannon. The screw held it as in a clenched hand, and this chain, multiplying the strokes of the battering-ram by those of the thong, made a terrible whirlwind around the gun,—a lash of iron in a fist of brass. This chain complicated the combat.

Despite all this, the man fought. He even attacked the cannon at times, crawling along by the side of the ship and clutching his handspike and the rope; the cannon seemed to understand his movements, and fled as though suspecting a trap. The man, nothing daunted, pursued his chase.

Such a struggle must necessarily be brief. Suddenly the cannon seemed to say to itself: Now, then, there must be an end to this. And it stopped. A crisis was felt to be at hand. The cannon, as if in suspense, seemed to meditate, or—for to all intents and purposes it was a living creature—it really did meditate, some furious design. All at once it rushed on the gunner, who sprang aside with a laugh, crying out, “Try it again!” as the cannon passed him. The gun in its fury smashed one of the larboard carronades; then, by the invisible sling in which it seemed to be held, it was thrown to the starboard, towards the man, who escaped. Three carronades were crushed by its onslaught; then, as though blind and besides itself it turned from the man, and rolled from stern to stem, splintering the latter, and causing a breach in the walls of the prow. The gunner took refuge at the foot of the ladder, a short distance from the old man, who stood watching. He held his handspike in readiness. The cannon seemed aware of it, and without taking the trouble to turn, it rushed backward on the man, as swift as the blow of an axe. The gunner, if driven up against the side of the ship, would be lost.

Page 121

One cry arose from the crew.

The old passenger—who until this moment had stood motionless—sprang forward more swiftly than all those mad swirls. He had seized a bale of the false assignats, and at the risk of being crushed succeeded in throwing it between the wheels of the carronade. This decisive and perilous manoeuvre could not have been executed with more precision and adroitness by an adept in all the exercises given in the work of Durosels' "Manual of Naval Gunnery."

The bale had the effect of a plug. A pebble may block a log; a branch sometimes changes the course of an avalanche. The carronade stumbled, and the gunner, availing himself of the perilous opportunity, thrust his iron bar between the spokes of the back wheels. Pitching forward, the cannon stopped; and the man, using his bar for a lever, rocked it backward and forward. The heavy mass upset, with the resonant sound of a bell that crashes in its fall. The man, reeking with perspiration, threw himself upon it, and passed the slip-noose of the tiller-rope around the neck of the defeated monster.

The combat was ended. The man had conquered. The ant had overcome the mastodon; the pygmy had imprisoned the thunderbolt.

The soldiers and sailors applauded.

The crew rushed forward with chains and cables, and in an instant the cannon was secured.

Saluting the passenger, the gunner exclaimed,—

"Sir, you have saved my life!"

The old man had resumed his impassible attitude, and made no reply.

* * * * *

The man had conquered; but it might be affirmed that the cannon also had gained a victory. Immediate shipwreck was averted; but the corvette was still in danger. The injuries the ship had sustained seemed irreparable. There were five breaches in the sides, one of them—a very large one—in the bow, and twenty carronades out of thirty lay shattered in their frames. The recaptured gun, which had been secured by a chain, was itself disabled. The screw of the breech-button being wrenched, it would consequently be impossible to level the cannon. The battery was reduced to nine guns; there was a leakage in the hold. All these damages must be repaired without loss of time, and the pumps set in operation. Now that the gun-deck had become visible, it was frightful to look upon. The interior of a mad elephant's cage could not have been more thoroughly devastated. However important it might be for the corvette to avoid

observation, the care for its immediate safety was still more imperative. They were obliged to light the deck with lanterns placed at intervals along the sides.

Page 122

In the meantime, while this tragic entertainment had lasted, the crew, entirely absorbed by a question of life and death, had not noticed what was going on outside of the ship. The fog had thickened, the weather had changed, the wind had driven the vessel at will; they were out of their course, in full sight of Jersey and Guernsey, much farther to the south than they ought to have been, and confronting a tumultuous sea. The big waves kissed the wounded sides of the corvette with kisses that savored of danger. The heaving of the sea grew threatening; the wind had risen to a gale; a squall, perhaps a tempest, was brewing. One could not see four oars' length before one.

While the crew made haste with their temporary repairs on the gun-deck, stopping the leaks and setting up the cannons that had escaped uninjured, the old passenger returned to the deck.

He stood leaning against the main-mast.

He had taken no notice of what was going on in the ship. The Chevalier de la Vieuville had drawn up the marines on either side of the main-mast, and at a signal-whistle of the boatswain the sailors, who had been busy in the rigging, stood up on the yards. Count Boisberthelot approached the passenger. The captain was followed by a man, who, haggard and panting, with his dress in disorder, still wore on his countenance an expression of content.

It was the gunner who had so opportunely displayed his power as a tamer of monsters, and gained the victory over the cannon.

The count made a military salute to the old man in the peasant garb, and said to him:—

“Here is the man, general.”

The gunner, with downcast eyes, stood erect in a military attitude.

“General,” resumed Count Boisberthelot, “considering what this man has done, do you not think that his superiors have a duty to perform?”

“I think so,” replied the old man.

“Be so good as to give your orders,” resumed Boisberthelot.

“It is for you to give them; you are the captain.”

“But you are the general,” answered Boisberthelot.

The old man looked at the gunner.

“Step forward,” he said.

The gunner advanced a step.

Turning to Count Boisberthelot, the old man removed the cross of Saint Louis from the captain's breast, and fastened it on the jacket of the gunner. The sailors cheered, and the marines presented arms.

Then pointing to the bewildered gunner he added:

"Now let the man be shot!"

Stupor took the place of applause.

Then, amid a tomb-like silence, the old man, raising his voice, said:—

"The ship has been endangered by an act of carelessness, and may even yet be lost. It is all the same whether one be at sea or face to face with the enemy. A ship at sea is like an army in battle. The tempest, though unseen, is ever present; the sea is an ambush. Death is the fit penalty for every fault committed when facing the enemy. There is no fault that can be retrieved. Courage must be rewarded and negligence be punished."

Page 123

These words fell one after the other slowly and gravely, with a certain implacable rhythm, like the strokes of the axe upon an oak-tree. Looking at the soldiers, the old man added,—

“Do your duty!”

The man on whose breast shone the cross of Saint Louis bowed his head, and at a sign of Count Boisberthelot two sailors went down to the gun-deck, and presently returned bringing the hammock-shroud, the two sailors were accompanied by the ship's chaplain, who since the departure had been engaged in saying prayers in the officers' quarters. A sergeant detached from the ranks twelve soldiers, whom he arranged in two rows, six men in a row. The gunner placed himself between the two lines. The chaplain, holding a crucifix, advanced and took his place beside the man. “March!” came from the lips of the sergeant; and the platoon slowly moved towards the bow, followed by two sailors carrying the shroud.

A gloomy silence fell on the corvette. In the distance a hurricane was blowing. A few moments later, a report echoed through the gloom; one flash, and all was still. Then came the splash of a body falling into the water. The old passenger, still leaning against the mainmast, his hands crossed on his breast, seemed lost in thought. Boisberthelot, pointing towards him with the forefinger of his left hand, remarked in an undertone to La Vieuville,—

“The Vendee has found a leader.”

THE MERCHANTS' CUP

From “Broken Stowage,” BY DAVID W. BONE

I

“Fatty” Reid burst into the half-deck with a whoop of exultation. “Come out, boys,” he yelled. “Come out and see what luck! The *James Flint* comin’ down the river, loaded and ready for sea! Who-oo! What price the *Hilda* now for the Merchants’ Cup?”

“Oh, come off,” said big Jones. “Come off with your Merchants’ Cup. Th’ *James Flint*’s a sure thing, and she wasn’t more than half-loaded when we were up at Crockett on Sunday!”

“Well, there she comes anyway! *James Flint*, sure enough! Grade’s house-flag up, and the Stars and Stripes!”

We hustled on deck and looked over by the Sacramento's mouth. "Fatty" was right. A big barque was towing down beyond San Pedro. The *James Flint*! Nothing else in 'Frisco harbour had spars like hers; no ship was as trim and clean as the big Yankee clipper that Bully Nathan commanded. The sails were all aloft, the boats aboard. She was ready to put to sea.

Our cries brought the captain and mate on deck, and the sight of the outward-bounder made old man Burke's face beam like a nor'west moon.

"A chance for ye now, byes," he shouted. "An open race, bedad! Ye've nothin' t' be afraid of if th' *James Flint* goes t' sea by Saturday!"

Page 124

Great was our joy at the prospect of the Yankee's sailing. The 'Frisco Merchants' Cup was to be rowed for on Saturday. It was a mile-and-half race for ships' boats, and three wins held the Cup for good. Twice, on previous years, the *Hilda's* trim gig had shot over the line—a handsome winner. If we won again, the Cup was ours for keeps! But there were strong opponents to be met this time. The *James Flint* was the most formidable. It was open word that Bully Nathan was keen on winning the trophy. Every one knew that he had deliberately sought out boatmen when the whalers came in from the north. Those who had seen the Yankee's crew at work in their snaky carvel-built boat said that no one else was in it. What chance had we boys in our clinker-built against the thews and sinews of trained whalemens? It was no wonder that we slapped our thighs at the prospect of a more open race.

Still, even with the Yankee gone, there were others in the running. There was the *Rhondda* that held the Cup for the year, having won when we were somewhere off the Horn; then the *Hedwig Rickmers*—a Bremen four-master—which had not before competed, but whose green-painted gig was out for practice morning and night. We felt easy about the *Rhondda* (for had we not, time and again, shown them our stern on the long pull from Green St. to the outer anchorage?), but the Germans were different. Try as we might, we could never pull off a spurt with them. No one knew for certain what they could do, only old Schenke, their skipper, and he held his tongue wisely.

The *James Flint* came around the bend, and our eager eyes followed her as she steered after the tug. She was making for the outer anchorage, where the laden ships lie in readiness for a good start off.

"Th' wind's 'bout west outside," said Jones. "A 'dead muzzler'! She'll not put t' sea tonight, even if she has all her 'crowd' aboard."

"No, worse luck! mebbe she'll lie over till Saturday after all. They say Bully's dead set on getting th' Cup. He might hang back. . . . Some excuse—short-handed or something!" Gregson was the one for "croaking."

"No hands?" said Fatty. "Huh! How could he be short-handed when everybody knows that Daly's boardin'-house is chock-full of fightin' Dutchmen? No, no! It'll be the sack for Mister Bully B. Nathan if he lets a capful o' fair wind go by and his anchor down. Gracie's agents 'll watch that!"

"Well! He's here for th' night, anyway. . . . There goes her mudhook!"

We watched her great anchor go hurtling from the bows and heard the roar of chain cable as she paid out and swung round to the tide.



“Come roun’, yo’ boys dere! Yo’ doan’ want no tea, eh?” The nigger cook, beating tattoo on a saucepan lid, called us back to affairs of the moment, and we sat down to our scanty meal in high spirits, talking—all at one time—of our chances of the Cup.

Page 125

The *Hilda* had been three months at San Francisco, waiting for the wheat crop and a profitable charter. We had come up from Australia, and most of our crew, having little wages due to them, had deserted soon after our arrival. Only we apprentices and the sail-maker remained, and we had work enough to set our muscles up in the heavy harbour jobs. Trimming coal and shovelling ballast may not be scientific training, but it is grand work for the back and shoulders.

We were in good trim for rowing. The old man had given us every opportunity, and nothing he could do was wanting to make us fit. Day and daily we had set our stroke up by the long pull from the anchorage to the wharves, old Burke coaching and encouraging, checking and speeding us, till we worked well together. Only last Sunday he had taken us out of our way, up the creek, to where we could see the flag at the *Rhondda's* masthead. The old man said nothing, but well we knew he was thinking of how the square of blue silk, with Californian emblem worked in white, would look at his trim little *Hilda's* fore-truck! This flag accompanied the Cup, and now (if only the Yankee and his hired whalemens were safely at sea) we had hopes of seeing it at our masthead again.

Tea over—still excited talk went on. Some one recalled the last time we had overhauled and passed the *Rhondda's* gig.

"It's all very well your bucking about beating the *Rhondda*," said Gregson; "but don't think we're going to have it all our own way! Mebbe they were 'playing 'possum' when we came by that time!"

"Maybe," said Jones. "There's Peters and H. Dobson in her crew. Good men! Both rowed in the Worcester boat that left the Conways' at the start, three years ago. . . . And what about the *Rickmers*? . . . No, no! It won't do to be too cocksure! . . . Eh, Takia?"

Takia was our cox-n, a small wiry Jap. Nothing great in inches, but a demon for good steering and timing a stroke. He was serving his apprenticeship with us and had been a year in the *Hilda*. Brute strength was not one of his points, but none was keener or more active in the rigging than our little Jap.

He smiled,—he always smiled,—he found it the easiest way of speaking English. "Oh, yes," he said. "Little cocksu'—good! Too much cocksu'—no good!"

We laughed at the wisdom of the East.

"Talk about being cocky," said Gregson; "you should hear Captain Schenke bragging about the way he brought the *Hedwig Rickmers* out. I heard 'em and the old man at it in the ship-chandler's yesterday. Hot . . . Look here, you chaps! I don't think the old man cares so much to win the Cup as to beat Schenke! The big 'squarehead' is always

ramming it down Burke's throat how he brought his barque out from Liverpool in a hundred and five days, while the *Hilda* took ten days more on her last run out!"

Page 126

"That's so, I guess," said Jones. (Jones had the Yankee "touch.") "Old Burke would dearly love to put a spoke in his wheel, but it'll take some doing. They say that Schenke has got a friend down from Sacramento—gym.-instructor or something to a college up there. He'll be training the 'Dutchy' crew like blazes. They'll give us a hot time, I'll bet!"

Gregson rose to go on deck. "Oh, well," he said, "it won't be so bad if the *James Flint* only lifts his hook by Saturday. Here's one bloomin' *hombre* that funks racin' a fancy whaler! . . . An' doesn't care who knows it, either!"

II

Thursday passed—and now Friday—still there was no sign of the wind changing, and the big Yankee barque lay quietly at anchor over by the Presidio.

When the butcher came off from the shore with the day's stores, we eagerly questioned him about the prospects of the *James Flint*'s sailing. "*Huh!* I guess yew're nat the only 'citizens' that air concerned 'bout that!" he said. "They're talkin' 'bout nuthin' else on every 'lime-juicer' in the Bay! . . . An' th' *Rickmers*! Gee! Schenkie's had his eye glued ter th' long telescope ever since daybreak, watchin' fer th' *Flint* heavin' up anchor!"

The butcher had varied information to give us. Now it was that Bully Nathan had telegraphed to his New York owners for permission to remain in port over Sunday. Then again, Bully was on the point of being dismissed his ship for not taking full advantage of a puff of nor'-west wind that came and went on Thursday night.

. . . The *Flint* was short of men! . . . The Flint had a full crew aboard! Rumours and rumours! "All sorts o' talk," said the butcher; "but I know this fer certain—she's got all her stores aboard. Gosh! I guess—she—has! I don't like to wish nobody no harm, byes, but I hope Bully Nathan's first chop 'll choke him, fer th' way he done me over the beef! . . . Scorch 'im!"

In the forenoon we dropped the gig and put out for practice. Old Burke and the mate came after us in the dinghy, the old man shouting instruction and encouragement through his megaphone as we rowed a course or spurted hard for a furious three minutes. Others were out on the same ploy, and the backwaters of the Bay had each a lash of oars to stir their tideless depths. Near us the green boat of the *Rickmers* thrashed up and down in style. Time and again we drew across—"just for a friendly spurt"—but the "Dutchies" were not giving anything away, and sheered off as we approached. We spent an hour or more at practice and were rowing leisurely back to the ship when the green boat overhauled us, then slowed to her skipper's orders.

Page 127

"How you vass, Cabtin Burke?" said Schenke, an enormous fair-headed Teuton, powerful-looking, but run sadly to fat in his elder years. "You t'ink you get a chanst now, *hein?* . . . Now de Yankee is goin' away!" He pointed over to the Presidio, where the *Flint* lay at anchor. We followed the line of his fat forefinger. At anchor, yes, but the anchor nearly a-weigh. Her flags were hoisted, the blue peter fluttering at the fore, and the *Active* tug was passing a hawser aboard, getting ready to tow her out. The smoke from the tugboat's funnel was whirling and blowing over the low forts that guard the Golden Gates. Good luck! A fine nor'-west breeze had come that would lift our dreaded rival far to the south'ard on her way round Cape Horn!

Schenke saw the pleased look with which old Burke regarded the Yankee's preparations for departure.

"Goot bizness, eh?" he said. "You t'ink you fly de flack on de *Hilda* nex' *Sonndag*, Cabtin? Veil! Ah wish you goot look, but you dond't got it all de same!"

"Oh, well, Captain Schenke, we can but thry," said the old man. "We can but thry, sorr! . . . Shure, she's a foine boat—that o' yours. . . . An' likely-looking lads, too!" No one could but admire the well-set figures of the German crew as they stroked easily beside us.

"*Schweinehunden*," said Schenke brutally. We noticed more than one stolid face darkling as they glanced aside. Schenke had the name of a "hard case."

"*Schweinehunden*," he said again. "Dey dond't like de hard vork, Cabtin. . . . Dey dond't like it—but ve takes der Coop, all de same! Dey pulls goot und strong, oder"—he rasped a short sentence in rapid Low German—"Shermans dond't be beat by no durn lime-juicer, *nein!*"

Old Burke grinned. "Cocky as ever, Captain Schenke! Bedad now, since ye had the luck of ye're last passage there's no limit to ye!"

"Luck! Luck! Always de luck mit you, Cabtin!"

"An' whatt ilse? . . . Sure, if I hadn't struck a bilt of calms an' had more than me share of head winds off the Horn, I'd have given ye a day or two mesilf!"

"Ho! Ho! Ho! *Das ist gut!*" The green boat rocked with Schenke's merriment. He laughed from his feet up—every inch of him shook with emotion. "Ho! Ho! Hoo! *Das ist ganz gut*. You t'ink you beat de *Hedwig Rickmers* too, Cabtin? You beat 'm mit dot putty leetle barque? You beat 'm mit de *Hilda*, *nichtwahr?*"

"Well, no," said our old man. "I don't exactly say I beat the *Rickmers*, but if I had the luck o' winds that ye had, bedad, I'd crack th' *Hilda* out in a hundred an' five days too!"

“Now, dot is not drue, Cabtin! *Aber ganz und gar nicht!* You know you haf bedder look von de vind as Ah got. Ah sail mein sheep! Ah dond’t vait for de fair winds nor not’ings!”

Page 128

"No," said Burke, "but ye get 'em, all the same. Everybody knows ye've th' devil's own luck, Schenke!"

"Und so you vas! Look now, Cabtin Burke. You t'nk you got so fast a sheep as mein, eh? Veil! Ah gif you a chanst to make money. Ah bet you feefty dollars to tventig, Ah take mein sheep home quicker as you vass!"

"Done wit' ye," said stout old 'Paddy' Burke, though well he know the big German barque could sail round the little *Hilda*. "Fifty dollars to twenty, Captain Schenke, an' moind y've said it!"

The green boat sheered off and forged ahead, Schenke laughing and waving his hand derisively. When they had pulled out of earshot, the old man turned ruefully to the mate: "Five pounds clean t'rown away, mister! Foine I know the *Rickmers* can baate us, but I wasn't goin' t' let that ould 'squarehead' have it all his own way! Divil th' fear!"

We swung under the *Hilda's* stern and hooked on to the gangway. The old man stepped out, climbed a pace or two, then came back.

"Look ye here, byes," he said, "I'll give ye foive dollars a man—an' a day's 'liberty' t' spind it—if ye only baate th' 'Dutchmen.' . . . Let th' Cup go where it will!"

III

The Bay of San Francisco is certainly one of the finest natural harbours in the world, let Sydney and Rio and Falmouth all contest the claim. Land-locked to every wind that blows, with only a narrow channel open to the sea, the navies of the world could lie peacefully together in its sheltered waters. The coast that environs the harbour abounds in natural beauties, but of all the wooded creeks—fair stretches of undulating downs—or stately curves of winding river, none surpasses the little bay formed by the turn of Benita, the northern postern of the Golden Gates. Here is the little township of Sancilito, with its pretty white houses nestling among the dark green of the deeply wooded slopes. In the bay there is good anchorage for a limited number of vessels, and fortunate were they who manned the tall ships that lay there, swinging ebb and flood, waiting for a burthen of golden grain.

On Saturday the little bay was crowded by a muster of varied craft. The ships at anchor were "dressed" to the mastheads with gaily-coloured flags. Huge ferryboats passed slowly up and down, their tiers of decks crowded with sightseers. Tug-boats and launches darted about, clearing the course, or convoying racing boats to the starting lines. Ships' boats of all kinds were massed together close inshore: gigs and pinnaces, lean whaleboats, squat dinghys, even high-sided ocean lifeboats with their sombre

broad belts of ribbed cork. A gay scene of colour and animation. A fine turn-out to see the fortune of the Merchants' Cup.

Page 129

At two the Regatta began. A race for longshore craft showed that the boarding-house “crimps” were as skillful at boatman’s work as at inducing sailormen to desert their ships. Then two outriggers flashed by, contesting a heat for a College race. We in the *Hilda’s* gig lay handily at the starting line and soon were called out. There were nine entries for the Cup, and the judges had decided to run three heats. We were drawn in the first, and, together with the *Ardlea’s* and *Compton’s* gigs, went out to be inspected. The boats had to race in sea-service conditions, no lightening was allowed. At the challenge of the judges we showed our gear. “Spare oar—right! Rowlocks—right! Sea-anchor—right! Bottom boards and stern grating—right. Painter, ten fathoms; hemp. . . . A bit short there, *Compton*! Eh? . . . Oh—all right,” said the official, and we manoeuvred into position, our sterns held in by the guard-boats. Some of the ships’ captains had engaged a steam-launch to follow the heats, and old Burke was there with his trumpet, shouting encouragement already.

“Air yew ready?”

A pause: then, pistol shot! We struck water and laid out! Our task was not difficult. The *Ardlea’s* gig was broad-bowed and heavy; they had no chance; but the *Compton’s* gave us a stiff pull to more than midway. Had they been like us, three months at boat-work, we had not pulled so easily up to the mark, but their ship was just in from Liverpool, and they were in poor condition for a mile and a half at pressure. We won easily, and scarce had cheered the losers before the launch came fussing up.

“Come aboard, Takia,” shouted old Burke. “Ye come down wit’ me an’ see what shape the German makes. He’s drawn wit’ th’ *Rhondda* in this heat!”

Takia bundled aboard the launch and we hauled inshore to watch the race. There was a delay at the start. Schenke, *nichts verstehen*, as he said, was for sending his boat away without a painter or spare gear. He was pulled up by the judges, and had to borrow.

Now they were ready. The *Rickmers* outside, *Rhondda* in the middle berth, and the neat little *Slieve Donard* inshore. At the start the *Rhonddas* came fair away from the German boat, but even at the distance we could see that the “Dutchmen” were well in hand. At midway the *Rhondda* was leading by a length, still going strong, but they had shot their bolt, and the green boat was surely pulling up. The *Slieve Donard*, after an unsteady course, had given up. Soon we could hear old Schenke roaring oaths and orders, as his launch came flying on in the wake of the speeding boats.

The Germans spurted.

We yelled encouragement to the *Rhonddas*. “Give ’em beans, old sons! . . .”

"Rhondda! Rhondda! . . . Shake 'er up" Gallantly the white boat strove to keep her place, but the greens were too strong. With a rush, they took the lead and held it to the finish, though two lengths from the line their stroke faltered, the swing was gone, and they were dabbling feebly when the shot rang out.

Page 130

"A grand race," said every one around. "A grand race"—but old Burke had something to say when he steamed up to put our cox'n among us. "Byes, byes," he said, "if there had been twinty yards more the *Rhondda* would have won. Now d'ye moind, Takia, ye divil . . . d'ye moind! Keep th' byes in hand till I give ye th' wurrd! . . . An' whin ye get th' wurrd, byes! . . . Oh, Saints! Shake her up when ye get th' wurrd!"

The third heat was closely contested. All three boats, two Liverpool barques and a Nova Scotiaman, came on steadily together. A clean race, rowed from start to finish, and the *Tuebrook* winning by a short length.

The afternoon was well spent when we stripped for the final, and took up our positions on the line. How big and muscular the Germans looked! How well the green boat sat the water! With what inward quakings we noted the clean fine lines of stem and stern! . . . Of the *Tuebrook* we had no fear. We knew they could never stand the pace the Germans would set. Could we?

Old Burke, though in a fever of excitement when we came to the line, had little to say. "Keep the byes in hand, Takia—till ye get th' wurrd," was all he muttered. We swung our oar-blades forward.

"Ready?" The starter challenged us.

Suddenly Takia yelped! We struck and lay back as the shot rang out! A stroke gained! Takia had taken the flash; the others the report!

The Jap's clever start gave us confidence and a lead. Big Jones at stroke worked us up to better the advantage. The green boat sheered a little, then steadied and came on, keeping to us, though nearly a length astern. The *Tuebrook* had made a bad start, but was thrashing away pluckily in the rear.

So we hammered at it for a third of the course, when Takia took charge. Since his famous start he had left us to take stroke as Jones pressed us, but now he saw signs of the waver that comes after the first furious burst—shifting grip or change of foothold.

"*Trok!—'trok!—'trok!*" he muttered, and steadied the pace. "*Troke!—'troke!—'troke!*" in monotone, good for soothing tension.

Past midway the green boat came away. The ring of the German's rowlocks rose to treble pitch. Slowly they drew up, working at top speed. Now they were level—level! and Takia still droning "*troke!—'troke!—'troke!*"—as if the lead was ours!

Wild outcry came from the crowd as the green boat forged ahead! Deep roars from Schenke somewhere in the rear! Now, labouring still to Takia's '*troke!—'troke!*' we had the foam of the German's stern wash at our blades! "Come away, *Hilda's!*" . . . "*Shake her up, there!*" . . . "*Hilda-h! Hilda-h!*"—Takia took no outward heed of the cries. He was

staring stolidly ahead, bending to the pulse of the boat. No outward heed—but '*troke!* —'*troke!* came faster from his lips. We strained, almost holding the Germans' ensign at level with our bow pennant.



Page 131

Loud over the wild yells of the crowd we heard the voice we knew—old Burke's bull-roar: "Let 'er rip, Taki'! Let 'er rip, bye!"

Takia's eyes gleamed as he sped us up—up—up! 'Troke became a yelp like a wounded dog's. He crouched, standing, in the sternsheets, and lashed us up to a furious thrash of oars! Still quicker! . . . The eyes of him glared at each of us, as if daring us to fail! The yelp became a scream as we drew level—the Germans still at top speed. "Up! Up! Up!" yells Takia, little yellow devil with a white froth at his lips! "Up! Up! Up!" swaying unsteadily to meet the furious urging.

The ring of the German rowlocks deepens—deepens—we see the green bow at our blades again. Her number two falters—jars—recovers again—and pulls stubbornly on. Their "shot" is fired! They can do no more! Done!

And so are we! Takia drops the yoke ropes and leans forward on the gunwale! Oars jar together! Big Jones bends forward with his mouth wide—wide! Done!

But not before a hush—a solitary pistol shot—then roar of voices and shrilling of steamer sirens tell us that the Cup is ours!

IV

A month later there was a stir in the western seaports. No longer the ships lay swinging idly at their moorings. The harvest of grain was ready for the carriers, and every day sail was spread to the free wind outside the Golden Gates, and laden ships went speeding on their homeward voyages. The days of boat-races and pleasant time-passing harbour jobs were gone; it was now work—work—to get the ship ready for her burden, and, swaying the great sails aloft, to rig harness for the power that was to bear us home. From early morning till late evening we were kept hard at it; for Captain Burke and the mate were as keen on getting the *Hilda* to sea after her long stay in port as they were on jockeying us up to win the Cup. Often, when we turned to in the morning, we would find a new shipmate ready to bear a hand with us. The old man believed in picking up a likely man when he offered. Long experience of Pacific ports had taught him how difficult it is to get a crew at the last moment.

So when at length the cargo was stowed, we were quite ready to go to sea, while many others—the *Hedwig Rickmers* among them—were waiting for men.

On the day before sailing a number of the ship captains were gathered together in the Chandler's store, talking of freights and passages, and speculating on the runs they hoped to make. Burke and Schencke were the loudest talkers, for we were both bound to Falmouth "for orders," and the *Rickmers* would probably sail three days after we had gone.

“Vat ’bout dot bett you make mit me, Cabtin?” said Schenke. “Dot is all recht, no?”

“Oh, yess,” answered the old man, but without enthusiasm. “That stands.”

Page 132

"Hoo! Hoo! Hoo! Tventig dollars to feefty—dot you goes home quicker as me, no?" Schencke turned to the other men. "Vat you tinks, yenthelmen? Ah tinks Ah sbend der tventig dollars now—so sure Ah vass."

The others laughed. "Man, man," said Findlayson of the *Rhondda*. "You don't tell me Burke's been fool enough to take that bet. Hoo! You haven't the ghost of a chance, Burke."

"Och, ye never know," said the now doleful sportsman. "Ye never know ye're luck."

"Look here, Cabtin," said Schencke (good-humoured by the unspoken tribute to his vessel's sailing powers)—"Ah gif you a chanst. Ah make de bett dis vay—look. Ve goes to Falmouth—you *und* me, *hein*? Now, de first who comes on de shore vins de money. Dot vill gif you t'ree days' start, no?"

"That's more like it," said the other captains. "I wish you luck, Burke," said Findlayson. "Good luck—you'll need it too—if you are to be home before the big German."

So the bet was made.

At daybreak next morning we put out to sea. The good luck that the *Rhondda* wished us came our way from the very first. When the tug left us we set sail to a fine fair wind, and soon were bowling along in style. We found the nor'-east Trades with little seeking; strong Trades, too, that lifted us to the Line almost before the harbour dust was blown from our masts and spars. There calms fell on us for a few days, but we drifted south in the right current, and in less than forty days had run into the "westerlies" and were bearing away for the Horn.

Old Burke was "cracking on" for all the *Hilda* could carry canvas. Every morning when he came on deck the first question to the mate would be: "Any ships in sight, mister?" . . . "Any ships astern," he meant, for his first glance was always to where the big green four-master might be expected to heave in sight. Then, when nothing was reported, he would begin his day-long strut up and down the poop, whistling "Garryowen" and rubbing his hands.

Nor was the joy at our good progress his alone. We in the half-deck knew of the bet, and were keen that the ship which carried the Merchants' Cup should not be overhauled by the runner-up! We had made a fetish of the trophy so hardly won. The Cup itself was safely stowed in the ship's strong chest, but the old man had let us have custody of the flag. Big Jones had particular charge of it; and it had been a custom while in 'Frisco to exhibit it on the Saturday nights to admiring and envious friends from other ships. This custom we continued when at sea. True, there were no visitors to set us up and swear what lusty chaps we were, but we could frank one another and say, "If you hadn't done this or that, we would never have won the race."

Page 133

On a breezy Saturday evening we were busy at these rites. The *Hilda* was doing well before a steady nor'-west wind, but the weather—though nothing misty—was dark as a pall. Thick clouds overcast the sky, and there seemed no dividing line between the darkling sea and the windy banks that shrouded the horizon. A dirty night was in prospect; the weather would thicken later; but that made the modest comforts of the half-deck seem more inviting by comparison; and we came together for our weekly “sing-song”—all but Gregson, whose turn it was to stand the lookout on the fo’c’sle-head.

The flag was brought out and hung up—Jones standing by to see that no pipe-lights were brought near—and we ranted at “Ye Mariners of England” till the mate sent word that further din would mean a “work-up” job for all of us.

Little we thought that we mariners would soon be facing dangers as great as any we so glibly sang about. Even as we sang, the *Hilda* was speeding on a fatal course! Across her track the almost submerged hull of a derelict lay drifting. Black night veiled the danger from the keenest eyes.

A frenzied order from the poop put a stunning period to our merriment. “Helm up, f'r God's sake! . . . *Up!*—*oh God!*—*Up! Up!*” A furious impact dashed us to the deck. Staggering, bruised, and bleeding, we struggled to our feet. Outside the yells of fear-stricken men mingled with hoarse orders, the crash of spars hurtling from aloft vied with the thunder of canvas, as the doomed barque swung round broadside to the wind and sea.

Even in that dread moment Jones had heed of his precious flag. As we flew to the door, he tore the flag down, stuffing it in his jumper as he joined us at the boats.

There was no time to hoist out the life-boats—it was pinnace and gig or nothing. Already the bows were low in the water. “She goes. She goes!” yelled some one. “Oh, Christ! She’s going!”

We bore frantically on the tackles that linked the gig, swung her out, and lowered by the run; the mate had the pinnace in the water, men were swarming into her. As the gig struck water, the barque heeled to the rail awash. We crowded in, old Burke the last to leave her, and pushed off. Our once stately *Hilda* reeled in a swirl of broken water, and the deep sea took her!

Sailor work! No more than ten minutes between “Ye Mariners” and the foundering of our barque!

We lay awhile with hearts too full for words; then the pinnace drew near, and the mate called the men. All there but one! “Gregson!” . . . No Gregson! The bosun knew. He had seen what was Gregson lying still under the wreck of the topmost spars.



The captain and mate conferred long together. We had no sail in the gig, but the larger boat was fully equipped. "It's the only chance, mister," said Burke at last. "No food—no water! We can't hold out for long. Get sail on your boat and stand an hour or two to the east'ard. Ye may fall in with a ship; she w'was right in th' track whin she s-struck. We can but lie to in th' gig an' pray that a ship comes by."

Page 134

"Aye, aye, sir." They stepped the mast and hoisted sail. "Good-bye all: God bless ye, captain," they said as the canvas swelled. "Keep heart!" For a time we heard their voices shouting us God-speed—then silence came!

V

Daybreak!

Thank God the bitter night was past. Out of the east the long-looked-for light grew on us, as we lay to sea-anchor, lurching unsteadily in the teeth of wind and driving rain. At the first grey break we scanned the now misty horizon. There was no sign of the pinnacle; no God-sent sail in all the dreary round!

We crouched on the bottom boards of the little gig and gave way to gloomy thoughts. What else could be when we were alone and adrift on the broad Pacific, without food or water, in a tiny gig already perilously deep with the burden of eight of us? What a difference to the gay day when we manned the same little boat and set out in pride to the contest! Here was the same spare oar that we held up to the judges—the long oar that Jones was now swaying over the stern, keeping her head to the wind and sea! Out there in the tumbling water the sea-anchor held its place; the ten fathoms of good hemp "painter" was straining at the bows!

The same boat! The same gear! The same crew, but how different! A crew of bent heads and wearied limbs! Listless-eyed, despairing! A ghastly crew, with black care riding in the heaving boat with us!

Poor old Burke had hardly spoken since his last order to the mate to sail the pinnacle to the east in search of help. When anything was put to him, he would say, "Aye, aye, b'ye," and take no further heed. He was utterly crushed by the disaster that had come so suddenly on the heels of his "good luck." He sat staring stonily ahead, deaf to our hopes and fears.

Water we had in plenty as the day wore on. The rain-soaked clothes of us were sufficient for the time, but soon hunger came and added a physical pain to the torture of our doubt. Again and again we stood up on the reeling thwarts and looked wildly around the sea-line. No pinnacle—no ship—nothing! Nothing, only sea and sky, and circling sea-birds that came to mock at our misery with their plaintive cries.

A bitter night! A no less cruel day! Dark came on us again, chill and windy, and the salt spray cutting at us like a whiplash.

Boo-m-m!

Big Jones stood up in the stern-sheets, swaying unsteadily. “D’ye hear anything there? . . . Like a gun?”

A gun? Gun? . . . Nothing new! . . . We had been hearing guns, seeing sails—in our minds—all the day! All day . . . guns . . . and sail! Boom-m-m-m!

“Gun! Oh God . . . a gun! Capt’n, a gun, d’ye hear! Hay—Hay-H. Out oars, there! A gun!” Hoarse in excitement Jones shook the old man and called at his ear. “Aye, aye, b’ye. Aye, aye,” said the broken old man, seeming without understanding.

Page 135

Jones ceased trying to rouse him, and, running out the steering oar, called on us to haul the sea-anchor aboard. We lay to our oars, listening for a further gunfire.

Whooo-o. . . . Boom-m-m.

A rocket! They were looking for us then! The pinnacle must have been picked up! A cheer—what a cheer!—came brokenly from our lips; and we lashed furiously at the oars, steering to where a glare in the mist had come with the last report.

Roused by the thrash of our oars, the old man sat up. “Whatt now, b’ye? Whatt now?”

“Ship firin’ rockets, sir,” said Jones. “Rockets . . . no mistake.” As he spoke, another coloured streamer went flaming through the eastern sky. “Give way, there! We’ll miss her if she’s running south! Give way, all!” The glare of the rocket put heart into our broken old skipper. “Steady now, b’yes,” he said, with something of his old enthusiasm.

We laboured steadily at the oars, but our strength was gone. The sea too, that we had thought moderate when lying to sea-anchor, came at us broadside on and set our light boat to a furious dance. Wave crests broke and lashed aboard, the reeling boat was soon awash, and the spare men had to bale frantically to keep her afloat. But terror of the ship running south from us nerved our wearied arms, and we kept doggedly swinging the oars. Soon we made out the vessel’s sidelight—the gleam of her starboard light, that showed that she was hauled to the wind, not running south as we had feared. They could not see on such a night, we had nothing to make a signal, but the faint green flame gave us heart in our distress.

The old man, himself again, was now steering, giving us Big Jones to bear at the oars. As we drew on we made out the loom of the vessel’s sails—a big ship under topsails only, and sailing slowly to the west. We pulled down wind to cross her course, shouting together as we rowed. Would they never hear? . . . Again! . . . Again!

Suddenly there came a hail from the ship, a roar of orders, rattle of blocks and gear, the yards swung round and she layed up in the wind, while the ghostly glare of a blue light lit up the sea around.

A crowd of men were gathered at the waist, now shouting and cheering as we laboured painfully into the circle of vivid light. Among them a big man (huge he looked in that uncanny glare) roared encouragement in hoarse gutturals.

Old Schenke? The *Hedwig Rickmers*?

Aye—Schenke! But a different Schenke to the big, blustering, overbearing “Square-head” we had known in ‘Frisco. Schenke as kind as a brother—a brother of the sea indeed. Big, fat, honest Schenke, passing his huge arm through that of our broken old skipper, leading him aft to his own bed, and silencing his faltering story by words of

cheer. “*Ach, du lieber Gott!* It is all right, no? All right, Cabtin, now you come on board. Ah know all 'bout it! . . . Ah pick de oder boat up in de morning, und dey tells me. You come af mit me, Cabtin. . . . Goot, no?”

Page 136

* * * * *

"Ninety-six days, Schenke, and here we are at the mouth of the Channel!" Old Burke had a note of regret in the saying. "Ninety-six days! Sure, this ship o' yours can sail. With a bit o' luck, now, ye'll be in Falmouth under the hundred."

"So. If de vind holds goot. Oh, de *Hedwig Rickmers* is a goot sheep, no? But if Ah dond't get de crew of de poor lettle *Hilda* to work mein sheep, Ah dond't t'ink ve comes home so quick as hundert days, no?"

"God bless us, man. Shure, it's the least they cud do, now. An' you kaaping' us in food an' drink an' clothes, bedad—all the time."

"Vat Ah do, Cabtin. Ah leaf you starfe, no?"

"Oh. Some men would have put into the Falklands and landed——"

"Und spoil a goot bassage, eh? Ach nein. More better to go on. You know dese men Ah get in 'Frisco is no goot. Dem "hoodlums," they dond't know de sailorman vork. But your beoble is all recht, eh! Gott! If Ah dond't haf dem here, it is small sail ve can carry on de sheep."

"Och, now, ye just say that, Schenke, ye just say that! But it's glad I am if we're any use t' ye."

"Hundert days to Falmouth, eh?" Schenke grinned as he said it. "Vat 'bout dot bett now, Cabtin?"

"Oh that," said Burke queerly. "You win, of course. I'm not quite broke yet, Captain Schenke. I'll pay the twenty dollars all right."

"No, no. De bett is not von. No? De bett vass—'who is de first on shore come,' *Heim*? Goot. Ven de sheep comes to Falmouth ve goes on shore, you und me, together. Like dis, eh?" He seized Burke by the arm and made a motion that they two should thus step out together.

Burke, shamefacedly, said: "Aye, aye, b'ye."

"Ah dond't care about de bett," continued the big German. "De bett is noting, but, look here, Cabtin—Ah tell you Ah look to vin dot Merchants' Cup. *Gott!* Ah vass *verrickt* ven your boys come in first. Ach so! Und now de Cup iss at de bottom of de Pacific." He sighed regretfully. "*Gott!* I van't t' be de first Sherman to vin dot Cup too!"

The mate of the *Rickmers* came on the poop and said something to his captain. Schenke turned to the old man in some wonderment. . . . “Vat dis is, eh? My mate tell me dot your boys is want to speak mit me. Vat it is, Cabtin? No troubles I hope?”

Burke looked as surprised as the other. “Send them up, Heinrich,” he said. We, the crew of the *Hilda’s* gig, filed on to the poop, looking as hot and uncomfortable as proper sailorfolk should do when they come on a deputation. Jones headed us, and he carried a parcel under his arm.

“Captain Schenke,” he said. “We are all here—the crew of the *Hilda’s* gig, that you picked up when—when—we were in a bad way. All here but poor Gregson.”

Page 137

The big lad's voice broke as he spoke of his lost watchmate. "An, if he was here he would want t' thank ye too for the way you've done by us. I can't say any more, Captain Schenke—but we want you to take a small present from us—the crew of the *Hilda's* gig." He held out the parcel.

Only half understanding the lad's broken words, Schenke took the parcel and opened it. "*Ach Gott Lieber Gott*," he said, and turned to show the gift to old Burke. Tears stood in the big "squarehead's" eyes; stood, and rolled unchecked down his fat cheeks. Tears of pleasure! Tears of pity! Stretched between his hands was a weather-beaten flag, its white emblem stained and begrimed by sea-water!

A tattered square of blue silk—the flag of the Merchants' Cup!

A STORM AND A RESCUE

From "The Wreck of the Grosvenor" BY W. CLARK RUSSELL

All that night it blew terribly hard, and raised as wild and raging a sea as ever I remember hearing or seeing described. During my watch—that is, from midnight until four o'clock—the wind veered a couple of points, but had gone back again only to blow harder; just as though it had stepped out of its way a trifle to catch extra breath.

I was quite worn out by the time my turn came to go below; and though the vessel was groaning like a live creature in its death agonies, and the seas thumping against her with such shocks as kept me thinking that she was striking hard ground, I fell asleep as soon as my head touched the pillow, and never moved until routed out by Duckling four hours afterward.

All this time the gale had not bated a jot of its violence, and the ship labored so heavily that I had the utmost difficulty in getting out of the cuddy on to the poop. When I say that the decks fore and aft were streaming wet, I convey no notion of the truth: the main deck was simply *afloat*, and every time the ship rolled, the water on her deck rushed in a wave against the bulwarks and shot high in the air, to mingle sometimes with fresh and heavy inroads of the sea, both falling back upon the deck with the boom of a gun.

I had already ascertained from Duckling that the well had been sounded and the ship found dry; and therefore, since we were tight below, it mattered little what water was shipped above, as the hatches were securely battened down fore and aft, and the mast-coats unwrung. But still she labored under the serious disadvantage of being overloaded; and the result was, her fore parts were being incessantly swept by seas which at times completely hid her fore-castle in spray.

Page 138

Shortly after breakfast, Captain Coxon sent me forward to dispatch a couple of hands on to the jib-boom to snug the inner jib, which looked to be rather shakily stowed. I managed to dodge the water on the main-deck by waiting until it rolled to the starboard scuppers and then cutting ahead as fast as I could; but just as I got upon the forecandle, I was saluted by a green sea which carried me off my legs, and would have swept me down on the main-deck had I not held on stoutly with both hands to one of the fore-shrouds. The water nearly drowned me, and kept me sneezing and coughing for ten minutes afterward. But it did me no further mischief; for I was incased in good oilskins and sou'-wester, which kept me as dry as a bone inside.

Two ordinary seamen got upon the jib-boom, and I bade them keep a good hold, for the ship sometimes danced her figurehead under water and buried her sprit-sail-yard; and when she sunk her stern, her flying jib-boom stood up like the mizzenmast. I waited until this job of snugging the sail was finished, and then made haste to get off the forecandle, where the seas flew so continuously and heavily that had I not kept a sharp lookout, I should several times have been knocked overboard.

Partly out of curiosity and partly with a wish to hearten the men, I looked into the forecandle before going aft. There were sliding-doors let into the entrance on either side the windlass, but one of them was kept half open to admit air, the forecandle above being closed. The darkness here was made visible by an oil lamp,—in shape resembling a tin coffee-pot with a wick in the spout,—which burned black and smokily. The deck was up to my ankles in water, which gurgled over the pile of swabs that lay at the open entrance. It took my eye some moments to distinguish objects in the gloom; and then by degrees the strange interior was revealed. A number of hammocks were swung against the upper deck and around the forecandle were two rows of bunks, one atop the other. Here and there were sea-chests lashed to the deck; and these, with the huge windlass, a range of chain cable, lengths of rope, odds and ends of pots and dishes, with here a pair of breeches hanging from a hammock, and there a row of oilskins swinging from a beam,—pretty well made up all the furniture that met my eye.

The whole of the crew were below. Some of the men lay smoking in their bunks, others in their hammocks with their boots over the edge; one was patching a coat, another greasing his boots; others were seated in a group talking; while under the lamp were a couple of men playing at cards upon a chest, three or four watching and holding on by the hammocks over their heads.

A man, lying in his bunk with his face toward me, started up and sent his legs, incased in blanket trousers and brown woolen stockings, flying out.

“Here’s Mr. Royle, mates!” he called out. “Let’s ask him the name of the port the captain means to touch at for proper food, for we aren’t goin’ to wait much longer.”

Page 139

"Don't ask me any questions of that kind, my lads," I replied promptly, seeing a general movement of heads in the bunks and hammocks. "I'd give you proper victuals if I had the ordering of them; and I have spoken to Captain Coxon about you, and I am sure he will see this matter put to rights."

I had difficulty in making my voice heard, for the striking of the seas against the ship's bows filled the place with an overwhelming volume of sound; and the hollow, deafening thunder was increased by the uproar of the ship's straining timbers.

"Who the devil thinks," said a voice from a hammock, "that we're going to let ourselves be grinded as we was last night without proper wittles to support us? I'd rather have signed articles for a coal-barge, with drowned rats to eat from Gravesend to Whitstable, than shipped in this here cursed vessel, where the bread's just fit to make savages retch!"

I had not bargained for this, but had merely meant to address them cheerily, with a few words of approval of the smart way in which they had worked the ship in the night. Seeing that my presence would do no good, I turned about and left the forecastle, hearing, as I came away, one of the Dutchmen cry out:—

"Look here, Mister Rile, vill you be pleased to ssay when we are to hov' something to eat?—for by Gott! ve vill kill te dom pigs in the long-boat if the skipper don't mindt—so look out!"

As ill-luck would have it, Captain Coxon was at the break of the poop, and saw me come out of the forecastle. He waited until he had got me alongside of him, when he asked me what I was doing among the men.

"I looked in to give them a good word for the work they did last night," I answered.

"And who asked you to give them a good word, as you call it?"

"I have never had to wait for orders to encourage a crew."

"Mind what you are about, sir!" he exclaimed, in a voice tremulous with rage. "I see through your game, and I'll put a stopper upon it that you won't like."

"What game, sir? Let me have your meaning."

"An infernal mutinous game!" he roared. "Don't talk to me, sir! I know you! I've had my eye upon you! You'll play false if you can, and are trying to smother up your d—d rebel meanings with genteel airs! Get away, sir!" he bellowed, stamping his foot. "Get away aft! You're a lumping useless incumbrance! But by thunder! I'll give you two for every one you try to give me! So stand by!"

And apparently half mad with his rage, he staggered away in the very direction in which he had told me to go, and stood near the wheel, glaring upon me with a white face, which looked indescribably malevolent in the fur cap and ear-protectors that ornamented it.

Page 140

I was terribly vexed by this rudeness, which I was powerless to resist, and regretted my indiscretion in entering the forecastle after the politic resolutions I had formed. However, Captain Coxon's ferocity was nothing new to me; truly I believed he was not quite right in his mind, and expected, as in former cases, that he would come round a bit by-and-by when his insane temper had passed. Still his insinuations were highly dangerous, not to speak of their offensiveness. It was no joke to be charged, even by a madman, with striving to arouse the crew to mutiny. Nevertheless I tried to console myself as best I could by reflecting that he could not prove his charges; that I need only to endure his insolence for a few weeks, and that there was always a law to vindicate me and punish him, should his evil temper betray him into any acts of cruelty against me.

The gale, at times the severest that I was ever in, lasted three days; during which the ship drove something like eighty miles to the northwest. The sea on the afternoon of the third day was appalling: had the ship attempted to run, she would have been pooped and smothered in a minute; but lying close, she rode fairly well, though there were moments when I held my breath as she sunk in a hollow like a coal-mine, filled with the astounding noise of boiling water,—really believing that the immense waves which came hurtling towards us with solid, sharp, transparent ridges, out of which the wind tore lumps of water and flung them through the rigging of the ship, must overwhelm the vessel before she could rise to it.

The fury of the tempest and the violence of the sea, which the boldest could not contemplate without feeling that the ship was every moment in more or less peril, kept the crew subdued; and they eat as best they could the provisions, without complaint. However, it needed nothing less than a storm to keep them quiet: for on the second day a sea extinguished the galley fire, and until the gale abated no cooking could be done; so that the men had to put up with cold water and biscuit. Hence all hands were thrown upon the ship's bread for two days; and the badness of it, therefore, was made even more apparent than heretofore, when its wormy moldiness was in some degree qualified by the nauseousness of bad salt pork and beef and the sickly flavor of damaged tea.

As I had anticipated, the captain came round a little a few hours after his insulting attack upon me. I think his temper frightened him when it had reference to me. Like others of his breed, he was a bit of a cur at the bottom. My character was a trifle beyond him; and he was ignorant enough to hate and fear what he could not understand. Be this as it may, he made some rough attempts at a rude kind of politeness when I went below to get some grog, and condescended to say that when I had been to sea as long as he, I would know that the most ungrateful rascals in the world were sailors; that every crew he had sailed with had always taken care to invent some grievance to growl over: either the provisions were bad, or the work too heavy, or the ship unseaworthy; and that long ago he had made up his mind never to pay attention to their complaints, since no

sooner would one wrong be redressed than another would be coined and shoved under his nose.

Page 141

I took this opportunity of assuring him that I had never willingly listened to the complaints of the men, and that I was always annoyed when they spoke to me about the provisions, as I had nothing whatever to do with that matter; and that so far from my wishing to stir up the men into rebellion, my conduct had been uniformly influenced by the desire to conciliate them and represent their conditions as very tolerable, so as to repress any tendency to disaffection which they might foment among themselves.

To this he made no reply, and soon we parted; but all the next day he was sullen again, and never addressed me save to give an order.

On the evening of the third day the gale broke; the glass had risen since the morning; but until the first dogwatch the wind did not bate one iota of its violence, and the horizon still retained its stormy and threatening aspect. The clouds then broke in the west, and the setting sun shone forth with deep crimson light upon the wilderness of mountainous waters. The wind fell quickly, then went round to the west and blew freshly; but there was a remarkable softness and sweetness in the feel and taste of it.

A couple of reefs were at once shaken out of the main-topsail, and a sail made. By midnight the heavy sea had subsided into a deep, long, rolling swell, still (strangely enough) coming from the south; but the fresh westerly wind held the ship steady, and for the first time for nearly a hundred hours we were able to move about the decks with comparative comfort. Early the next morning the watch were set to wash down and clear up the decks; and when I left my cabin at eight o'clock, I found the weather bright and warm, with a blue sky shining among heavy, white, April-looking clouds, and the ship making seven knots under all plain sail. The decks were dry and comfortable, and the ship had a habitable and civilized look, by reason of the row of clothes hung by the seamen to dry on the forecastle.

It was half past nine o'clock, and I was standing near the taffrail looking at a shoal of porpoises playing some hundreds of feet astern, when the man who was steering asked me to look in the direction to which he pointed—that was, a little to the right of the bowsprit—and say if there was anything to be seen there; for he had caught sight of something black upon the horizon twice, but could not detect it now.

I turned my eyes toward the quarter of the sea indicated, but could discern nothing whatever; and telling him that what he had seen was probably a wave, which, standing higher than his fellows, will sometimes show black a long distance off, walked to the fore part of the poop.

The breeze still held good; and the vessel was slipping easily through the water, though the southerly swell made her roll and at times shook the wind out of the sails. The skipper had gone to lie down,—being pretty well exhausted, I daresay; for he had kept the deck for the greater part of three nights running. Duckling was also below. Most of my watch were on the forecastle, sitting or lying in the sun, which shone very warm

upon the decks; the hens under the long-boat were chattering briskly, and the cocks crowing, and the pigs grunting, with the comfort of the warmth.

Page 142

Suddenly, as the ship rose, I distinctly beheld something black out away upon the horizon, showing just under the foot of the foresail. It vanished instantly; but I was not satisfied, and went for the glass which lay upon the brackets just under the companion. I then told the man who was steering to keep her away a couple of points for a few moments; and resting the glass against the mizzen-royal backstay, pointed it toward the place where I had seen the black object.

For some moments nothing but sea or sky filled the field of the glass as the ship rose and fell; but all at once there leaped into this field the hull of a ship, deep as her main-chains in the water, which came and went before my eye as the long seas lifted or dropped in the foreground. I managed to keep her sufficiently long in view to perceive that she was totally dismantled.

"It's a wreck," said I, turning to the man: "let her come to again and luff a point. There may be living creatures aboard of her."

Knowing what sort of man Captain Coxon was, I do not think that I should have had the hardihood to luff the ship a point out of her course had it involved the bracing of the yards; for the songs of the men would certainly have brought him on deck, and I might have provoked some ugly insolence. But the ship was going free, and would head more westerly without occasioning further change than slightly slackening the weather-braces of the upper yards. This I did quietly; and the dismantled hull was brought right dead on end with our flying jib-boom. The men now caught sight of her, and began to stare and point; but did not sing out, as they saw by the telescope in my hand that I perceived her. The breeze unhappily began to slacken somewhat, owing perhaps to the gathering heat of the sun; our pace fell off: and a full hour passed before we brought the wreck near enough to see her permanently,—for up to this she had been constantly vanishing under the rise of the swell. She was now about two miles off, and I took a long and steady look at her through the telescope. It was a black hull with painted ports. The deck was flush fore and aft, and there was a good-sized house just before where the mainmast should have been. This house was uninjured, though the galley was split up, and to starboard stood up in splinters like the stump of a tree struck by lightning. No boats could be seen aboard of her. Her jib-boom was gone, and so were all three masts,—clean cut off at the deck, as though a hand-saw had done it; but the mizzenmast was alongside, held by the shrouds and backstays, and the port main and fore shrouds streamed like serpents from her chains into the water. I reckoned at once that she must be loaded with timber, for she never could keep afloat at that depth with any other kind of cargo in her.

She made a most mournful and piteous object in the sunlight, sluggishly rolling to the swell which ran in transparent volumes over her sides and foamed around the deck-house. Once when her stern rose, I read the name *Cecilia* in broad white letters.

Page 143

I was gazing intently, in the effort to witness some indication of living thing on board, when, to my mingled consternation and horror, I witnessed an arm projecting through the window of the deck-house and frantically waving what resembled a white handkerchief. As none of the men called out, I judged the signal was not perceptible to the naked eye; and in my excitement I shouted, "There's a living man on board of her, my lads!" dropped the glass, and ran aft to call the captain.

I met him coming up the companion ladder. The first thing he said was, "You're out of your course," and looked up at the sails.

"There's a wreck yonder," I cried, pointing eagerly, "with a man on board signaling to us."

"Get me the glass," he said sulkily; and I picked it up and handed it to him.

He looked at the wreck for some moments; and addressing the man at the wheel, exclaimed, making a movement with his hand, "Keep her away! Where in the devil are you steering to?"

"Good heaven!" I ejaculated: "there's a man on board—there may be others!"

"Damnation!" he exclaimed between his teeth: "what do you mean by interfering with me? Keep her away!" he roared out.

During this time we had drawn sufficiently near to the wreck to enable the sharper-sighted among the hands to remark the signal, and they were calling out that there was somebody flying a handkerchief aboard the hull.

"Captain Coxon," said I, with as firm a voice as I could command,—for I was nearly in as great a rage as he, and rendered insensible to all consequences by his inhumanity,—“if you bear away and leave that man yonder to sink with that wreck when he can be saved with very little trouble, you will become as much a murderer as any ruffian who stabs a man asleep.”

When I had said this, Coxon turned black in the face with passion. His eyes protruded, his hands and fingers worked as though he were under some electrical process, and I saw for the first time in my life a sight I had always laughed at as a bit of impossible novelist description,—a mouth foaming with rage. He rushed aft, just over Duckling's cabin, and stamped with all his might.

"Now," thought I, "they may try to murder me!" And without a word I pulled off my coat, seized a belaying-pin, and stood ready; resolved that happen what might, I would give the first man who should lay his fingers on me something to remember me by while he had breath in his body.

The men, not quite understanding what was happening, but seeing that a “row” was taking place, came to the fore-castle and advanced by degrees along the main-deck. Among them I noticed the cook, muttering to one or the other who stood near.

Mr. Duckling, awakened by the violent clattering over his head, came running up the companion-way with a bewildered, sleepy look in his face. The captain grasped him by the arm, and pointing to me, cried out with an oath that “that villain was breeding a mutiny on board, and he believed wanted to murder him and Duckling.”

Page 144

I at once answered, "Nothing of the kind! There is a man miserably perishing on board that sinking wreck, Mr. Duckling, and he ought to be saved. My lads!" I cried, addressing the men on the main-deck, "is there a sailor among you all who would have the heart to leave that man yonder without an effort to rescue him?"

"No, sir!" shouted one of them. "We'll save the man; and if the skipper refuses, we'll make him!"

"Luff!" I called to the man at the wheel.

"Luff at your peril!" screamed the skipper.

"Aft here, some hands," I cried, "and lay the mainyard aback. Let go the port main-braces!"

The captain came running toward me.

"By the living God!" I cried in a fury, grasping the heavy brass belaying-pin, "if you come within a foot of me, Captain Coxon, I'll dash your brains out!"

My attitude, my enraged face and menacing gesture, produced the desired effect. He stopped dead, turned a ghastly white, and looked round at Duckling.

"What do you mean by this (etc.) conduct, you (etc.) mutinous scoundrels?" roared Duckling, with a volley of foul language.

"Give him one for himself if he says too much, Mr. Royle!" sung out some hoarse voice on the main-deck; "we'll back yer!" And then came cries of "They're a cursed pair o' murderers!" "Who run the smack down?" "Who lets men drown?" "Who starves honest men?" This last exclamation was followed by a roar.

The whole of the crew were now on deck, having been aroused by our voices. Some of them were looking on with a grin, others with an expression of fierce curiosity. It was at once understood that I was making a stand against the captain and chief mate; and a single glance at them assured me that by one word I could set the whole of them on fire to do my bidding, even to shedding blood.

In the meantime, the man at the wheel had luffed until the weather leeches were flat and the ship scarcely moving. And at this moment, that the skipper might know their meaning, a couple of hands jumped aft and let go the weather main-braces. I took care to keep my eyes on Coxon and the mate, fully prepared for any attack that one or both might make on me. Duckling eyed me furiously but in silence, evidently baffled by my resolute air and the position of the men. Then he said something to the captain, who looked exhausted and white and haggard with his useless passion. They walked over

to the lee side of the poop; and after a short conference, the captain to my surprise went below, and Duckling came forward.

“There’s no objection,” he said, “to your saving the man’s life, if you want. Lower away the starboard quarter-boat,—and you go along in her,” he added to me, uttering the last words in such a thick voice that I thought he was choking.

“Come along, some of you!” I cried out, hastily putting on my coat; and in less than a minute I was in the boat with the rudder and thole-pins shipped, and four hands ready to out oars as soon as we touched the water.

Page 145

Duckling began to fumble at one end of the boat's falls.

"Don't let him lower away!" roared out one of the men in the boat. "He'll let us go with a run. He'd like to see us drowned!"

Duckling fell back, scowling with fury; and shoving his head over as the boat sunk quietly into the water, he discharged a volley of execrations at us, saying that he would shoot some of us, if he swung for it, before he was done, and especially applying a heap of abusive terms to me.

The fellow pulling the bow oar laughed in his face; and another shouted out, "We'll teach you to say your prayers yet, you ugly old sinner!"

We got away from the ship's side cleverly, and in a short time were rowing fast for the wreck. The excitement under which I labored made me reckless of the issue of this adventure. The sight of the lonely man upon the wreck, coupled with the unmanly, brutal intention of Coxon to leave him to his fate, had goaded me into a state of mind infuriate enough to have done and dared anything to *compel* Coxon to save him. He might call it mutiny, but I called it humanity; and I was prepared to stand or fall by my theory. The hate the crew had for their captain and chief mate was quite strong enough to guarantee me against any foul play on the part of Coxon; otherwise I might have prepared myself to see the ship fill and stand away, and leave us alone on the sea with the wreck. One of the men in the boat suggested this; but another immediately answered, "They'd pitch the skipper overboard if he gave such an order, and glad o' the chance. There's no love for 'em among us, I can tell you; and by ——! there'll be bloody work done aboard the *Grosvenor* if things aren't mended soon, as you'll see."

They all four pulled at their oars savagely as these words were spoken; and I never saw such sullen and ferocious expressions on men's faces as came into theirs, as they fixed their eyes as with one accord upon the ship. *She*, deep as she was, looked a beautiful model on the mighty surface of the water, rolling with marvelous grace to the swell, the strength and volume of which made me feel my littleness and weakness as it lifted the small boat with irresistible power. There was wind enough to keep her sails full upon her graceful, slender masts, and the brass-work upon her deck flashed brilliantly as she rolled from side to side.

Strange contrast, to look from her to the broken and desolate picture ahead! My eyes were riveted upon it now with new and intense emotion, for by this time I could discern that the person who was waving to us was a female,—woman or girl I could not yet make out,—and that her hair was like a veil of gold behind her swaying arm.

"It's a woman!" I cried in my excitement; "it's no man at all. Pull smartly, my lads! pull smartly, for God's sake!"

Page 146

The men gave way stoutly, and the swell favoring us, we were soon close to the wreck. The girl, as I now perceived she was, waved her handkerchief wildly as we approached; but my attention was occupied in considering how we could best board the wreck without injury to the boat. She lay broadside to us, with her stern on our right, and was not only rolling heavily with wallowing, squelching movements, but was swirling the heavy mizzenmast that lay alongside through the water each time she went over to starboard; so that it was necessary to approach her with the greatest caution to prevent our boat from being stove in. Another element of danger was the great flood of water which she took in over her shattered bulwarks, first on this side, then on that, discharging the torrent again into the sea as she rolled. This water came from her like a cataract, and in a second would fill and sink the boat, unless extreme care were taken to keep clear of it.

I waved my hat to the poor girl, to let her know that we saw her and had come to save her, and steered the boat right around the wreck, that I might observe the most practical point for boarding her.

She appeared to be a vessel of about seven hundred tons. The falling of her masts had crushed her port bulwarks level with the deck, and part of her starboard bulwarks was also smashed to pieces. Her wheel was gone, and the heavy seas that had swept her deck had carried away capstans, binnacle, hatchway gratings, pumps—everything, in short, but the deck-house and the remnants of the galley. I particularly noticed a strong iron boat's-davit twisted up like a corkscrew. She was full of water, and lay as deep as her main-chains; but her bows stood high, and her fore-chains were out of the sea. It was miraculous to see her keep afloat as the long swell rolled over her in a cruel, foaming succession of waves.

Though these plain details impressed themselves upon my memory, I did not seem to notice anything, in the anxiety that possessed me to rescue the lonely creature in the deck-house. It would have been impossible to keep a footing upon the main-deck without a life-line or something to hold on by; and seeing this, and forming my resolutions rapidly, I ordered the man in the bow of the boat to throw in his oar and exchange places with me, and head the boat for the starboard port-chains. As we approached I stood up with one foot planted on the gunwale ready to spring; the broken shrouds were streaming aft and alongside, so that if I missed the jump and fell into the water there was plenty of stuff to catch hold of.

"Gently—'vast rowing—ready to back astern smartly!" I cried as we approached. I waited a moment: the hull rolled toward us, and the succeeding swell threw up our boat; the deck, though all aslant, was on a line with my feet. I sprung with all my strength, and got well upon the deck, but fell heavily as I reached it. However, I was up again in a moment, and ran forward out of the water.

Page 147

Here was a heap of gear—stay-sail, and jib-halyards, and other ropes, some of the ends swarming overboard. I hauled in one of these ends, but found I could not clear the raffle; but looking round, I perceived a couple of coils of line—spare stun'-sail tacks or halyards I took them to be—lying close against the foot of the bowsprit. I immediately seized the end of one of these coils, and flung it into the boat, telling them to drop clear of the wreck astern; and when they found they had backed as far as the length of the line permitted, I bent on the end of the other coil, and paid that out until the boat was some fathoms astern. I then made my end fast, and sung out to one of the men to get on board by the starboard mizzen-chains, and to bring the end of the line with him. After waiting a few minutes, the boat being hidden, I saw the fellow come scrambling over the side with a red face, his clothes and hair streaming, he having fallen overboard. He shook himself like a dog, and crawled with the line, on his hands and knees, a short distance forward, then hauled the line taut and made it fast.

"Tell them to bring the boat round here," I cried, "and lay off on their oars until we are ready. And you get hold of this line and work yourself up to me."

Saying which, I advanced along the deck, clinging tightly with both hands. It very providentially happened that the door of the deck-house faced the forecastle within a few feet of where the remains of the galley stood. There would be, therefore, less risk in opening it than had it faced beamwise: for the water, as it broke against the sides of the house, disparted clear of the fore and after parts; that is, the great bulk of it ran clear, though of course a foot's depth of it as least surged against the door.

I called out to the girl to open the door quickly, as it slid in grooves like a panel, and was not to be stirred from the outside. The poor creature appeared mad; and I repeated my request three times without inducing her to leave the window. Then, not believing that she understood me, I cried out, "Are you English?"

"Yes," she replied. "For God's sake, save us!"

"I cannot get you through that window," I exclaimed. "Rouse yourself and open that door, and I will save you."

She now seemed to comprehend, and drew in her head. By this time the man out of the boat had succeeded in sliding along the rope to where I stood, though the poor devil was nearly drowned on the road; for when about half-way, the hull took in a lump of swell which swept him right off his legs, and he was swung hard a-starboard, holding on for his life. However, he recovered himself smartly when the water was gone, and came along hand over fist, snorting and cursing in wonderful style.

Meanwhile, though I kept a firm hold of the life-line, I took care to stand where the inroads of water were not heavy, waiting impatiently for the door to open. It shook in the

grooves, tried by a feeble hand; then a desperate effort was made, and it slid a couple of inches.

Page 148

"That will do!" I shouted. "Now then, my lad, catch hold of me with one hand, and the line with the other."

The fellow took a firm grip of my monkey-jacket, and I made for the door. The water washed up to my knees, but I soon inserted my fingers in the crevice of the door and thrust it open.

The house was a single compartment, though I had expected to find it divided into two. In the centre was a table that traveled on stanchions from the roof to the deck, On either side were a couple of bunks. The girl stood near the door. In a bunk to the left of the door lay an old man with white hair. Prostrate on his back, on the deck, with his arms stretched against his ears, was the corpse of a man, well dressed; and in a bunk on the right sat a sailor, who, when he saw me, yelled out and snapped his fingers, making horrible grimaces.

Such, in brief, was the *coup d'oeil* of that weird interior as it met my eyes.

I seized the girl by the arm.

"You first," said I. "Come; there is no time to be lost."

But she shrunk back, pressing against the door with her hand to prevent me from pulling her, crying in a husky voice, and looking at the old man with the white hair, "My father first! my father first!"

"You shall all be saved, but you must obey me. Quickly now!" I exclaimed passionately; for a heavy sea at that moment flooded the ship, and a rush of water swamped the house through the open door and washed the corpse on the deck up into a corner.

Grasping her firmly, I lifted her off her feet, and went staggering to the life-rope, slinging her light body over my shoulder as I went. Assisted by my man, I gained the bow of the wreck, and hailing the boat, ordered it alongside.

"One of you," cried I, "stand ready to receive this lady when I give the signal."

I then told the man who was with me to jump into the forechains, which he instantly did. The wreck lurched heavily to port. "Stand by, my lads!" I shouted. Over she came again, with the water swooping along the maindeck: The boat rose high, and the forechains were submerged to the height of the man's knees. "Now!" I called, and lifted the girl over. She was seized by the man in the chains, and pushed toward the boat; the fellow standing in the bow of the boat caught her, and at the same moment down sunk the boat, and the wreck rolled wearily over. But the girl was safe.

"Hurrah, my lad!" I sung out. "Up with you,—there are others remaining;" and I went sprawling along the line to the deck-house, there to encounter another rush of water,



which washed as high as my thighs, and fetched me such a thump in the stomach that I thought I must have died of suffocation.

I was glad to find that the old man had got out of his bunk, and was standing at the door.

“Is my poor girl safe, sir?” he exclaimed, with the same huskiness of voice that had grated so unpleasantly in the girl’s tone.

Page 149

"Quite safe; come along."

"Thanks be to Almighty God!" he ejaculated, and burst into tears.

I seized hold of his thin cold hands, but shifted my fingers to catch him by the coat collar, so as to exert more power over him; and handed him along the deck, telling my companion to lay hold of the seaman and fetch him away smartly. We managed to escape the water, for the poor old gentleman bestirred himself very nimbly, and I helped him over the fore-chains; and when the boat rose, tumbled him into her without ceremony. I saw the daughter leap toward him and clasp him in her arms; but I was soon again scrambling on to the deck, having heard cries from my man, accompanied with several loud curses, mingled with dreadful yells.

"He's bitten me, sir!" cried by companion, hauling himself away from the deck-house.

"He's roaring mad."

"It can't be helped," I answered. "We must get him out."

He saw me pushing along the life-line, plucked up heart, and went with myself through a sousing sea to the door. I caught a glimpse of a white face glaring at me from the interior: in a second a figure shot out, fled with incredible speed toward the bow, and leaped into the sea just where our boat lay.

"They'll pick him up," I exclaimed. "Stop a second;" and I entered the house and stooped over the figure of the man on the deck.

I was not familiar with death, and yet I knew it was here. I cannot describe the signs in his face; but such as they were, they told me the truth. I noticed a ring upon his finger, and that his clothes were good. His hair was black, and his features well shaped, though his face had a half-convulsed expression, as if something frightful had appeared to him, and he had died of the sight of it.

"This wreck must be his coffin," I said. "He is a corpse. We can do no more."

We scrambled for the last time along the life-line and got into the fore-chains; but to our consternation, saw the boat rowing away from the wreck. However, the fit of rage and terror that possessed me lasted but a moment or two; for I now saw they were giving chase to the madman, who was swimming steadily away. Two of the men rowed, and the third hung over the bows, ready to grasp the miserable wretch. The *Grosvenor* stood steady, about a mile off, with her mainyards backed; and just as the fellow over the boat's bows caught hold of the swimmer's hair, the ensign was run up on board the ship and dipped three times.

"Bring him along!" I shouted. "They'll be off without us if we don't bear a hand."

They nearly capsized the boat as they dragged the lunatic, streaming like a drowned rat, out of the water; and one of the sailors tumbled him over on his back, and knelt upon him, while he took some turns with the boat's painter round his body, arms and legs. The boat then came alongside; and watching our opportunity, we jumped into her and shoved off.

Page 150

I had now leisure to examine the persons whom we had saved.

They—father and daughter, as I judged them by the girl's exclamation on the wreck—sat in the stern-sheets, their hands locked. The old man seemed nearly insensible; leaning backward with his chin on his breast and his eyes partially closed. I feared he was dying; but could do no good until we reached the *Grosvenor*, as we had no spirits in the boat.

The girl appeared to be about twenty years of age; very fair, her hair of golden straw color, which hung wet and streaky down her back and over her shoulders, though a portion of it was held by a comb. She was deadly pale, and her lips blue; and in her fine eyes was such a look of mingled horror and rapture as she cast them around her,—first glancing at me, then at the wreck, then at the *Grosvenor*,—that the memory of it will last me to my death. Her dress, of some dark material, was soaked with salt water up to her hips, and she shivered and moaned incessantly, though the sun beat so warmly upon us that the thwarts were hot to the hand.

The mad sailor lay at the bottom of the boat, looking straight into the sky. He was a horrid-looking object, with his streaming hair, pasty features, and red beard, his naked shanks and feet protruding through his soaking, clinging trousers, which figured his shin-bones as though they clothed a skeleton. Now and again he would give himself a wild twirl and yelp out fiercely; but he was well-nigh spent with his swim, and on the whole was quiet enough.

I said to the girl, "How long have you been in this dreadful position?"

"Since yesterday morning," she answered, in a choking voice painful to hear, and gulping after each word. "We have not had a drop of water to drink since the night before last. He is mad with thirst, for he drank the water on the deck;" and she pointed to the man in the bottom of the boat.

"My God!" I cried to the men, "do you hear her? They have not drunk water for two days! For the love of God, give way!"

They bent their backs to the oars, and the boat foamed over the long swell. The wind was astern and helped us. I did not speak again to the poor girl; for it was cruel to make her talk, when the words lacerated her throat as though they were pieces of burning iron.

After twenty minutes, which seemed as many hours, we reached the vessel. The crew pressing round the gangway cheered when they saw we had brought people from the wreck. Duckling and the skipper watched us grimly from the poop.

“Now then, my lads,” I cried, “up with this lady first. Some of you on deck get water ready, as these people are dying of thirst.”

In a few minutes, both the girl and the old man were handed over the gangway. I cut the boat’s painter adrift from the ringbolt so that we could ship the madman without loosening his bonds, and he was hoisted up like a bale of goods. Then four of us got out of the boat, leaving one to drop her under the davits and hook on the falls.

Page 151

At this moment a horrible scene took place.

The old man, tottering on the arms of two seamen, was being led into the cuddy, followed by the girl, who walked unaided. The madman, in the grasp of the big sailor named Johnson, stood near the gangway; and as I scrambled on deck, one of the men was holding a pannikin full of water to his face. The poor wretch was shrinking away from it, with his eyes half out of their sockets; but suddenly tearing his arm with a violent effort from the rope that bound him, he seized the pannikin and bit clean through the tin; after which, throwing back his head, he swallowed the whole draught dashed the pannikin down, his face turned black and he fell dead on the deck.

The big sailor sprung aside with an oath, forced from him by his terror; and from every looker-on there broke a groan. They all shrunk away and stood staring with blanched faces. Such a piteous sight as it was, lying doubled up, with the rope pinioning the miserable limbs, the teeth locked, and the right arm uptossed!

"Aft here and get the quarter-boat hoisted up!" shouted Duckling, advancing on the poop; and seeing the man dead on the deck, he added, "Get a tarpaulin and cover him up, and let him lie on the fore-hatch."

"Shall I tell the steward to serve out grog to the men who went with me?" I asked him.

He stared at me contemptuously, and walked away without answering.

THE SAILOR'S WIFE

From "An Iceland Fisherman," BY PIERRE LOTI

The Icelanders were all returning now. Two ships came in the second day, four the next, and twelve during the following week. And all through the country joy returned with them; and there was happiness for the wives and mothers, and junkets in the taverns where the beautiful barmaids of Paimpol served out drink to the fishers.

The *Leopoldine* was among the belated; there were yet another ten expected. They would not be long now; and allowing a week's delay so as not to be disappointed, Gaud waited in happy, passionate joy for Yann, keeping their home bright and tidy for his return. When everything was in good order there was nothing left for her to do; and besides, in her impatience, she could think of nothing else but her husband.

Three more ships appeared; then another five. There were only two lacking now.

"Come, come," they said to her cheerily, "this year the *Leopoldine* and the *Marie-Jeanne* will be the last, to pick up all the brooms fallen overboard from the other craft."

Gaud laughed also. She was more animated and beautiful than ever, in her great joy of expectancy.

But the days succeeded one another without result.

She still dressed up every day, and with a joyful look went down to the harbor to gossip with the other wives. She said that this delay was but natural: was it not the same event every year? These were such safe boats, and had such capital sailors.

Page 152

But when at home alone, at night, a nervous anxious shiver of apprehension would run through her whole frame.

Was it right to be frightened already? Was there even a single reason to be so? but she began to tremble at the mere idea of grounds for being afraid.

The 10th of September came. How swiftly the days flew by!

One morning—a true autumn morning, with cold mist falling over the earth in the rising sun—she sat under the porch of the chapel of the shipwrecked mariners, where the widows go to pray; with eyes fixed and glassy, and throbbing temples tightened as by an iron band.

These sad morning mists had begun two days before; and on this particular day Gaud had awakened with a still more bitter uneasiness, caused by the forecast of advancing winter. Why did this day, this hour, this very moment, seem to her more painful than the preceding? Often ships are delayed a fortnight; even a month, for that matter.

But surely there was something different about this particular morning; for she had come to-day for the first time to sit in the porch of this chapel and read the names of the dead sailors, perished in their prime.

IN MEMORY OF
GAOS YVON
Lost at Sea

NEAR THE NORDEN-FJORD

Like a great shudder, a gust of wind rose from the sea, and at the same time something fell like rain upon the roof above. It was only the dead leaves, though;—many were blown in at the porch; the old wind-tossed trees of the graveyard were losing their foliage in this rising gale, and winter was marching nearer.

Lost at Sea
NEAR THE NORDEN-FJORD
In the storm of the 4th and 5th of August, 1880

She read mechanically under the arch of the doorway; her eyes sought to pierce the distance over the sea. That morning it was untraceable under the gray mist, and a dragging drapery of clouds overhung the horizon like a mourning veil.

Another gust of wind, and other leaves danced in whirls. A stronger gust still; as if the western storm which had strewn those dead over the sea wished to deface the very inscriptions which kept their names in memory with the living.



Gaud looked with involuntary persistency at an empty space upon the wall which seemed to yawn expectant. By a terrible impression, she was pursued by the thought of a fresh slab which might soon perhaps be placed there,—with another name which she did not even dare think of in such a spot.

She felt cold, and remained seated on the granite bench, her head reclining against the stone wall.

NEAR THE NORDEN-FJORD

In the storm of the 4th and 5th of August, 1880

at the age of 23 years

Requiescat in pace!

Then Iceland loomed up before her, with its little cemetery lighted up from below the sea-line by the midnight sun. Suddenly, in the same empty space on the wall, with horrifying clearness she saw the fresh slab she was thinking of; a clear white one, with a skull and crossbones, and in a flash of foresight a name,—the worshiped name of “Yann Gaos”! Then she suddenly and fearfully drew herself up straight and stiff, with a hoarse wild cry in her throat like a mad creature.

Page 153

Outside, the gray mist of the dawn fell over the land, and the dead leaves were again blown dancingly into the porch.

Steps on the footpath! Somebody was coming? She rose, and quickly smoothed down her cap and composed her face. Nearer drew the steps. She assumed the air of one who might be there by chance; for above all, she did not wish to appear yet like the widow of a shipwrecked mariner.

It happened to be Fante Floury, the wife of the second mate of the *Leopoldine*. She understood immediately what Gaud was doing there: it was useless to dissemble with her. At first each woman stood speechless before the other. They were angry and almost hated each other for having met holding a like sentiment of apprehension.

"All the men of Treguier and Saint-Brieuc have been back for a week," said Fante at last, in an unfeeling, muffled, half-irritated voice.

She carried a blessed taper in her hand, to offer up a prayer. Gaud did not wish yet to resort to that extreme resource of despairing wives. Yet silently she entered the chapel behind Fante, and they knelt down together side by side like two sisters.

To the *Star of the Sea* they offered ardent imploring prayers, with their whole soul in them. A sound of sobbing was alone heard, as their rapid tears swiftly fell upon the floor. They rose together, more confident and softened. Fante held up Gaud, who staggered; and taking her in her arms, kissed her.

Wiping their eyes and smoothing their disheveled hair, they brushed off the salt dust from the flag-stones which had soiled their gowns, and went away in opposite directions without another word.

This end of September was like another summer, only a little less lively. The weather was so beautiful that had it not been for the dead leaves which fell upon the roads, one might have thought that June had come back again. Husbands and sweethearts had all returned, and everywhere was the joy of a second springtime of love.

At last, one day, one of the missing ships was signaled. Which one was it?

The groups of speechless and anxious women had rapidly formed on the cliff. Gaud, pale and trembling, was there, by the side of her Yann's father.

"I'm almost sure," said the old fisher, "I'm almost sure it's them. A red rail and a topsail that clews up,—it's very like them, anyhow. What do you make it, Gaud?"

"No, it isn't," he went on, with sudden discouragement: "we've made a mistake again; the boom isn't the same, and ours has a jigger-sail. Well, well, it isn't our boat this time, it's only the *Marie-Jeanne*. Never mind, my lass, surely they'll not be long now."

But day followed day, and night succeeded night, with uninterrupted serenity.

Gaud continued to dress up every day; like a poor crazed woman, always in fear of being taken for the widow of a shipwrecked sailor, feeling exasperated when others looked furtively and compassionately at her, and glancing aside so that she might not meet those glances which froze her very blood.

Page 154

She had fallen into the habit of going at the early morning right to the end of the headland, on the high cliffs of Pors-Even; passing behind Yann's old home, so as not to be seen by his mother or little sisters. She went to the extreme point of the Ploubazlanec land, which is outlined in the shape of a reindeer's horn upon the gray waters of the Channel, and sat there all day long at the foot of the lonely cross which rises high above the immense waste of the ocean. There are many of these crosses hereabout; they are set up on the most advanced cliffs of the sea-bound land, as if to implore mercy, and to calm that restless mysterious power which draws men away, never to give them back, and in preference retains the bravest and noblest.

Around this cross stretches the evergreen waste, strewn with short rushes. At this great height the sea air was very pure; it scarcely retained the briny odor of the weeds, but was perfumed with all the exquisite ripeness of September flowers.

Far away, all the bays and inlets of the coast were firmly outlined, rising one above another; the land of Brittany terminated in jagged edges, which spread out far into the tranquil surface.

Near at hand the reefs were numerous; but out beyond, nothing broke its polished mirror, from which arose a soft caressing ripple, light and intensified from the depths of its many bays. Its horizon seemed so calm, and its depths so soft! The great blue sepulchre of many Gaoses hid its inscrutable mystery; whilst the breezes, faint as human breath, wafted to and fro the perfume of the stunted gorse, which had bloomed again in the latest autumn sun.

At regular hours the sea retreated, and great spaces were left uncovered everywhere, as if the Channel was slowly drying up; then with the same lazy slowness the waters rose again, and continued their everlasting coming without any heed of the dead.

At the foot of the cross Gaud remained, surrounded by these tranquil mysteries, gazing ever before her until the night fell and she could see no more.

September had passed. The sorrowing wife took scarcely any nourishment, and could no longer sleep.

She remained at home now, crouching low with her hands between her knees, her head thrown back and resting against the wall behind. What was the good of getting up or going to bed now? When she was thoroughly exhausted she threw herself, dressed, upon her bed. Otherwise she remained in the same position, chilled and benumbed; in her quiescent state, only her teeth chattered with the cold; she had that continual impression of a band of iron round her brows; her cheeks looked wasted; her mouth was dry, with a feverish taste, and at times a painful hoarse cry rose from her throat and was repeated in spasms, whilst her head beat backwards against the granite wall. Or

else she called Yann by his name in a low, tender voice, as if he were quite close to her; whispering words of love to her.

Page 155

Sometimes she occupied her brain with thoughts of quite insignificant things; for instance, she amused herself by watching the shadow of the china Virgin lengthen slowly over the high woodwork of the bed, as the sun went down. And then the agonized thoughts returned more horribly; and her wailing cry broke out again as she beat her head against the wall.

All the hours of the day passed; and all the hours of evening, and of night; and then the hours of the morning. When she reckoned the time he ought to have been back, she was seized with a still greater terror; she wished to forget all dates and the very names of the days.

Generally, there is some information concerning the wrecks off Iceland; those who return have seen the tragedy from afar, or else have found some wreckage or bodies, or have an indication to guess the rest. But of the *Leopoldine* nothing had been seen, and nothing was known. The *Marie-Jeanne* men—the last to have seen it on the 2d of August—said that she was to have gone on fishing farther towards the north; and beyond that the secret was unfathomable.

Waiting, always waiting, and knowing nothing! When would the time come when she need wait no longer? She did not even know that; and now she almost wished that it might be soon. Oh! if he were dead, let them at least have pity enough to tell her so!

Oh to see her darling, as he was at this very moment,—that is, what was left of him! If only the much-implored Virgin, or some other power, would do her the blessing to show her by second-sight her beloved! either living and working hard to return a rich man, or else as a corpse surrendered by the sea, so that she might at least know a certainty.

Sometimes she was seized with the thought of a ship appearing suddenly upon the horizon: the *Leopoldine* hastening home. Then she would suddenly make an instinctive movement to rise, and rush to look out at the ocean, to see whether it were true.

But she would fall back. Alas! where was this *Leopoldine* now? Where could she be? Out afar, at that awful distance of Iceland,—forsaken, crushed, and lost.

All ended by a never-fading vision appearing to her,—an empty, sea-tossed wreck, slowly and gently rocked by the silent gray and rose-streaked sea; almost with soft mockery, in the midst of the vast calm of deadened waters.

Two o'clock in the morning.

It was at night especially that she kept attentive to approaching footsteps; at the slightest rumor or unaccustomed noise her temples vibrated: by dint of being strained to outward things, they had become fearfully sensitive.

Two o'clock in the morning. On this night as on others, with her hands clasped and her eyes wide open in the dark, she listened to the wind sweeping in never-ending tumult over the heath.

Suddenly a man's footsteps hurried along the path! At this hour who would pass now? She drew herself up, stirred to the very soul, her heart ceasing to beat.

Page 156

Some one stopped before the door, and came up the small stone steps.

He!—O God!—he! Some one had knocked,—it could be no other than he! She was up now, barefooted; she, so feeble for the last few days, had sprung up as nimbly as a kitten, with her arms outstretched to wind round her darling. Of course the *Leopoldine* had arrived at night, and anchored in Pors-Even Bay, and he had rushed home; she arranged all this in her mind with the swiftness of lightning. She tore the flesh off her fingers in her excitement to draw the bolt, which had stuck.

“Eh?”

She slowly moved backward, as if crushed, her head falling on her bosom. Her beautiful insane dream was over. She could just grasp that it was not her husband, her Yann, and that nothing of him, substantial or spiritual, had passed through the air; she felt plunged again into her deep abyss, to the lowest depths of her terrible despair.

Poor Fantec—for it was he—stammered many excuses: his wife was very ill, and their child was choking in its cot, suddenly attacked with a malignant sore throat; so he had run over to beg for assistance on the road to fetch the doctor from Paimpol.

What did all this matter to her? She had gone mad in her own distress, and could give no thoughts to the troubles of others. Huddled on a bench, she remained before him with fixed glazed eyes, like a dead woman’s; without listening to him, or even answering at random or looking at him. What to her was the speech the man was making?

He understood it all, and guessed why the door had been opened so quickly to him; and feeling pity for the pain he had unwittingly caused, he stammered out an excuse.

“Just so: he never ought to have disturbed her—her in particular.”

“I!” ejaculated Gaud quickly, “why should I not be disturbed particularly, Fantec?”

Life had suddenly come back to her; for she did not wish to appear in despair before others. Besides, she pitied him now; she dressed to accompany him, and found the strength to go and see to his little child.

At four o’clock in the morning, when she returned to throw herself on the bed, sleep subdued her, for she was tired out. But that moment of excessive joy had left an impression on her mind, which in spite of all was permanent; she awoke soon with a shudder, rising a little and partially recollecting—she knew not what. News had come to her about her Yann. In the midst of her confusion of ideas, she sought rapidly in her mind what it could be; but there was nothing save Fantec’s interruption.

For the second time she fell back into her terrible abyss, nothing changed in her morbid, hopeless waiting.



Yet in that short, hopeful moment, she had felt him so near to her that it was as if his spirit had floated over the sea unto her,—what is called a foretoken (*pressigne*) in Breton land; and she listened still more attentively to the steps outside, trusting that some one might come to her to speak of him.

Page 157

Just as the day broke, Yann's father entered. He took off his cap, and pushed back his splendid white locks, which were in curls like Yann's, sat down by Gaud's bedside.

His heart ached heavily too; for Yann, his tall, handsome Yann, was his first-born, his favorite and his pride: but he did not despair yet. He comforted Gaud in his own blunt, affectionate way. To begin with, those who had last returned from Iceland spoke of the increasing dense fogs, which might well have delayed the vessel; and then too an idea struck him,—they might possibly have stopped at the distant Faroe Islands on their homeward course, whence letters were so long in traveling. This had happened to him once forty years ago, and his own poor dead and gone mother had had a mass said for his soul. The *Leopoldine* was such a good boat,—next to new,—and her crew were such able-bodied seamen.

Granny Moan stood by them shaking her head: the distress of her granddaughter had almost given her back her own strength and reason. She tidied up the place, glancing from time to time at the faded portrait of Sylvestre, which hung upon the granite wall with its anchor emblems and mourning-wreath of black bead-work. Ever since the sea had robbed her of her own last offspring, she believed no longer in safe returns; she only prayed through fear, bearing Heaven a grudge in the bottom of her heart.

But Gaud listened eagerly to these consoling reasonings; her large sunken eyes looked with deep tenderness out upon this old sire, who so much resembled her beloved one; merely to have him near her was like a hostage against death having taken the younger Gaos; and she felt reassured, nearer to her Yann. Her tears fell softly and silently, and she repeated again her passionate prayers to the Star of the Sea.

A delay out at those Islands to repair damages was a very likely event. She rose and brushed her hair, and then dressed as if she might fairly expect him. All then was not lost, if a seaman, his own father, did not yet despair. And for a few days she resumed looking out for him again.

Autumn at last arrived,—a late autumn too,—its gloomy evenings making all things appear dark in the old cottage; and all the land looked sombre too.

The very daylight seemed a sort of twilight; immeasurable clouds, passing slowly overhead, darkened the whole country at broad noon. The wind blew constantly with the sound of a great cathedral organ at a distance, but playing profane, despairing dirges; at other times the noise came close to the door, like the howling of wild beasts.

She had grown pale,—aye, blanched,—and bent more than ever; as if old age had already touched her with its featherless wing. Often did she finger the wedding clothes of her Yann, folding them and unfolding them again and again like some maniac,—especially one of his blue woolen jerseys which still had preserved his shape: when she threw it gently on the table, it fell with the shoulders and chest well defined; so she

placed it by itself in a shelf of their wardrobe, and left it there, so that it might forever rest unaltered.

Page 158

Every night the cold mists sank upon the land, as she gazed over the depressing heath through her little window, and watched the thin puffs of white smoke arise from the chimneys of other cottages scattered here and there on all sides. There the husbands had returned, like wandering birds driven home by the frost. Before their blazing hearths the evenings passed, cozy and warm; for the springtime of love had begun again in this land of North Sea fishermen.

Still clinging to the thought of those islands where he might perhaps have lingered, she was buoyed up by a kind hope, and expected him home any day.

* * * * *

But he never returned. One August night, out off gloomy Iceland, mingled with the furious clamor of the sea, his wedding with the sea was performed. It had been his nurse; it had rocked him in his babyhood and had afterwards made him big and strong; then, in his superb manhood, it had taken him back again for itself alone. Profoundest mystery had surrounded this unhallowed union. While it went on, dark curtains hung pall-like over it as if to conceal the ceremony, and the ghoul howled in an awful, deafening voice to stifle his cries. He, thinking of Gaud, his sole, darling wife, had battled with giant strength against this deathly rival, until he at last surrendered, with a deep death-cry like the roar of a dying bull, through a mouth already filled with water; and his arms were stretched apart and stiffened forever.

All those he had invited in days of old were present at his wedding. All except Sylvestre, who had gone to sleep in the enchanted gardens far, far away, at the other side of the earth.

THE SALVING OF THE YAN-SHAN

From "In Blue Waters," BY H. DE VERE STACKPOOLE

I

The *Heart of Ireland* was spreading her wings to the north-west trades, making a good seven knots, with the coast of California a vague line on the horizon to port and all the blue Pacific before her.

Captain Blood was aft with his mate, Billy Harman, leaning on the rail and watching the foam boosting away from the stern and flowing off in creamy lines on the swirl of the wake. Ginnell, owner and captain of the *Heart of Ireland*, shanghaied and reduced to deck hand, was forward on the look-out, and one of the coolie crew was at the wheel.



"I'm not given to meeting trouble half-way," said Blood, shifting his position and leaning with his left arm on the rail, "but it 'pears to me Pat Ginnell is taking his set down a mighty sight too easy. He's got something up his sleeve."

"So've we," replied Harman. "What can he do? He laid out to shanghai you, and by gum, he did it. I don't say I didn't let him down crool, playin' into his hands and pretendin' to help and gettin' Captain Mike as a witness, but the fac' remains he got you aboard this hooker by foul play, shanghaied you were, and then you turns the tables on him, knocks the stuffin' out of him and turns him into a deck hand. How's he to complain? I'd start back to 'Frisco now and dare him to come ashore with his complaints. We've got his ship, well, that's his fault. He's no legs to stand on, that's truth."

Page 159

"Leavin' aside this little bisness, he's known as a crook from Benicia right to San Jose. The bay stinks with him and his doin's; settin' Chinese sturgeon lines, Captain Mike said he was, and all but nailed, smugglin' and playin' up to the Greeks, and worse. The Bayside's hungry to catch him an' stuff him in the penitentiary, and he hasn't no friends. I'm no saint, I owns it, but I'm a plaster John the Baptis' to Ginnell, and I've got friends, so have you. Well, what are you bothering about?"

"Oh, I'm not bothering about the law," said Blood, "only about him. I'm going to keep my eye open and not be put asleep by his quiet ways—and I'd advise you to do the same."

"Trust me," said Harman, "and more especial when we come to longsides with the *Yan-Shan*."

Now the *Yan-Shan* had started in life somewhere early in the nineties as a twelve hundred ton cargo boat in the Bullmer line; she had been christened the *Robert Bullmer*, and her first act when the dog-shores had been knocked away was a bull charge down the launching slip, resulting in the bursting of a hawser, the washing over of a boat and the drowning of two innocent spectators; her next was an attempt to butt the Eddystone over in a fog, and, being unbreakable, she might have succeeded only that she was going dead slow. She drifted out of the Bullmer line on the wash of a law-suit owing to the ramming by her of a Cape boat in Las Palmas harbour; engaged herself in the fruit trade in the service of the Corona Capuella Syndicate, and got on to the Swimmer rocks with a cargo of Jamaica oranges, a broken screw shaft and a blown-off cylinder cover. The ruined cargo, salvage and tow smashed the Syndicate, and the *Robert Bullmer* found new occupations till the See-Yup-See Company of Canton picked her up, and, rechristening, used her for conveying coffins and coolies to the American seaboard. They had sent her to Valdivia on some business, and on the return from the southern port to 'Frisco she had, true to her instincts and helped by a gale, run on San Juan, a scrap of an island north of the Channel Islands of the California coast. Every soul had been lost with the exception of two Chinese coolies, who, drifting on a raft, had been picked up and brought to San Francisco.

She had a general cargo and twenty thousand dollars in gold coin on board, but the coolies had declared her to be a total wreck, said, in fact, when they had last sighted her she was going to pieces.

That was the yarn Harman heard through Clancy, with the intimation that the wreck was not worth two dollars, let alone the expenses of a salvage ship.

The story had eaten into Harman's mind; he knew San Juan better than any man in 'Frisco, and he considered that a ship once ashore there would stick; then Ginnell turned up, and the luminous idea of inducing Ginnell to shanghai Blood so that Blood might with his, Harman's, assistance shanghai Ginnell and use the *Heart of Ireland* for the picking of the *Yan-Shan's* pocket, entered his mind.

Page 160

"It's just when we come alongside the *Yan-Shan* we may find our worst bother," said Blood.

"Which way?" asked Harman.

"Well, they're pretty sure to send some sort of a wrecking expedition to try and salvage some of the cargo, let alone those dollars."

"See here," said Harman, "I had the news from Clancy that morning, and it had only just come to 'Frisco, it wasn't an hour old; we put the cap on Ginnell and were out of the Golden Gate before sundown same day. A wrecking ship would take all of two days to get her legs under her, supposing anyone bought the wreck, so we have two days' start; we've been makin' seven knots and maybe a bit over, they won't make more. So we have two days to our good when we get there."

"They may start a quick ship out on the job," said Blood.

"Well, now, there's where my knowledge comes in," said Harman. "There's only two salvage ships at present in 'Frisco, and rotten tubs they are. One's the *Maryland*, she's most a divin' and dredgin' ship, ain't no good for this sort of work, sea-bottom scrapin' is all she's good for, and little she makes at it. The other's the *Port of Amsterdam*, owned by Gunderman. She's the ship they'd use; she's got steam winches and derricks 'nough to discharge the Ark, and stowage room to hold the cargo down to the last flea, but she's no good for more than eight knots; she steams like as if she'd a drogue behind her, because why?—she's got beam engines—she's that old, she's got beam engines in her. I'm not denyin' there's somethin' to be said for them, but, there you are, there's no speed in them."

"Well, beam engines or no beam engines, we'll have a pretty rough time if she comes down and catches us within a cable's length of the *Yan-Shan*," said Blood. "However, there's no use in fetching trouble; let's go and have a look at the lazaret, I want to see how we stand for grub."

Chop-stick Charlie was the name Blood had christened the coolie who acted as steward and cabin hand. He called him now, and out of the opium-tintured gloom of the fo'c'sle Charlie appeared, received his orders and led them to the lazaret.

None of the crew had shown the slightest emotion on seeing Blood take over command of the schooner and Ginnell swabbing decks. The fight, that had made Blood master of the *Heart of Ireland* and Ginnell's revolver, had occurred in the cabin and out of sight of the coolies, but even had it been conducted in full view of them, it is doubtful whether they would have shown any feeling or lifted a hand in the matter.

As long as their little privileges were regarded, as long as opium bubbled in the evening pipe, and pork, rice and potatoes were served out, one white skipper was the same as another to them.

The overhaul of the stores took half an hour and was fairly satisfactory, and, when they came, on deck, Blood, telling Charlie to take Ginnell's place as lookout, called the latter down into the cabin.

Page 161

"We want to have a word with you," said Blood, whilst Harman took his seat on a bunk edge opposite him.

"It's time you knew our minds and what we intend doing with the schooner and yourself."

"Faith," said Ginnell, "I think it is."

"I'm glad you agree. Well, when you shanghaied me on board this old shark-boat of yours, there's little doubt as to what you intended doing with me. Harman will tell you, for we've talked on the matter."

"He'd a' worked you crool hard, fed you crool bad, and landed you after a six months' cruise doped or drunk, with two cents in your pocket and an affidavit up his sleeve that you'd tried to fire his ship," said Harman. "I know the swab."

Ginnell said nothing for a moment in answer to this soft impeachment, he was cutting himself a chew of tobacco; then at last he spoke:

"I don't want no certifikit of character from either the pair of you," said he. "You've boned me ship and you've blacked me eye and you've near stove me ribs in sittin' on me chest and houldin' me revolver in me face; what I wants to know is your game. Where's your profits to come from on this job?"

"I'll tell you," replied Blood. "There's a hooker called the *Yan-Shan* piled on the rocks down the coast and we're going to leave our cards on her—savvy?"

"Oh, Lord!" said Ginnell.

"What's the matter now?" asked Harman.

"What's the matter, d'you say?" cried Ginnell. "Why, it's the *Yan-Shan* I was after meself."

Blood stared at the owner of the *Heart of Ireland* for a moment, then he broke into a roar of laughter.

"You don't mean to say you bought the wreck?" he asked.

"Not me," replied Ginnell. "Sure, where d'you think I'd be findin' the money to buy wrecks with? I had news that mornin' she was lyin' there derelick, and I was just slippin' down the coast to have a look at her when you two spoiled me lay by takin' me ship."

It was now that Harman began to laugh.

"Well, if that don't beat all," said he. "And maybe, since you were so keen on havin' a look at her, you've brought wreckin' tools with you in case they might come in handy?"

"That's as may be," replied Ginnell. "What you have got to worry about isn't wreckin' tools, but how to get rid of the boodle if it's there. Twenty thousand dollars, that's the figure."

"So you know of the dollars?" said Blood.

"Sure, what do you take me for?" asked Ginnell. "D'you think I'd have bothered about the job only for the dollars? What's the use of general cargo to the like of me? Now what I'm thinkin' is this, you want a fence to help you to get rid of the stuff. Supposin' you find it, how are you to cart this stuff ashore and bank it? You'll be had, sure, but not if I'm at your back. Now, gents, I'm willin' to wipe out all differences and help in the salvin' on shares, and I'll make it easy for you. You'll each take seven thousand and I'll take the balance, and I won't charge nuthin' for the loan you've took of the *Heart of Ireland*. It's a losin' game for me, but it's better than bein' done out entirely."

Page 162

Blood looked at Harman and Harman looked at Blood. Then telling Ginnell that they would consider the matter, they went on deck to talk it over.

There was truth in what Ginnell said. They would want help in getting the coin ashore in safety, and unless they marooned or murdered Ginnell, he, if left out, would always be a witness to make trouble. Besides, though engaged on a somewhat shady business, neither Blood nor Harman were scoundrels. Ginnell up to this had been paid out in his own coin, the slate was clean, and it pleased neither of them to take profit from this blackguard beyond what they considered their due.

It was just this touch of finer feeling that excluded them from the category of rogues and made their persons worth considering and their doings worth recounting.

"We'll give him what he asks," said Blood, when the consultation was over, "and mind you, I don't like giving it him one little bit, not on account of the money but because it seems to make us partners with that swab. I tell you this, Billy Harman, I'd give half as much again if an honest man was dealing with us in this matter instead of Pat Ginnell."

"And what honest man would deal with us?" asked the ingenuous Harman. "Lord! one might think the job we was on was tryin' to sell a laundry. It's safe enough, for who can say we didn't hit the wreck cruisin' round promiscuous, but it won't hold no frills in the way of Honesty and such. Down with you, and close the bargain with that chap and tip him the wink that, though we're mugs enough to give him six thousand dollars for the loan of his old shark-boat, we're men enough to put a pistol bullet in his gizzard if he tries any games with us. Down you go."

Blood went.

II

Next morning, an hour after sunrise, through the blaze of light striking the Pacific across the far-off Californian coast, San Juan showed like a flake of spar on the horizon to southward.

The sea all there is of an impossible blueness, the Pacific blue deepened by the *Kuro Shiwo* current, that mysterious river of the sea which floods up the coast of Japan, crosses the Pacific towards Alaska, and sweeps down the West American seaboard to fan out and lose itself away down somewhere off Chile.

Harman judged the island to be twenty miles away, and as they were making six and a half knots, he reckoned to hit it in three hours if the wind held.

They went down and had breakfast, and after the meal Ginnell, going to the locker where he had stowed the wrecking tools, fetched them out and laid them on deck.

There were two crow-bars and a jemmy, not to mention a flogging hammer, a rip saw, some monstrous big chisels and a shipwright's mallet. They looked like a collection of burglar's implements from the land of Brobdingnag.

"There you are," said Ginnell. "You never know what you may want on a job like this, with bulkheads, maybe, to be cut through and chests broke open; get a spare sail, Misther Harman, and rowl the lot up in it so's they'll be aisier for thransport."

Page 163

He was excited, and the Irish in him came out when he was like that; also, as the most knowledgeable man in the business, he was taking the lead. You never could have fancied from his cheerful manner and his appearance of boss that Blood was the real master of the situation, or that Blood, only a few days ago, had nearly pounded the life out of him, captured his revolver, and taken possession of the *Heart of Ireland*.

The schooner carried a whale-boat, and this was now got in readiness for lowering, with provisions and water for the landing-party, and when that was done the island, now only four miles distant, showed up fine, a sheer splinter of volcanic rock standing up from the sea and creamed about with foam.

Not a sign of a wreck was to be seen, though Ginnell's glasses were powerful enough to show up every detail from the rock fissures to the roosting gulls.

Gloom fell upon the party, with the exception of Harman.

"It'll be on the other side if it's there at all," said he. "She'd have been coming up from the s'uthard, and if the gale was behind her it would have taken her right on to the rocks; she couldn't be on this side, anyhow, because why?—there's nuthin' to hold her. It's a mile deep water off them cliffs, but on the other side it shoals gradual from tide marks to ten fathoms water, which holds for a quarter of a mile—keep her as she is, you could scrape them cliffs with a battleship without danger of groundin'."

After a minute or two, he took the wheel himself and steered her whilst the fellows stood by the halyards ready to let go at a moment's notice.

It was an impressive place, this north side of the island of San Juan; the heavy swell came up smacking right on to the sheer cliff wall, jetting green water and foam yards high to the snore and boom of caves and cut outs in the rock. Gulls haunted the place. The black petrel, the Western gull and the black-footed albatross all were to be found here; long lines of white gulls marked the cliff edges, and far above, in the dazzling azure of the sky, a Farallone cormorant circled like the spirit of the place, challenging the newcomers with its cry.

Harman shifted his helm, and the *Heart of Ireland* with main boom swinging to port came gliding past the western rocks and opening the sea to southward where, far on the horizon, lovely in the morning light like vast ships under press of sail, the San Lucas Islands lay remote in the morning splendour.

Away to port the line of the Californian coast showed beyond the heave of the sea from Point Arguello to Point Conception, and to starboard and west of the San Lucas's a dot in the sun-dazzle marked the peaks of the island of San Nicolas.



Then, as the *Heart of Ireland* came around and the full view of the south of San Juan burst upon them, the wreck piled on the rocks came in sight, and, anchored quarter of a mile off the shore—a Chinese junk!

Page 164

"Well, I'm damned," said Harman.

Ginnell, seizing his glasses, rushed forward and looked through them at the wreck.

"It's swarmin' with chows," cried he, coming aft. "They seem to have only just landed, be the look of them. Keep her as she goes and be ready with the anchor there forrard; we'll scupper them yet. Mr. Harman, be plazed to fetch up that linth of lead pipe you'll find on the cabin flure be the door. Capt'in, will you see with Charlie here to the boat while I get the anchor ready for droppin'; them coolies is all thumbs."

He went forward, and the *Heart of Ireland*, with the wind spilling out of her mainsail, came along over the heaving blue swell, satin-smooth here in the shelter of the island.

Truly the *Yan-Shan*, late *Robert Bullmer*, had made a masterpiece of her last business; she had come stem on, lifted by the piling sea, and had hit the rocks, smashing every bow-plate from the keel to within a yard or two of the gunnel, then a wave had taken her under the stern and lifted her and flung her broadside on just as she now lay, pinned to her position by the rock horns that had gored her side, and showing a space of her rust-red bottom to the sun.

The water was squattering among the rocks right up to her, the phosphor-bronze propeller showed a single blade cocked crookedly at the end of the broken screw shaft; rudder there was none, the funnel was gone, spar deck and bridge were in wrack and ruin, whilst the cowl of a bent ventilator turned seaward seemed contemplating with a languid air the beauty of the morning and the view of the far distant San Lucas Islands.

The *Heart of Ireland* picked up a berth inside the junk, and as the rasp and rattle of the anchor chain came back in faint echoes from the cliff, a gong on the junk woke to life and began to snarl and roar its warning to the fellows on the wreck.

"Down with the boat," cried Ginnell. With the "linth of lead pipe," a most formidable weapon, sticking from his pocket, he ran to help with the falls; the whaleboat smacked the water, the crew tumbled in, and, with Ginnell in the bow, it started for the shore.

The gong had done its work. The fellows who had been crawling like ants over the dead body of the *Yan-Shan* came slithering down on ropes, appeared running and stumbling over the rocks abaft the stern, some hauling along sacks of loot, others brandishing sticks or bits of timber, and all shouting and clamouring with a noise like gulls whose nests are being raided.

There was a small scrap of shingly beach off which the Chinamen's scow was lying anchored with a stone and with a China boy for anchor watch. The whale-boat passed the scow, dashed nose end up the shelving beach, and the next moment Ginnell and his linth of lead pipe was amongst the Chinamen, whilst Blood, following him, was firing his

revolver over their heads. Harman, with a crowbar carried at the level, was aiming straight at the belly of the biggest of the foe, when they parted right and left, dropping everything, beaten before they were touched, and making for the water over the rocks.

Page 165

Swimming like rats, they made for the scow, scrambled on board her, howked up the anchor stone and shot out the oars.

"They're off for the junk," cried Ginnell. "Faith, that was a clane bit of work; look at thim rowin' as if the divil was after thim."

They were, literally, and now on board the junk they were hauling the boat in, shaking out the lateen sail and dragging up the anchor as though a hundred pair of hands were at work instead of twenty.

Then, as the huge sail bellied gently to the wind and the junk broke the violet breeze shadow beyond the calm of the sheltered water, a voice came over the sea, a voice like the clamour of a hundred gulls, thin, rending, fierce as the sound of tearing calico.

"Shout away, me boys," said Ginnell. "You've got the shout and we've got the boodle, and good day to ye."

III

He turned with the others to examine the contents of the sacks dropped by the vanquished ones and lying amongst the rocks. They were old gunny bags and they were stuffed with all sorts of rubbish and valuables, musical instruments, bits of old metal, cabin curtains, and even cans of bully beef—there was no sign of dollars.

"The fools were so busy picking up everything they could find lying about, they hadn't time to search for the real stuff," said Blood. "Didn't know of it."

"Well," said Ginnell, "stick the ould truck back in the bags with the instruments; we'll sort it out when we get aboard and fling the rubbish over and keep what's worth keepin'."

Helped by the coolies, they refilled the bags and left them in position for carrying off, and then, led by Ginnell, they made round the stern of the wreck to the port side.

Now, on the sea side the *Yan-Shan* presented a bad enough picture of desolation and destruction, but here on the land side the sight was terrific.

The great yellow funnel had crashed over on to the rocks and lay with lengths of the guys still adhering to it; a quarter boat with bottom half out had gone the way of the funnel; crabs were crawling over all sorts of raffle, broken spars, canvas from the bridge screen and woodwork of the chart-house, whilst all forward of amidships the plates, beaten and twisted and ripped apart, showed cargo, held, or in the act of escaping. One big packing case, free of the ship, had resolved itself into staves round its once contents, a piano that appeared perfectly uninjured.

A rope ladder hung from the bulwarks amidships, and up it Ginnell went, followed by the others, reaching a roofless passage that had once been the part alley-way.

Here on the slanting deck one got a full picture of the ruin that had come on the ship; the masts were gone, as well as the funnel; boats, ventilators—with the exception of the twisted cowl looking seaward—bridge, chart-house, all had vanished wholly or in part, a picture made more impressive by the calm blue sky overhead and the brilliancy of the sunlight.

Page 166

The locking bars had been removed from the cover of the fore hatch and the hatch opened, evidently by the Chinese in search of plunder. Ginnell scarcely turned an eye on it before he made aft, followed by the others, he reached the saloon companion-way and dived down it.

If the confusion on deck was bad, it was worse below. The cabin doors on either side were either open or off their hinges, bunk bedding, mattresses, an open and rifled valise, some women's clothes, an empty cigar-box and a cage with a dead canary in it lay on the floor.

The place looked as if an army of pillagers had been at work for days, and the sight struck a chill to the hearts of the beholders.

"We're dished," said Ginnell. "Quick, boys, if the stuff's anywhere it'll be in the old man's cabin, there's no mail room in a packet like this. If it's not there, we're done."

They found the captain's cabin, they found his papers tossed about, his cash-box open and empty, and a strong box clamped to the deck by the bunk in the same condition. They found, to complete the business, an English sovereign on the floor in a corner.

Ginnell sat down on the edge of the bunk.

"They've got the dollars," said he. "That's why they legged it so quick and—we let them go. Twenty thousand dollars in gold coin and we let them go. Tear an' ages! Afther them!" He sprang from the bunk and dashed through the saloon, followed by the others. On deck they strained their eyes seaward towards a brown spot on the blue far, far away to the sou'-west. It was the junk making a soldier's wind of it, every inch of sail spread. Judging by the distance she had covered, she must have been making at least eight knots, and the Heart of Ireland under similar wind conditions was incapable of more than seven.

"No good chasing her," said Blood.

"Not a happorth," replied Ginnell. Then the quarrel began.

"If you hadn't held us pokin' over them old sacks on the rocks there we'd maybe have had a chance of over-haulin' her," said Ginnell.

"Sacks," cried Blood, "what are you talking about; it was you who let them go, shouting good day to them and telling them we'd got the boodle!"

"Boodle, b'g-d!" cried Ginnell. "You're a nice chap to talk about boodle. You did me in an' collared me boat, and now you're let down proper, and serve you right."

Blood was about to reply in kind, when the dispute was cut short by a loud yell from the engine-room hatch.

Harman, having satisfied himself with a glance that all was up with the junk, had gone poking about and entered the engine-room hatchway. He now appeared, shouting like a maniac.

"The dollars," he cried, "two dead Chinkies an' the dollars."

He vanished again with a shout, they rushed to the hatch, and there, on the steel grating leading to the ladder, curled together like two cats that had died in battle, lay the Chinamen, Harman kneeling beside them, his hands at work on the neck of a tied sack that chinked as he shook it with the glorious rich, mellow sound that gold in bulk and gold in specie alone can give.

Page 167

The lanyard came away, and Harman, plunging his big hand in, produced it filled with British sovereigns.

Not one of them moved or said a word for a moment, then Ginnell suddenly squatted down on the grating beside Harman, and, taking a sovereign between finger and thumb gingerly, as though he feared it might burn him, examined it with a laugh. Then he bit it, spun it in the air, caught it in his left hand and brought his great right palm down on it with a bang.

"Hids or tails!" cried Ginnell. "Hids I win, tails you lose." He gave a coarse laugh as he opened his palm, where the coin lay tail up.

"Hids it is," he cried, then he tossed it back into the bag and rose to his feet.

"Come on, boys," said he, "let's bring the stuff down to the saloon and count it."

"Better get it aboard," said Blood.

Harman looked up. The grin on his face stamped by the finding of the gold was still there, and in the light coming through the hatch his forehead showed beaded with sweat.

"I'm with Ginnell," said he, "let's get down to the saloon for an overhaul. I can't wait whiles we row off to the schooner. I wants to feel the stuff and I wants to divide it, b'g-d, right off and now. Boys, we're rich, we sure are. It's the stroke of my life, and I can't wait for no rowin' on board no schooners before we divide up."

"Come on, then," said Blood.

The sack was much bigger than its contents, so there was plenty of grip for him as he seized one corner. Then, Harman grasping it by the neck, they lugged it out and along the deck and down the saloon companionway, Ginnell following.

The Chinese had opened nearly all the cabin port-holes for the sake of light to assist them in their plundering, and now as Blood and Harman placed the sack on the slanting saloon table, the crying of gulls came clearly and derisively from the cliffs outside, mixed with the hush of the sea and the boost of the swell as it broke creaming and squattering among the rocks. The lackadaisical ventilator cowl, which took an occasional movement from stray puffs of air, added its voice now and then, whining and complaining like some lost yet inconsiderable soul.

No other sound could be heard as the three men ranged themselves, Ginnell on the starboard, and Blood and Harman on the port side of the table.

The swivel seats, though all aslant, were practicable, and Harman was in the act of taking his place in the seat he had chosen when Ginnell interposed.

“One moment, Mr. Harman,” said the owner of the *Heart of Ireland*. “I’ve a word to say to you and Mr. Blood—sure, I beg your pardon—I mane Capt’in Blood.”

“Well,” said Blood, grasping a chair-back. “What have you to say?”

“Only this,” replied Ginnell with a grin. “I’ve got back me revolver.”

Blood clapped his hand to his pocket. It was empty.

Page 168

"I picked your pocket of it," said Ginnell, producing the weapon, "two minits back; you fired three shots over the heads of them chows and there's three ca'tridges left in her. I can hit a dollar at twinty long paces. Move an inch either the one or other of you, and I'll lay your brains on the table fornint you."

They did not move, for they knew that he was in earnest. They knew that if they moved he would begin to shoot, and if he began to shoot he would finish the job, leave their corpses on the floor, and sail off with the dollars and his Chinese crew in perfect safety. There were no witnesses.

"Now," said Ginnell, "what the pair of you have to do is this. Misther Harman, you'll go into that cabin behind you, climb on the upper bunk, stick your head through the port-hole and shout to the coolies down below there with the boat to come up. It'll take two men to get them dollars on deck and down to the wather side. When you've done that, the pair of you will walk into the ould man's cabin an' say your prayers, thanking the saints you've got off so easy, whiles I puts the bolt on you till the dollars are away. And remimber this, one word or kick from you and I shoot—the Chinamen will never tell."

"See here," said Harman.

"One word!" shouted Ginnell, suddenly dropping the mask of urbanity and levelling the pistol.

It was as though the tiger-cat in his grimy soul had suddenly burst bonds and mastered him. His finger pressed on the trigger and the next moment Harman's brains, or what he had of them, might have been literally forenint him on the table, when suddenly, tremendous as the last trumpet, paralysing as the inrush of a body of armed men, booing and bellowing back from the cliffs in a hundred echoes came a voice—the blast of a ship's syren.

"Huroop, Hirrip, Hurop, Haar—Haar—Haar!"

Ginnell's arm fell. Harman, forgetting everything, turned, dashed into the cabin behind him, climbed on the upper bunk, and stuck his head through the port-hole.

Then he dashed back into the saloon.

"It's the *Port of Amsterdam*," cried Harman, "It's the salvage ship, she's there droppin' her anchor; we're done, we're dished—and we foolin' like this and they crawlin' up on us."

"And you said she'd only do eight knots!" cried Blood.

Ginnell flung the revolver on the floor. Every trace of the recent occurrence had vanished, and the three men thought no more of one another than a man thinks of petty matters in the face of dissolution. Gunderman was outside, that was enough for them.

“Boys,” said Ginnell, “ain’t there no way out with them dollars? S’pose we howk them ashore?”

“Cliffs two hundred foot high,” said Harman, “not a chanst. We’re dished.”

Said Blood: “There’s only one thing left. We’ll walk the dollars down to the boat and row off with them. Of course we’ll be stopped; still, there’s the chance that Gunderman may be drunk or something. It’s one chance in a hundred billion—it’s the only one.”

Page 169

But Gunderman was not drunk, nor were his boat party; and the court-martial he held on the beach in broken English and with the sack of coin beside him as chief witness would form a bright page of literature had one time to record it.

Ginnell, as owner of the *Heart of Ireland*, received the whole brunt of the storm; there was no hearing for him when, true to himself, he tried to cast the onus of the business on Blood and Harman. He was told to get out and be thankful he was not brought back to 'Frisco in irons, and he obeyed instructions, rowing off to the schooner, he and Harman and Blood, a melancholy party with the exception of Blood, who was talking to Harman with extreme animation on the subject of beam engines.

On deck it was Blood who gave orders for hauling up the anchor and setting sail. He had recaptured the revolver.

THE DERELICT NEPTUNE*

From "Spun Gold," BY MORGAN ROBERTSON

Reprinted by courtesy of Harper & Brothers.

Across the Atlantic Ocean from the Gulf of Guinea to Cape St. Roque moves a great body of water—the Main Equatorial Current—which can be considered the motive power, or mainspring, of the whole Atlantic current system, as it obtains its motion directly from the ever-acting push of the tradewinds. At Cape St. Roque this broad current splits into two parts, one turning north, the other south. The northern part contracts, increases its speed, and, passing up the northern coast of South America as the Guiana Current, enters through the Caribbean Sea into the Gulf of Mexico, where it circles around to the northward; then, colored a deep blue from the fine river silt of the Mississippi, and heated from its long surface exposure under a tropical sun to an average temperature of eighty degrees, it emerges into the Florida Channel as the Gulf Stream.

From here it travels northeast, following the trend of the coast line, until, off Cape Hatteras, it splits into three divisions, one of which, the westernmost, keeps on to lose its warmth and life in Baffin's Bay. Another impinges on the Hebrides, and is no more recognizable as a current; and the third, the eastern and largest part of the divided stream, makes a wide sweep to the east and south, enclosing the Azores and the deadwater called the Sargasso Sea, then, as the African Current, runs down the coast until, just below the Canary Isles, it merges into the Lesser Equatorial Current, which, parallel to the parent stream, and separated from it by a narrow band of backwater, travels west and filters through the West Indies, making puzzling combinations with the tides, and finally bearing so heavily on the young Gulf Stream as to give to it the sharp turn to the northward through the Florida Channel.

Page 170

In the South Atlantic, the portion of the Main Equatorial Current split off by Cape St. Roque and directed south leaves the coast at Cape Frio, and at the latitude of the River Plate assumes a due easterly direction, crossing the ocean as the Southern Connecting Current. At the Cape of Good Hope it meets the cold, northeasterly Cape Horn Current, and with it passes up the coast of Africa to join the Equatorial Current at the starting-point in the Gulf of Guinea, the whole constituting a circulatory system of ocean rivers, of speed value varying from eighteen to ninety miles a day.

On a bright morning in November, 1894, a curious-looking craft floated into the branch current which, skirting Cuba, flows westward through the Bahama Channel. A man standing on the highest of two points enclosing a small bay near Cape Maisi, after a critical examination through a telescope, disappeared from the rocks, and in a few moments a light boat, of the model used by whalers, emerged from the mouth of the bay, containing this man and another. In the boat also was a coil of rope.

The one who had inspected the craft from the rocks was a tall young fellow, dressed in flannel shirt and trousers, the latter held in place by a cartridge-belt, such as is used by the American cowboy. To this was hung a heavy revolver. On his head was a broad-brimmed cork helmet, much soiled, and resembling in shape the Mexican sombrero. Beneath this head-gear was a mass of brown hair, which showed a non-acquaintance with barbers for, perhaps, months, and under this hair a sun-tanned face, lighted by serious gray eyes. The most noticeable feature of this face was the extreme arching of the eyebrows—a never-failing index of the highest form of courage. It was a face that would please. The face of the other was equally pleasing in its way. It was red, round, and jolly, with twinkling eyes, the whole borrowing a certain dignity from closely cut white hair and mustaches. The man was about fifty, dressed and armed like the other.

“What do you want of pistols, Boston?” he said to the younger man. “One might think this an old-fashioned, piratical cutting out.”

“Oh, I don’t know, Doc. It’s best to have them. That hulk may be full of Spaniards, and the whole thing nothing but a trick to draw us out. But she looks like a derelict. I don’t see how she got into this channel, unless she drifted up past Cape Maisi from the southward, having come in with the Guiana Current. It’s all rocks and shoals to the eastward.”

The boat, under the impulse of their oars, soon passed the fringing reef and came in sight of the strange craft, which lay about a mile east and half a mile off shore. “You see,” resumed the younger man, called Boston, “there’s a back-water inside Point Mulas, and if she gets into it she may come ashore right here.”

“Where we can loot her. Nice business for a respectable practitioner like me to be engaged in! Doctor Bryce, of Havana, consorting with Fenians from Canada, exiled German socialists, Cuban horse-thieves who would be hung in a week if they went to

Texas, and a long-legged sailor man who calls himself a retired naval officer, but who looks like a pirate; and all shouting for *Cuba Libre! Cuba Libre!* It's plunder you want."

Page 171

"But none of us ever manufactured dynamite," answered Boston, with a grin. "How long did they have you in Moro Castle, Doc?"

"Eight months," snapped the doctor, his face clouding. "Eight months in that rathole, with the loss of my property and practice—all for devotion to science. I was on the brink of the most important and beneficent discovery in explosives the world ever dreamed of. Yes, sir, 'twould have made me famous and stopped all warfare."

"The captain told me this morning that he'd heard from Marti," said Boston, after an interval. "Good news, he said, but that's all I learned. Maybe it's from Gomez. If he'll only take hold again we can chase the Spanish off the island now. Then we'll put some of your stuff under Moro and lift it off the earth."

In a short time, details of the craft ahead, hitherto hidden by distance, began to show. There was no sign of life aboard; her spars were gone, with the exception of the foremast, broken at the hounds, and she seemed to be of about a thousand tons burden, colored a mixed brown and dingy gray, which, as they drew near, was shown as the action of iron rust on black and lead-colored paint. Here and there were outlines of painted ports. Under the stump of a shattered bowsprit projected from between bluff bows a weather-worn figurehead, representing the god of the sea. Above on the bows were wooden-stocked anchors stowed inboard, and aft on the quarters were iron davits with blocks intact—but no falls. In a few of the dead-eyes in the channels could be seen frayed rope-yarns, rotten with age, and, with the stump of the foremast, the wooden stocks of the anchors, and the teak-wood rail, of a bleached gray color. On the round stern, as they pulled under it, they spelled, in raised letters, flecked here and there with discolored gilt, the name "Neptune, of London." Unkempt and forsaken, she had come in from the mysterious sea to tell her story.

The climbed the channels, fastened the painter, and peered over the rail. There was no one in sight, and they sprang down, finding themselves on a deck that was soft and spongy with time and weather.

"She's an old tub," said Boston, scanning the gray fabric fore and aft; "one of the first iron ships built, I should think. They housed the crew under the t'gallant forecastle. See the doors forward, there? And she has a full-decked cabin—that's old style. Hatches are all battened down, but I doubt if this tarpaulin holds water." He stepped on the main hatch, brought his weight on the ball of one foot, and turned around. The canvas crumbled to threads, showing the wood beneath. "Let's go below. If there were any Spaniards here they'd have shown themselves before this." The cabin doors were latched but not locked, and they opened them.

"Hold on," said the doctor, "this cabin may have been closed for years, and generated poisonous gases. Open that upper door, Boston."

Page 172

Boston ran up the shaky poop ladder and opened the companion-way above, which let a stream of the fresh morning air and sunshine into the cabin, then, after a moment or two, descended and joined the other, who had entered from the main-deck. They were in an ordinary ship's cabin, surrounded by staterooms, and with the usual swinging lamp and tray; but the table, chairs, and floor were covered with fine dust.

"Where the deuce do you get so much dust at sea?" coughed the doctor.

"Nobody knows, Doc. Let's hunt for the manifest and the articles. This must have been the skipper's room." They entered the largest stateroom, and Boston opened an old-fashioned desk. Among the discolored documents it contained, he found one and handed it to the doctor. "Articles," he said; "look at it." Soon he took out another. "I've got it. Now we'll find what she has in her hold, and if it's worth bothering about."

"Great Scott!" exclaimed the doctor; "this paper is dated 1844, fifty years ago." Boston looked over his shoulder.

"That's so; she signed her crew at Boston, too. Where has she been all this time? Let's see this one."

The manifest was short, and stated that her cargo was 3000 barrels of lime, 8000 kids of tallow, and 2500 carboys of acid, 1700 of which were sulphuric, the rest of nitric acid. "That cargo won't be much good to us, Doc. I'd hope to find something we could use. Let's find the log-book, and see what happened to her." Boston rummaged what seemed to be the first-mate's room. "Plenty of duds here," he said; "but they're ready to fall to pieces. Here's the log."

He returned with the book, and, seated at the dusty table, they turned the yellow leaves. "First departure, Highland Light, March 10, 1844," read Boston. "We'll look in the remarks column."

Nothing but the ordinary incidents of a voyage were found until they reached the date June 1st, where entry was made of the ship being "caught aback" and dismasted off the Cape of Good Hope in a sudden gale. Then followed daily "remarks" of the southeasterly drift of the ship, the extreme cold (which, with the continuance of the bad weather, prevented saving the wreck for jury-masts), and the fact that no sails were sighted.

June 6th told of her being locked in soft, slushy ice, and still being pressed southward by the never-ending gale; June 10th said that the ice was hard, and at June 15th was the terrible entry: "Fire in the hold!"

On June 16th was entered this: "Kept hatches battened down and stopped all air-holes, but the deck is too hot to stand on, and getting hotter. Crew insist on lowering the boats

and pulling them northward over the ice to open water in hopes of being picked up. Good-bye.” In the position columns of this date the latitude was given as 62 degrees 44 minutes S. and the longitude as 30 degrees 50 minutes E. There were no more entries.

Page 173

"What tragedy docs this tell of?" said the doctor. "They left this ship in the ice fifty years ago. Who can tell if they were saved?"

"Who indeed?" said Boston. "The mate hadn't much hope. He said 'Good-bye.' But one thing is certain; we are the first to board her since. I take it she stayed down there in the ice until she drifted around the Pole, and thawed out where she could catch the Cape Horn current, which took her up to the Hope. Then she came up with the South African Current till she got into the Equatorial drift, then west, and up with the Guiana Current into the Caribbean Sea to the southward of us, and this morning the flood-tide brought her through. It isn't a question of winds; they're too variable. It's currents, though it may have taken her years to get here. But the surprising part of it is that she hasn't been boarded. Let's look in the hold and see what the fire has done."

When they boarded the hulk, the sky, with the exception of a filmy haze overhanging the eastern end of the island, was clear. Now, as they emerged from the cabin, this haze had solidified and was coming—one of the black and vicious squalls of the West India seas.

"No man can tell what wind there is in them," remarked Boston, as he viewed it. "But it's pretty close to the water, and dropping rain. Hold on, there, Doc. Stay aboard. We couldn't pull ashore in the teeth of it." The doctor had made a spasmodic leap to the rail. "If the chains were shackled on, we might drop one of the hooks and hold her; but it's two hours work for a full crew."

"But we're likely to be blown away, aren't we?" asked the doctor.

"Not far. I don't think it'll last long. We'll make the boat fast astern and get out of the wet." They did so, and entered the cabin. Soon the squall, coming with a shock like that of a solid blow, struck the hulk broadside to and careened her. From the cabin door they watched the nearly horizontal rain as it swished across the deck, and listened to the screaming of the wind, which prevented all conversation. Silently they waited—one hour—two hours—then Boston said: "This is getting serious. It's no squall. If it wasn't so late in the season I'd call it a hurricane. I'm going on deck."

He climbed the companionway stairs to the poop, and shut the scuttle behind him—for the rain was flooding the cabin—then looked around. The shore and horizon were hidden by a dense wall of gray, which seemed not a hundred feet distant. From to windward this wall was detaching great waves or sheets of almost solid water, which bombarded the ship in successive blows, to be then lost in the gray whirl to leeward. Overhead was the same dismal hue, marked by hurrying masses of darker cloud, and below was a sea of froth, white and flat; for no waves could rise their heads in that wind. Drenched to the skin, he tried the wheel and found it free in its movements. In front of it was a substantial

Page 174

binnacle, and within a compass, which, though sluggish, as from a well-worn pivot, was practically in good condition. “Blowing us about nor’west by west,” he muttered, as he looked at it—“straight up the coast. It’s better than the beach in this weather, but may land us in Havana.” He examined the boat. It was full of water, and tailing to windward, held by its painter. Making sure that this was fast, he went down.

“Doc,” he said, as he squeezed the water from his limp cork helmet and flattened it on the table, “have you any objections to being rescued by some craft going into Havana?”

“I have—decided objections.”

“So have I; but this wind is blowing us there—sideways. Now, such a blow as this, at this time of year, will last three days at least, and I’ve an idea that it’ll haul gradually to the south, and west towards the end of it. Where’ll we be then? Either piled up on one of the Bahama keys or interviewed by the Spaniards. Now I’ve been thinking of a scheme on deck. We can’t get back to camp for a while—that’s settled. This iron hull is worth something, and if we can take it into an American port we can claim salvage. Key West is the nearest, but Fernandina is the surest. We’ve got a stump of a foremast and a rudder and a compass. If we can get some kind of sail up forward and bring her ’fore the wind, we can steer any course within thirty degrees of the wind line.”

“But I can’t steer. And how long will this voyage take? What will we eat?”

“Yes, you can steer—good enough. And, of course, it depends on food, and water, too. We’d better catch some of this that’s going to waste.”

In what had been the steward’s storeroom they found a harness-cask with bones and dry rust in the bottom. “It’s salt meat, I suppose,” said the doctor, “reduced to its elements.” With the handles of their pistols they carefully hammered down the rusty hoops over the shrunken staves, which were well preserved by the brine they had once held, and taking the cask on deck, cleaned it thoroughly under the scuppers—or drain-holes—of the poop, and let it stand under the stream of water to swell and sweeten itself.

“If we find more casks we’ll catch some more,” said Boston; “but that will last us two weeks. Now we’ll hunt for her stores. I’ve eaten salt-horse twenty years old, but I can’t vouch for what we may find here.” They examined all the rooms adjacent to the cabin, but found nothing.

“Where’s the lazarette in this kind of a ship?” asked Boston. “The cabin runs right aft to the stern. It must be below us.” He found that the carpet was not tacked to the floor, and, raising the after end, discovered a hatch, or trap-door, which he lifted. Below,

when their eyes were accustomed to the darkness, they saw boxes and barrels—all covered with the same fine dust which filled the cabin.

“Don’t go down there, yet, Boston,” said the doctor. “It may be full of carbonic acid gas. She’s been afire, you know. Wait.” He tore a strip from some bedding in one of the rooms, and, lighting one end by means of a flint and steel which he carried, lowered the smouldering rag until it rested on the pile below. It did not go out.

Page 175

"Safe enough, Boston," he remarked. "But you go down; you're younger."

Boston smiled and sprang down on the pile, from which he passed up a box. "Looks like tinned stuff, Doc. Open it, and I'll look over here."

The doctor smashed the box with his foot, and found, as the other had thought, that it contained cylindrical cans; but the labels were faded with age. Opening one with his jack-knife, he tasted the contents. It was a mixture of meat and a fluid, called by sailors "soup-and-bully," and as fresh and sweet as though canned the day before.

"We're all right, Boston," he called down the hatch. "Here's as good a dish as I've tasted for months. Ready cooked, too."

Boston soon appeared. "There are some beef or pork barrels over in the wing," he said, "and plenty of this canned stuff. I don't know what good the salt meat is. The barrels seem tight, but we won't need to broach one for a while. There's a bag of coffee—gone to dust, and some hard bread that isn't fit to eat; but this'll do." He picked up the open can.

"Boston," said the doctor, "if those barrels contain meat, we'll find it cooked—boiled in its own brine, like this."

"Isn't it strange," said Boston, as he tasted the contents of the can, "that this stuff should keep so long?"

"Not at all. It was cooked thoroughly by the heat, and then frozen. If your barrels haven't burst from the expansion of the brine under the heat or cold, you'll find the meat just as good."

"But rather salty, if I'm a judge of salt-horse. Now, where's the sail-locker? We want a sail on that foremast. It must be forward."

In the forecabin they found sailor's chests and clothing in all stages of ruin, but none of the spare sails that ships carry. In the boatswain's locker, in one corner of the forecabin, however, they found some iron-strapped blocks in fairly good condition, which Boston noted. Then they opened the main-hatch, and discovered a mixed pile of boxes, some showing protruding necks of large bottles, or carboys, others nothing but the circular opening. Here and there in the tangled heap were sections of canvas sails—rolled and unrolled, but all yellow and worthless. They closed the hatch and returned to the cabin, where they could converse.

"They stowed their spare canvas in the 'tween-deck on top of the cargo," said Boston; "and the carboys—"

“And the carboys burst from the heat and ruined the sails,” broke in the doctor. “But another question is, what became of that acid?”

“If it’s not in the ’tween-deck yet, it must be in the hold—leaked through the hatches.”

“I hope it hasn’t reached the iron in the hull, Boston, my boy. It takes a long time for cold acids to act on iron after the first oxidation, but in fifty years mixed nitric and sulphuric will do lots of work.”

Page 176

"No fear, Doc; it had done its work when you were in your cradle. What'll we do for canvas? We must get this craft before the wind. How'll the carpet do?" Boston lifted the edge, and tried the fabric in his fingers. "It'll go," he said; "we'll double it. I'll hunt for a palm-and-needle and some twine." These articles he found in the mate's room. "The twine's no better than yarn," said he, "but we'll use four parts."

Together they doubled the carpet diagonally, and with long stitches joined the edges. Then Boston sewed into each corner a thimble—an iron ring—and they had a triangular sail of about twelve feet hoist. "It hasn't been exposed to the action of the air like the ropes in the locker forward," said Boston, as he arose and took off the palm; "and perhaps it'll last till she pays off. Then we can steer. You get the big pulley-blocks from the locker, Doc, and I'll get the rope from the boat. It's lucky I thought to bring it; I expected to lift things out of the hold with it."

At the risk of his life Boston obtained the coil from the boat, while the doctor brought the blocks. Then, together, they rove off a tackle. With the handles of their pistols they knocked bunk-boards to pieces and saved the nails; then Boston climbed the foremast, as a painter climbs a steeple—by nailing successive billets of wood above his head for steps. Next he hauled up and secured the tackle to the forward side of the mast, with which they pulled up the upper corner of their sail, after lashing the lower corners to the windlass and fiferail.

It stood the pressure, and the hulk paid slowly off and gathered headway. Boston took the wheel and steadied her at northwest by west—dead before the wind—while the doctor, at his request, brought the open can of soup and lubricated the wheel-screw with the only substitute for oil at their command; for the screw worked hard with the rust of fifty years.

Their improvised sail, pressed steadily on but one side, had held together, but now, with the first flap as the gale caught it from another direction, appeared a rent; with the next flap the rag went to pieces.

"Let her go!" sang out Boston gleefully; "we can steer now. Come here, Doc, and learn to steer."

The doctor came; and when he left that wheel, three days later, he had learned. For the wind had blown a continuous gale the whole of this time, which, with the ugly sea raised as the ship left the lee of the land, necessitated the presence of both men at the helm. Only occasionally was there a lull during which one of them could rush below and return with a can of soup. During one of these lulls Boston had examined the boat, towing half out of water, and concluded that a short painter was best with a water-logged boat, had reinforced it with a few turns of his rope from forward. In the three days they had sighted no craft except such as their own—helpless—hove-to or scudding.

Page 177

Boston had judged rightly in regard to the wind. It had hauled slowly to the southward, allowing him to make the course he wished—through the Bahama and up the Florida Channel with the wind over the stern. During the day he could guide himself by landmarks, but at night, with a darkened binnacle, he could only steer blindly on with the wind at his back. The storm centre, at first to the south of Cuba, had made a wide circle, concentric with the curving course of the ship, and when the latter had reached the upper end of the Florida channel, had spurted ahead and whirled out to sea across her bows. It was then that the undiminished gale, blowing nearly west, had caused Boston, in despair, to throw the wheel down and bring the ship into the trough of the sea—to drift. Then the two wet, exhausted, hollow-eyed men slept the sleep that none but sailors and soldiers know; and when they awakened, twelve hours later, stiff and sore, it was to look out on a calm, starlit evening, with an eastern moon silvering the surface of the long, northbound rollers, and showing in sharp relief a dark horizon, on which there was no sign of land or sail.

They satisfied their hunger; then Boston, with a rusty iron pot from the galley, to which he fastened the end of his rope, dipped up some of the water from over the side. It was warm to the touch, and, aware that they were in the Gulf Stream, they crawled under the musty bedding in the cabin berths and slept through the night. In the morning there was no promise of the easterly wind that Boston hoped would come to blow them to port, and they secured their boat—reeving off davit-tackles, and with the plug out, pulling it up, one end at a time, while the water drained out through the hole in the bottom.

“Now, Boston,” said the doctor, “here we are, as you say, on the outer edge of the Gulf Stream, drifting out into the broad Atlantic at the rate of four miles an hour. We’ve got to make the best of it until something comes along; so you hunt through that store-room and see what else there is to eat, and I’ll examine the cargo. I want to know where that acid went.”

They opened all the hatches, and while Boston descended to the lazarette, the doctor, with his trousers rolled up, climbed down the notched steps in a stanchion. In a short time he came up with a yellow substance in his hand, which he washed thoroughly with fresh water in Boston’s improvised draw-bucket, and placed in the sun to dry. Then he returned to the ’tween-deck. After a while, Boston, rummaging the lazarette, heard him calling through the bulkhead, and joined him.

“Look here, Boston,” said the doctor; “I’ve cleared away the muck over this hatch. It’s ‘corked,’ as you sailormen call it. Help me get it up.”

Page 178

They dug the compacted oakum from the seams with their knives, and by iron rings in each corner, now eaten with rust to almost the thinness of wire, they lifted the hatch. Below was a filthy-looking layer of whitish substance, protruding from which were charred, half-burned staves. First they repeated the experiment with the smouldering rag, and finding that it burned, as before, they descended. The whitish substance was hard enough to bear their weight, and they looked around. Overhead, hung to the under side of the deck and extending the length of the hold, were wooden tanks, charred, and in some places burned through.

"She must have been built for a passenger or troop ship," said Boston. "Those tanks would water a regiment."

"Boston," answered the doctor, irrelevantly, "will you climb up and bring down an oar from the boat? Carry it down—don't throw it, my boy." Boston obliged him, and the doctor, picking his way forward, then aft, struck each tank with the oar. "Empty—all of them," he said.

He dug out with his knife a piece of the whitish substance under foot, and examined it closely in the light from the hatch.

"Boston," he said, impressively, "this ship was loaded with lime, tallow, and acids—acids above, lime and tallow down here. This stuff is neither; it is lime-soap. And, moreover, it had not been touched by acids." The doctor's ruddy face was ashen.

"Well?" asked Boston.

"Lime soap is formed by the causticizing action of lime on tallow in the presence of water and heat. It is easy to understand this fire. One of those tanks leaked and dribbled down on the cargo, attacking the lime—which was stowed underneath, as all these staves we see on top are from tallow-kids. The heat generated by the slaking lime set fire to the barrels in contact, which in turn set fire to others, and they burned until the air was exhausted, and then went out. See, they are but partly consumed. There was intense heat in this hold, and expansion of the water in all the tanks. Are tanks at sea filled to the top?"

"Chock full, and a cap screwed down on the upper end of the pipes."

"As I thought. The expanding water burst every tank in the hold, and the cargo was deluged with water, which attacked every lime barrel in the bottom layer, at least. Result—the bursting of those barrels from the ebullition of slaking lime, the melting of the tallow—which could not burn long in the closed-up-space—and the mixing of it in the interstices of the lime barrels with water and lime—a boiling hot mess. What happens under such conditions?"



“Give it up,” said Boston, laconically.

“Lime soap is formed, which rises, and the water beneath is in time all taken up by the lime.”

“But what of it?” interrupted the other.

“Wait. I see that this hold and the ’tween-deck are lined with wood. Is that customary in iron ships?”

Page 179

"Not now. It used to be a notion that an iron skin damaged the cargo; so the first iron ships were ceiled with wood."

"Are there any drains in the 'tween-deck to let water out, in case it gets into that deck from above—a sea, for instance?"

"Yes, always; three or four scupper-holes each side amidships. They lead the water into the bilges, where the pumps can reach it."

"I found up there," continued the doctor, "a large piece of wood, badly charred by acid for half its length, charred to a lesser degree for the rest. It was oval in cross section, and the largest end was charred most."

"Scupper plug. I suppose they plugged the 'tween-deck scuppers to keep any water they might ship out of the bilges and away from the lime."

"Yes, and those plugs remained in place for days, if not weeks or months, after the carboys burst, as indicated by the greater charring of the larger end of the plug. I burrowed under the debris, and found the hole which that plug fitted. It was worked loose, or knocked out of the hole by some internal movement of the broken carboys, perhaps. At any rate, it came out, after remaining in place long enough for the acids to become thoroughly mixed and for the hull to cool down. She was in the ice, remember. Boston, the mixed acid went down that hole, or others like it. Where is it now?"

"I suppose," said Boston, thoughtfully, "that it soaked up into the hold, through the skin."

"Exactly. The skin is calked with oakum, is it not?" Boston nodded.

"That oakum would contract with the charring action, as did the oakum in the hatch, and every drop of that acid—ten thousand gallons, as I have figured—has filtered up into the hold, with the exception of what remained between the frames under the skin. Have you ever studied organic chemistry?"

"Slightly."

"Then you can follow me. When tallow is saponified there is formed, from the palmitin, stearin, and olein contained, with the causticizing agent—in this case, lime—a soap. But there are two ends to every equation, and at the bottom of this immense soap vat, held in solution by the water, which would afterwards be taken up by the surplus lime, was the other end of this equation; and as the yield from tallow of this other product is about thirty per cent., and as we start with eight thousand fifty-pound kids—four hundred thousand pounds—all of which has disappeared, we know that, sticking to the skin and sides of the barrels down here, is—or was once—one hundred and twenty thousand pounds, or sixty tons, of the other end of the equation—glycerine!"

“Do you mean, Doc,” asked Boston, with a startled look, “that—”

Page 180

"I mean," said the doctor, emphatically, "that the first thing the acids—mixed in the 'tween-deck to just about the right proportions, mind you—would attack, on oozing through the skin, would be this glycerine; and the certain product of this union under intense cold—this hull was frozen in the ice, remember—would be nitro-glycerine; and, as the yield of the explosive is two hundred and twenty per cent. of the glycerine, we can be morally sure that in the bottom of this hold, each minute globule of it held firmly in a hard matrix of sulphate or nitrate of calcium—which would be formed next when the acids met the hydrates and carbonates of lime—is over one hundred and thirty tons of nitro-glycerine, all the more explosive from not being washed of free acids. Come up on deck. I'll show you something else."

Limp and nerveless, Boston followed the doctor. This question was beyond his seamanship.

The doctor brought the yellow substance—now well dried. "I found plenty of this in the 'tween-deck," he said; "and I should judge they used it to pack between the carboy boxes. It was once cotton-batting. It is now, since I have washed it, a very good sample of gun-cotton. Get me a hammer—crowbar—something hard."

Boston brought a marline-spike from the locker, and the doctor, tearing off a small piece of the substance and placing it on the iron barrel of a gipsy-winch, gave it a hard blow with the marline spike, which was nearly torn from his hand by the explosion that followed.

"We have in the 'tween-deck," said the doctor, as he turned, "about twice as many pounds of this stuff as they used to pack the carboys with; and, like the nitro-glycerine, is the more easily exploded from the impurities and free acids. I washed this for safe handling. Boston, we are adrift on a floating bomb that would pulverize the rock of Gibraltar!"

"But, doctor," asked Boston, as he leaned against the rail for support, "wouldn't there be evolution of heat from the action of the acids on the lime—enough to explode the nitro-glycerine just formed?"

"The best proof that it did not explode is the fact that this hull still floats. The action was too slow, and it was very cold down there. But I can't yet account for the acids left in the bilges. What have they been doing all these fifty years?"

Boston found a sounding-rod in the locker, which he scraped bright with his knife, then, unlaying a strand of the rope for a line, sounded the pump-well. The rod came up dry, but with a slight discoloration on the lower end, which Boston showed to the doctor.

"The acids have expended themselves on the iron frames and plates. How thick are they?"

“Plates, about five-eighths of an inch; frames, like railroad iron.”

“This hull is a shell! We won’t get much salvage. Get up some kind of distress signal, Boston.” Somehow the doctor was now the master-spirit.

Page 181

A flag was nailed to the mast, union down, to be blown to pieces with the first breeze; then another, and another, until the flag locker was exhausted. Next they hung out, piece after piece, all they could spare of the rotten bedding, until that too was exhausted. Then they found, in a locker of their boat, a flag of Free Cuba, which they decided not to waste, but to hang out only when a sail appeared.

But no sail appeared, and the craft, buffeted by gales and seas, drifted eastward, while the days became weeks, and the weeks became months. Twice she entered the Sargasso Sea—the graveyard of derelicts—to be blown out by friendly gales and resume her travels. Occasional rains replenished the stock of fresh water, but the food they found at first, with the exception of some cans of fruit, was all that came to light; for the salt meat was leathery, and crumbled to a salty dust on exposure to the air. After a while their stomachs revolted at the diet of cold soup, and they ate only when hunger compelled them.

At first they had stood watch-and-watch, but the lonely horror of the long night vigils in the constant apprehension of instant death had affected them alike, and they gave it up, sleeping and watching together. They had taken care of their boat and provisioned it, ready to lower and pull into the track of any craft that might approach. But it was four months from the beginning of this strange voyage when the two men, gaunt and hungry—with ruined digestions and shattered nerves—saw, with joy which may be imagined, the first land and the first sail that gladdened their eyes after the storm in the Florida Channel.

A fierce gale from the southwest had been driving them, broadside on, in the trough of the sea, for the whole of the preceding day and night; and the land they now saw appeared to them a dark, ragged line of blue, early in the morning. Boston could only surmise that it was the coast of Portugal or Spain. The sail—which lay between them and the land, about three miles to leeward—proved to be the try-sail of a black craft, hove-to, with bows nearly towards them.

Boston climbed the foremast with their only flag and secured it; then, from the high poop-deck, they watched the other craft, plunging and wallowing in the immense Atlantic combers, often raising her forefoot into plain view, again descending with a dive that hid the whole forward half in a white cloud of spume.

“If she was a steamer I’d call her a cruiser,” said Boston; “one of England’s black ones, with a storm-sail on her military mainmast. She has a ram bow, and—yes, sponsors and guns. That’s what she is, with her funnels and bridge carried away.”

“Isn’t she right in our track, Boston?” asked the doctor, excitedly. “Hadn’t she better get out of our way?”

“She’s got steam up—a full head; sec the escape-jet? She isn’t helpless. If she don’t launch a boat, we’ll take to ours and board her.”

Page 182

The distance lessened rapidly—the cruiser plunging up and down in the same spot, the derelict heaving to leeward in great, swinging leaps, as the successive seas caught her, each one leaving her half a length farther on. Soon they could make out the figures of men.

“Take us off,” screamed the doctor, waving his arms, “and get out of our way!”

“We’ll clear her,” said Boston; “see, she’s started her engine.”

As they drifted down on the weather-side of the cruiser they shouted repeatedly words of supplication and warning. They were answered by a solid shot from a secondary gun, which flew over their heads. At the same time, the ensign of Spain was run up on the flag-staff.

“They’re Spanish, Boston. They’re firing on us. Into that boat with you! If a shot hits our cargo, we won’t know what struck us.”

They sprang into the boat, which luckily hung on the lee side, and cleared the falls—fastened and coiled in the bow and stern. Often during their long voyage they had rehearsed the launching of the boat in a seaway—an operation requiring quick and concerted action.

“Ready, Doc?” sang out Boston. “One, two, three—let go!” The falls overhauled with a whirl, and the falling boat, striking an uprising sea with a smack, sank with it. When it raised they unhooked the tackle blocks, and pushed off with the oars just as a second shot hummed over their heads.

“Pull, Boston; pull hard—straight to windward!” cried the doctor.

The tight whaleboat shipped no water, and though they were pulling in the teeth of a furious gale, the hulk was drifting away from them, so, in a short time, they were separated from their late home by a full quarter-mile of angry sea. The cruiser had forged ahead in plain view, and, as they looked, took in the try-sail.

“She’s going to wear,” said Boston. “See, she’s paying off.”

“I don’t know what ‘wearing’ means, Boston,” panted the doctor, “but I know the Spanish nature. She’s going to ram that hundred and thirty tons of nitro. Don’t stop. Pull away. Hold on, there; hold on, you fools!” he shouted. “That’s a torpedo; keep away from her!”

Forgetting his own injunction to “pull away,” the doctor stood up, waving his oar frantically, and Boston assisted. But if their shouts and gestures were understood aboard the cruiser, they were ignored. She slowly turned in a wide curve and headed straight for the *Neptune* which had drifted to leeward of her.



What was in the minds of the officers on that cruiser's deck will never be known. Cruisers of all nations hold roving commissions in regard to derelicts, and it is fitting and proper for one of them to gently prod a "vagrant of the sea" with the steel prow and send her below to trouble no more. But it may be that the sight of the Cuban flag, floating defiantly in the gale, had something to do with the full speed at which the Spanish ship approached. When but half a length separated the two craft, a heavy sea lifted the bow of the cruiser high in air; then it sank, and the sharp steel ram came down like a butcher's cleaver on the side of the derelict.

Page 183

A great semicircular wall of red shut out the gray of the sea and sky to leeward, and for an instant the horrified men in the boat saw—as people see by a lightning flash—dark lines radiating from the centre of this red wall, and near this centre poised on end in mid-air, with deck and sponsons still intact, a bowless, bottomless remnant of the cruiser. Then, and before the remnant sank into the vortex beneath, the spectacle went out in the darkness of unconsciousness; for a report, as of concentrated thunder, struck them down. A great wave had left the crater-like depression in the sea, which threw the boat on end, and with the inward rush of surrounding water rose a mighty gray cone, which then subsided to a hollow, while another wave followed the first. Again and again this gray pillar rose and fell, each subsidence marked by the sending forth of a wave. And long before these concentric waves had lost themselves in the battle with the storm-driven combers from the ocean, the half-filled boat, with her unconscious passengers, had drifted over the spot where lay the shattered remnant, which, with the splintered fragments of wood and iron strewn on the surface and bottom of the sea for a mile around, and the lessening cloud of dust in the air, was all that was left of the derelict *Neptune* and one of the finest cruisers in the Spanish navy.

A few days later, two exhausted, half-starved men pulled a whaleboat up to the steps of the wharf at Cadiz, where they told some lies and sold their boat. Six months after, these two men, sitting at a camp-fire of the Cuban army, read from a discolored newspaper, brought ashore with the last supplies, the following:

“By cable to the ‘Herald.’

“CADIZ, March 13, 1895.—Anxiety for the safety of the *Reina Regente* has grown rapidly to-day, and this evening it is feared, generally, that she went down with her four hundred and twenty souls in the storm which swept the southern coast on Sunday night and Monday morning. Despatches from Gibraltar say that pieces of a boat and several semaphore flags belonging to the cruiser came ashore at Ceuta and Tarifa this afternoon.”

THE TERRIBLE SOLOMONS*

From “South Sea Tales,” BY JACK LONDON

Reprinted by courtesy of the Macmillan Co.

There is no gainsaying that the Solomons are a hard-bitten bunch of islands. On the other hand, there are worse places in the world. But to the new chum who has no constitutional understanding of men and life in the rough, the Solomons may indeed prove terrible.

Page 184

It is true that fever and dysentery are perpetually on the walk-about, that loathsome skin diseases abound, that the air is saturated with a poison that bites into every pore, cut, or abrasion and plants malignant ulcers, and that many strong men who escape dying there return as wrecks to their own countries. It is also true that the natives of the Solomons are a wild lot, with a hearty appetite for human flesh and a fad for collecting human heads. Their highest instinct of sportsmanship is to catch a man with his back turned and to smite him a cunning blow with a tomahawk that severs the spinal column at the base of the brain. It is equally true that on some islands, such as Malaita, the profit and loss account of social intercourse is calculated in homicides. Heads are a medium of exchange, and white heads are extremely valuable. Very often a dozen villages make a jack-pot, which they fatten moon by moon, against the time when some brave warrior presents a white man's head, fresh and gory, and claims the pot.

All the foregoing, is quite true, and yet there are white men who have lived in the Solomons a score of years and who feel homesick when they go away from them. A man needs only to be careful—and lucky—to live a long time in the Solomons; but he must also be of the right sort. He must have the hall-mark of the inevitable white man stamped upon his soul. He must be inevitable. He must have a certain grand carelessness of odds, a certain colossal self-satisfaction, and a racial egotism that convinces him that one white is better than a thousand niggers every day in the week, and that on Sunday he is able to clean out two thousand niggers. For such are the things that have made the white man inevitable. Oh, and one other thing—the white man who wishes to be inevitable, must not merely despise the lesser breeds and think a lot of himself; he must also fail to be too long on imagination. He must not understand too well the instincts, customs and mental processes of the blacks, the yellows, and the browns; for it is not in such fashion that the white race has tramped its royal road around the world.

Bertie Arkwright was not inevitable. He was too sensitive, too finely strung, and he possessed too much imagination. The world was too much with him. He projected himself too quiveringly into his environment. Therefore, the last place in the world for him to come was the Solomons. He did not come, expecting to stay. A five-weeks' stop-over between steamers, he decided, would satisfy the call of the primitive he felt thrumming the strings of his being. At least, so he told the lady tourists on the Makembo, though in different terms; and they worshipped him as a hero, for they were lady tourists and they would know only the safety of the steamer's deck as she threaded her way through the Solomons.

Page 185

There was another man on board, of whom the ladies took no notice. He was a little shriveled wisp of a man, with a withered skin the color of mahogany. His name on the passenger list does not matter, but his other name, Captain Malu, was a name for niggers to conjure with, and to scare naughty pickaninnies to righteousness, from New Hanover to the New Hebrides. He had farmed savages and savagery, and from fever and hardship, the crack of Sniders and the lash of the overseers, had wrested five millions of money in the form of beche-de-mer, sandalwood, pearl-shell and turtle-shell, ivory nuts and copra, grasslands, trading stations, and plantations. Captain Malu's little finger, which was broken, had more inevitableness in it than Bertie Arkwright's whole carcass. But then, the lady tourists had nothing by which to judge save appearances, and Bertie certainly was a fine-looking man.

Bertie talked with Captain Malu in the smoking-room, confiding to him his intention of seeing life red and bleeding in the Solomons. Captain Malu agreed that the intention was ambitious and honorable. It was not until several days later that he became interested in Bertie, when that young adventurer insisted on showing him an automatic 44-calibre pistol. Bertie explained the mechanism and demonstrated by slipping a loaded magazine up the hollow butt.

"It is so simple," he said. He shot the outer barrel back along the inner one. "That loads it, and cocks it, you see. And then all I have to do is pull the trigger, eight times, as fast as I can quiver my finger. See that safety clutch. That's what I like about it. It is safe. It is positively fool-proof." He slipped out the magazine. "You see how safe it is."

As he held it in his hand, the muzzle came in line with Captain Malu's stomach. Captain Malu's blue eyes looked at it unswervingly.

"Would you mind pointing it in some other direction?" he asked.

"It's perfectly safe," Bertie assured him. "I withdrew the magazine. It's not loaded now, you know."

"A gun is always loaded."

"But this one isn't."

"Turn it away just the same."

Captain Malu's voice was flat and metallic and low, but his eyes never left the muzzle until the line of it was drawn past him and away from him.

"I'll bet a fiver it isn't loaded," Bertie proposed warmly.

The other shook his head.

“Then I’ll show you.”

Bertie started to put the muzzle to his own temple with the evident intention of pulling the trigger.

“Just a second,” Captain Malu said quietly, reaching out his hand. “Let me look at it.”

He pointed it seaward and pulled the trigger. A heavy explosion followed, instantaneous with the sharp click of the mechanism that flipped a hot and smoking cartridge sideways along the deck. Bertie’s jaw dropped in amazement.

“I slipped the barrel back once, didn’t I?” he explained. “It was silly of me, I must say.”

Page 186

He giggled flabbily, and sat down in a steamer chair. The blood had ebbed from his face, exposing dark circles under his eyes. His hands were trembling and unable to guide the shaking cigarette to his lips. The world was too much with him, and he saw himself with dripping brains prone upon the deck.

“Really,” he said, “. . . really.”

“It’s a pretty weapon,” said Captain Malu, returning the automatic to him.

The Commissioner was on board the *Makembo*, returning from Sydney, and by his permission a stop was made at Ugi to land a missionary. And at Ugi lay the ketch *Arla*, Captain Hansen, skipper. Now the *Arla* was one of many vessels owned by Captain Malu, and it was at his suggestion and by his invitation that Bertie went aboard the *Arla* as guest for a four-days’ recruiting cruise on the coast of Malaita. Thereafter the *Arla* would drop him at Reminge Plantation (also owned by Captain Malu), where Bertie could remain for a week, and then be sent over to Tulgal, the seat of government, where he would become the Commissioner’s guest. Captain Malu was responsible for two other suggestions, which given, he disappears from this narrative. One was to Captain Hansen, the other to Mr. Harriwell, manager of Reminge Plantation. Both suggestions were similar in tenor, namely, to give Mr. Bertram Arkwright an insight into the rawness and redness of life in the Solomons. Also, it is whispered that Captain Malu mentioned that a case of Scotch would be coincidental with any particularly gorgeous insight Mr. Arkwright might receive.

* * * * *

“Yes, Svartz always was too pig-headed. You see, he took four of his boat’s crew to Tulagi to be flogged—officially, you know—then started back with them in the whale-boat. It was pretty squally, and the boat capsized just outside. Swartz was the only one drowned. Of course it was an accident.”

“Was it? Really?” Bertie asked, only half-interested, staring hard at the black man at the wheel.

Ugi had dropped astern, and the *Arla* was sliding along through a summer sea toward the wooded ranges of Malaita. The helmsman who so attracted Bertie’s eyes sported a tenpenny nail, stuck skewerwise through his nose. About his neck was string of pants buttons. Thrust through holes in his ears were a can-opener, the broken handle of a tooth-brush, a clay pipe, the brass wheel of an alarm clock, and several Winchester rifle cartridges. On his chest, suspended from around his neck hung the half of a china plate. Some forty similarly appavelled blacks lay about the deck, fifteen of which were boat’s crew, the remainder being fresh labor recruits.

“Of course it was an accident,” spoke up the *Arla*’s mate, Jacobs, a slender, dark-eyed man who looked more a professor than a sailor. “Johnny Bedlip nearly had the same kind of accident. He was bringing back several from a flogging, when they capsized him. But he knew how to swim as well as they, and two of them were drowned. He used a boat-stretcher and a revolver. Of course it was an accident.”

Page 187

"Quite common, them accidents," remarked the skipper. "You see that man at the wheel, Mr. Arkwright? He's a man-eater. Six months ago, he and the rest of the boat's crew drowned the then captain of the *Arla*. They did it on deck, sir, right aft there by the mizzen-traveller."

"The deck was in a shocking state," said the mate.

"Do I understand—?" Bertie began.

"Yes, just that," said Captain Hansen. "It was accidental drowning."

"But on deck—?"

"Just so. I don't mind telling you, in confidence, of course, that they used an axe."

"This present crew of yours?"

Captain Hansen nodded.

"The other skipper always was too careless," explained the mate. "He but just turned his back, when they let him have it."

"We haven't any show down here," was the skipper's complaint. "The government protects a nigger against a white every time. You can't shoot first. You've got to give the nigger first shot, or else the government calls it murder and you go to Fiji. That's why there's so many drowning accidents."

Dinner was called, and Bertie and the skipper went below, leaving the mate to watch on deck.

"Keep an eye out for that black devil, Auiki," was the skipper's parting caution. "I haven't liked his looks for several days."

"Right O," said the mate.

Dinner was part way along, and the skipper was in the middle of his story of the cutting out of the *Scottish Chiefs*.

"Yes," he was saying, "she was the finest vessel on the coast. But when she missed stays, and before ever she hit the reef, the canoes started for her. There were five white men, a crew of twenty Santa Cruz boys and Samoans, and only the super-cargo escaped. Besides, there were sixty recruits. They were all kai-kai'd. Kaikai?—oh, I beg your pardon. I mean they were eaten. Then there was the *James Edwards*, a dandy-rigged—"

But at that moment there was a sharp oath from the mate on deck and a chorus of savage cries. A revolver went off three times, and then was heard a loud splash. Captain Hansen had sprung up the companionway on the instant, and Bertie's eyes had been fascinated by a glimpse of him drawing his revolver as he sprung. Bertie went up more circumspectly, hesitating before he put his head above the companionway slide. But nothing happened. The mate was shaking with excitement, his revolver in his hand. Once he startled, and half-jumped around, as if danger threatened his back.

"One of the natives fell overboard," he was saying, in a queer tense voice. "He couldn't swim."

"Who was it?" the skipper demanded.

"Auiki," was the answer.

"But I say, you know, I heard shots," Bertie said, in trembling eagerness, for he scented adventure, and adventure that was happily over with.

The mate whirled upon him, snarling:

Page 188

"It's a damned lie. There ain't been a shot fired. The nigger fell overboard."

Captain Hansen regarded Bertie with unblinking, lack-lustre eyes.

"I—I thought—" Bertie was beginning.

"Shots? Did you hear any shots, Mr. Jacobs?"

"Not a shot," replied Mr. Jacobs.

The skipper looked at his guest triumphantly, and said:

"Evidently an accident. Let us go down, Mr. Arkwright, and finish dinner."

Bertie slept that night in the captain's cabin, a tiny stateroom off the main-cabin. The for'ard bulkhead was decorated with a stand of rifles. Over the bunk were three more rifles. Under the bunk was a big drawer, which when he pulled it out, he found filled with ammunition dynamite, and several boxes of detonators. He elected to take the settee on the opposite side. Lying conspicuously on the small table, was the *Arla's* log. Bertie did not know that it had been especially prepared for the occasion by Captain Malu, and he read therein how on September 21, two boat's crew had fallen overboard and been drowned. Bertie read between the lines and knew better. He read how the *Arla's* whale-boat had been bushwacked at Sulu and had lost three men; of how the skipper discovered the cook stewing human flesh on the galley fire—flesh purchased by the boat's crew ashore in Fui; of how an accidental discharge of dynamite, while signalling, had killed another boat's crew; of night attacks; ports fled from between the dawns; attacks by bushmen in mangrove swamps and by fleets of salt-water men in the larger passages. One item that occurred with monotonous frequency was death by dysentery. He noticed with alarm that two white men had so died—guests, like himself on the *Arla*.

"I say, you know," Bertie said next day to Captain Hansen. "I've been glancing through your log."

The skipper displayed quick vexation that the log had been left lying about.

"And all that dysentery, you know, that's all rot, just like the accidental drownings," Bertie continued. "What does dysentery really stand for?"

The skipper openly admired his guest's acumen, stiffened himself to make indignant denial, then gracefully surrendered.

"You see, it's like this, Mr. Arkwright. These islands have got a bad enough name as it is. It's getting harder every day to sign on white men. Suppose a man is killed. The company has to pay through the nose for another man to take the job. But if the man

merely dies of sickness, it's all right. The new chums don't mind disease. What they draw the line at is being murdered. I thought the skipper of the *Ar/a* had died of dysentery when I took his billet. Then it was too late. I'd signed the contract."

"Besides," said Mr. Jacobs, "there's altogether too many accidental drownings anyway. It don't look right. It's the fault of the government. A white man hasn't a chance to defend himself from the niggers."

Page 189

"Yes, look at the *Princess* and that Yankee mate," the skipper took up the tale. "She carried five white men besides a government agent. The captain, the agent, and the supercargo were ashore in the two boats. They were killed to the last man. The mate and bosun, with about fifteen of the crew—Samoans and Tongans—were on board. A crowd of niggers came off from the shore. First thing the mate knew, the bosun and the crew were killed in the first rush. The mate grabbed three cartridge-belts and two Winchesters and skinned up to the cross-trees. He was the sole survivor, and you can't blame him for being mad. He pumped one rifle till it got so hot he couldn't hold it, then he pumped the other. The deck was black with niggers. He cleaned them out. He dropped them as they went over the rail, and he dropped them as fast as they picked up their paddles. Then they jumped into the water and started to swim for it, and, being mad, he got half a dozen more. And what did he get for it?"

"Seven years in Fiji," snapped the mate.

"The government said he wasn't justified in shooting after they'd taken to the water," the skipper explained.

"And that's why they die of dysentery nowadays," the mate added.

"Just fancy," said Bertie, as he felt a longing for the cruise to be over.

Later on in the day he interviewed the black who had been pointed out to him as a cannibal. This fellow's name was Sumasai. He had spent three years on a Queensland plantation. He had been to Samoa, and Fiji, and Sydney; and as a boat's crew had been on recruiting schooners through New Britain, New Ireland, New Guinea, and the Admiralties. Also, he was a wag, and he had taken a line on his skipper's conduct. Yes, he had eaten many men. How many? He could not remember the tally. Yes, white men, too; they were very good, unless they were sick. He had once eaten a sick one.

"My word!" he cried, at the recollection. "Me sick plenty along him. My belly walk about too much."

Bertie shuddered, and asked about heads. Yes, Sumasai had several hidden ashore, in good condition, sun-dried, and smoke-cured. One was of the captain of a schooner. It had long whiskers. He would sell it for two quid. Black men's heads he would sell for one quid. He had some pickaninny heads, in poor condition, that he would let go for ten bob.

Five minutes afterward, Bertie found himself sitting on the companionway-slide alongside a black with a horrible skin disease. He sheered off, and on inquiry was told that it was leprosy. He hurried below and washed himself with antiseptic soap. He took many antiseptic washes in the course of the day, for every native on board was afflicted with malignant ulcers of one sort or another.

As the *Arla* drew in to an anchorage in the midst of mangrove swamps, a double row of barbed wire was stretched around above her rail. That looked like business and when Bertie saw the shore canoes alongside, armed with spears, bows and arrows, and Sniders, he wished more earnestly than ever that the cruise was over.

Page 190

That evening the natives were slow in leaving the ship at sundown. A number of them checked the mate when he ordered them ashore.

“Never mind, I’ll fix them,” said Captain Hansen, diving below.

When he came back, he showed Bertie a stick of dynamite attached to a fish-hook. Now it happens that a paper-wrapped bottle of chlorodyne with a piece of harmless fuse projecting can fool anybody. It fooled Bertie, and it fooled the natives. When Captain Hansen lighted the fuse and hooked the fish-hook into the tail-end of a native’s loin-cloth, that native was smitten with so ardent a desire for the shore that he forgot to shed the loin-cloth. He started for’ard, the fuse sizzling and spluttering at his rear, the natives in his path taking headers over the barbed wire at every jump. Bertie was horror-stricken. So was Captain Hansen. He had forgotten his twenty-five recruits, on each of which he had paid thirty shillings advance. They went over the side along with the shore-dwelling folk and followed by him who trailed the sizzling chlorodyne bottle.

Bertie did not see the bottle go off; but the mate opportunely discharging a stick of real dynamite aft where it would harm nobody, Bertie would have sworn in any admiralty court to a nigger blown to flinders.

The flight of the twenty-five recruits had actually cost the *Arla* forty pounds, and, since they had taken to the bush, there was no hope of recovering them. The skipper and his mate proceeded to drown their sorrow in cold tea. The cold tea was in whiskey bottles, so Bertie did not know it was cold tea they were mopping up. All he knew was that the two men got very drunk and argued eloquently and at length as to whether the exploded nigger should be reported as a case of dysentery or as an accidental drowning. When they snored off to sleep, he was the only white man left, and he kept a perilous watch till dawn, in fear of an attack from shore and an uprising of the crew.

Three more days the *Arla* spent on the coast, and three more nights the skipper and the mate drank overfondly of cold tea, leaving Bertie to keep watch. They knew he could be depended upon, while he was equally certain that if he lived, he would report their drunken conduct to Captain Malu. Then the *Arla* dropped anchor at Reminge Plantation, on Guadalcanar, and Bertie landed on the beach with a sigh of relief and shook hands with the manager. Mr. Harriwell was ready for him.

“Now you mustn’t be alarmed if some of our fellows seem downcast,” Mr. Harriwell said, having drawn him aside in confidence. “There’s been talk of an outbreak, and two or three suspicious signs I’m willing to admit, but personally I think it’s all poppycock.”

“How—how many blacks have you on the plantation?” Bertie asked, with a sinking heart.

“We’re working four hundred just now,” replied Mr. Harriwell, cheerfully; “but the three of us, with you, of course, and the skipper and mate of the *Arla*, can handle them all right.”

Page 191

Bertie turned to meet one McTavish, the storekeeper, who scarcely acknowledged the introduction, such was his eagerness to present his resignation.

"It being that I'm a married man, Mr. Harriwell, I can't very well afford to remain on longer. Trouble is working up, as plain as the nose on your face. The niggers are going to break out, and there'll be another Hohono horror here."

"What's a Hohono horror?" Bertie asked, after the storekeeper had been persuaded to remain until the end of the month.

"Oh, he means Hohono Plantation, on Ysabel," said the manager. "The niggers killed the five white men ashore, captured the schooner, killed the captain and mate, and escaped in a body to Malaita. But I always said they were careless on Hohono. They won't catch us napping here. Come along, Mr. Arkwright, and see our view from the veranda."

Bertie was too busy wondering how he could get away to Tulagi to the Commissioner's house, to see much of the view. He was still wondering, when a rifle exploded very near to him behind his back. At the same moment his arm was nearly dislocated, so eagerly did Mr. Harriwell drag him indoors.

"I say, old man, that was a close shave," said the manager, pawing him over to see if he had been hit. "I can't tell you how sorry I am. But it was broad daylight, and I never dreamed."

Bertie was beginning to turn pale.

"They got the other manager that way," McTavish vouchsafed. "And a dashed fine chap he was. Blew his brains out all over the veranda. You noticed that dark stain there between the steps and the door?"

Bertie was ripe for the cocktail which Mr. Harriwell pitched in and compounded for him; but before he could drink it, a man in riding trousers and puttees entered.

"What's the matter now?" the manager asked, after one look at the newcomer's face. "Is the river up again?"

"River be blowed—it's the niggers. Stepped out of the cane-grass not a dozen feet away, and whopped at me. It was a Snider, and he shot from the hip. Now what I want to know is where'd he get the Snider? Oh, I beg your pardon. Glad to know you, Mr. Arkwright."

"Mr. Brown is my assistant," explained Mr. Harriwell. "And now let's have that drink."

"But where'd he get that Snider?" Mr. Brown insisted. "I always objected to keeping those guns on the premises?"

"They're still there," Mr. Harriwell said, with a show of heat.

Mr. Brown smiled incredulously.

"Come along and see," said the manager.

Bertie joined the procession into the office, where Mr. Harriwell pointed triumphantly at a big packing-case in a dusty corner.

"Well, then, where did the beggar get that Snider?" harped Mr. Brown.

But just then McTavish lifted the packing-case. The manager started then tore off the lid. The case was empty. They gazed at one another in horrified silence. Harriwell dropped wearily.

Page 192

Then McVeigh cursed.

“What I contended all along—the house-boys are not to be trusted.”

“It does look serious,” Harriwell admitted, “but we’ll come through it all right. What the sanguinary niggers need is a shaking up. Will you gentlemen please bring your rifles to dinner, and will you, Mr. Brown, kindly prepare forty or fifty sticks of dynamite. Make the fuses good and short. We’ll give them a lesson. And now, gentlemen, dinner is served.”

One thing that Bertie detested was rice and curry, so it happened that he alone partook of an inviting omelet. He had quite finished his plate, when Harriwell helped himself to the omelet. One mouthful, he tasted, then spat out vociferously.

“That’s the second time,” McTavish announced ominously.

Harriwell was still hawking and spitting.

“Second time, what?” Bertie quavered.

“Poison,” was the answer. “That cook will be hanged yet.”

“That’s the way the bookkeeper went out at Cape Marsh,” Brown spoke up. “Died horribly. They said on the *Jessie* that they heard him screaming three miles away.”

“I’ll put the cook in irons,” sputtered Harriwell. “Fortunately we discovered it in time.”

Bertie sat paralysed. There was no color in his face. He attempted to speak, but only an inarticulate gurgled resulted. All eyed him anxiously.

“Don’t say it, don’t say it,” McTavish cried in a tense voice.

“Yes, I ate it, plenty of it, a whole plateful!” Bertie cried explosively, like a diver suddenly regaining breath.

The awful silence continued half a minute longer, and he read his fate in their eyes.

“Maybe it wasn’t poison after all,” said Harriwell, dismally.

“Call in the cook,” said Brown.

In came the cook, a grinning black boy, nose-spiked and ear-plugged.

“Here, you, Wi-wi, what name that?” Harriwell bellowed, pointing accusingly at the omelet.

Wi-wi was very naturally frightened and embarrassed.

“Him good fella kai-kai,” he murmured apologetically.

“Make him eat it,” suggested McTavish. “That’s a proper test.”

Harriwell filled a spoon with the stuff and jumped for the cook, who fled in panic.

“That settles it,” was Brown’s solemn pronouncement. “He won’t eat it.”

“Mr. Brown, will you please go and put the irons on him?” Harriwell turned cheerfully to Bertie. “It’s all right, old man, the Commissioner will deal with him, and if you die, depend upon it, he will be hanged.”

“Don’t think the government’ll do it,” objected McTavish.

“But gentlemen, gentlemen,” Bertie cried. “In the meantime think of me.”

Harriwell shrugged his shoulders pityingly.

“Sorry, old man, but it’s a native poison, and there are no known antidotes for native poisons. Try and compose yourself, and if——”

Page 193

Two sharp reports of a rifle from without, interrupted the discourse, and Brown, entering, reloaded his rifle and sat down to table.

"The cook's dead," he said. "Fever. A rather sudden attack."

"I was just telling Mr. Arkwright that there are no antidotes for native poisons——"

"Except gin," said Brown.

Harriwell called himself an absent-minded idiot and rushed for the gin bottle.

"Neat, man, neat," he warned Bertie, who gulped down a tumbler two-thirds full of the raw spirits, and coughed and choked from the angry bite of it till the tears ran down his cheeks.

Harriwell took his pulse and temperature, made a show of looking out for him, and doubted that the omelet had been poisoned. Brown and McTavish also doubted; but Bertie discerned an insincere ring in their voices. His appetite had left him, and he took his own pulse stealthily under the table. There was no question but what it was increasing, but he failed to ascribe it to the gin he had taken. McTavish, rifle in hand, went out on the veranda to reconnoitre.

"They're massing up at the cook-house," was his report. "And they've no end of Sniders. My idea is to sneak around on the other side and take them in flank. Strike the first blow, you know. Will you come along, Brown?"

Harriwell ate on steadily, while Bertie discovered that his pulse had leaped up five beats. Nevertheless, he could not help jumping when the rifles began to go off. Above the scattering of Sniders could be heard the pumping of Brown's and McTavish's Winchesters—all against a background of demoniacal screeching and yelling.

"They've got them on the run," Harriwell remarked, as voices and gunshots faded away in the distance.

Scarcely were Brown and McTavish back at the table when the latter reconnoitred.

"They've got dynamite," he said.

"Then let's charge them with dynamite," Harriwell proposed.

Thrusting half a dozen sticks each into their pockets and equipping themselves with lighted cigars, they started for the door. And just then it happened. They blamed McTavish for it afterward, and he admitted that the charge had been a trifle excessive. But at any rate it went off under the house, which lifted up corner-wise and settled back on its foundations. Half the china on the table was shattered, while the eight-day clock

stopped. Yelling for vengeance, the three men rushed out into the night, and the bombardment began.

When they returned, there was no Bertie. He had dragged himself away to the office, barricaded himself in, and sunk upon the floor in a gin-soaked nightmare, wherein he died a thousand deaths while the valorous fight went on around him. In the morning, sick and headachy from the gin, he crawled out to find the sun still in the sky and God presumably in heaven, for his hosts were alive and uninjured.

Page 194

Harriwell pressed him to stay on longer, but Bertie insisted on sailing immediately on the *Arla* for Tulagi, where, until the following steamer day, he stuck close by the Commissioner's house. There were lady tourists on the outgoing steamer, and Bertie was again a hero, while Captain Malu, as usual, passed unnoticed. But Captain Malu sent back from Sydney two cases of the best Scotch whiskey on the market, for he was not able to make up his mind as to whether it was Captain Hansen or Mr. Harriwell who had given Bertie Arkwright the more gorgeous insight into life in the Solomons.

EL DORADO

From "A Tarpaulin Muster," BY JOHN MASEFIELD

The night had fallen over the harbour before the winch began to rattle. The stars came out, calm and golden, shaking little tracks in the sea. In the tiers of ships shone the riding-lights. To the westward, where the Point jutted out, the great golden light of Negra winked and glimmered as it revolved. It was a beat continually, like the marching of an army, along the line of the coast. In one of the tiers of ships there was a sing-song. A crew had gathered on the forecastle head, to beat their pannikins to the stars. The words of their song floated out into the darkness, full of a haunting beauty which thrilled and satisfied me. There was something in the night, in the air, in the beauty of the town, and in the sweetness of the sailors' singing, which made me sorry to be leaving. I should have liked to have gone ashore again, to the *Calle del Inca*, where the cafes and taverns stood. I should have liked to have seen those stately pale women, in their black robes, with the scarlet roses in their hair, swaying slowly on the stage to the clicking of the castenets. I should have liked to have taken part in another wild dance among the tables of the wine shops. I was sorry to be leaving.

When the winch began to clank, as the cable was hove in, I gathered up my lead-line, and went to the leadsman's dicky, or little projecting platform, on the starboard side. I was to be the leadsman that night, and as we should soon be moving, I made the breast-rope secure, and stood by.

Presently the bell of the engine-room clanged, and there came a wash abaft as the screws thrashed. The ship trembled, as the turbulent trampling of the engines shook her. The bell clanged again; the water below me gleamed and whitened; the dark body of the steamer, with her lines of lit ports, swept slowly across the lights in the harbour. The trampling of the engines steadied, and took to itself a rhythm. We were off. I cast an eye astern at the little town I was so sad to leave, and caught a glimpse of a path of churned water, broadening astern of us. A voice sounded from the promenade deck behind me. "Zat light, what you call 'eem?"

I could not answer. My orders were to keep strict silence. The point of an umbrella took me sharply below the shoulders. "What you call 'eem—zat light? Ze light zere?"

Page 195

I wondered if I could swing my lead on to him; it was worth trying. Again came the umbrella; and again the bell of the engine-room clanged.

"Are you ready there with the lead?" came the mate's voice above me. "All ready with the lead, sir." "What have we now?" I gathered forward and swung the lead. I could not reach the umbrella-man, even with my spare line. Once, twice, thrice I swung, and pitched the plummet well forward into the bow wash.

"By the deep, eight, sir."

Again the bell clanged; the ship seemed to tremble and stop. "Another cast now, quickly." "And a half, seven, sir." As I hauled in, I again tasted the umbrella, and another question came to me: "What 'ave you do? Why 'ave you do zat?" I swore under my breath. "Are you asleep there leadsman?" The mate was biting his finger-ends. I sent the lead viciously into the sea. "Quarter less seven, sir." "Another cast, smartly, now." Rapidly I hauled in, humming an old ballad to myself. "We'll have the ship ashore," I repeated. There was a step on the deck behind me, and again came the voice, "Ze man, ze man zere what 'ave he do? Why 'ave 'e go like so?" "Won't you pass further aft, sir?" said a suave voice. "You're interrup'in' the leadsman." It was one of the quartermasters. Once again the lead flew forward. "By the mark, seven, sir."

There was a pause; then came the voice again. "I go zees way," said the quartermaster. The steps of the umbrella-man passed away aft. "Zees way," said the quartermaster, under his breath, "zees way! You gaw-dem Dago!" I could have hugged the fellow.

"What now?" said the old man, leaning over from the bridge. I cast again. "And a half, eight, sir."

"We're clear," said the voice above me. "Speed ahead, Mr. Jenkins." I gathered up my line. The engine-room bell clanged once more; the ship seemed to leap suddenly forward. In a few seconds, even as I coiled my line, the bow wash broadened to a roaring water. The white of it glimmered and boiled, and spun away from us streaked with fires. Across the stars above us the mists from the smoke-stack stretched in a broad cloud. Below me the engines trampled thunderously. Ahead there were the lights, and the figure of the look-out, and the rush and hurry of the water. Astern, far astern already, were the port, the ships at anchor, and the winking light on the Point. A bugle abaft called the passengers to dinner, and I watched them as they went from their cabins. A lady, in blue gown, with a shawl round her head, was talking to a man in evening dress. "Isn't it interesting," she remarked, "to hear them making the soundings?" The white shirt was politely non-committal. "Aft there, two of you," said a hard voice, "and trice the ladder up. Smartly now." The lady in the blue dress stopped to watch us.

Page 196

I did not see the umbrella-man again until the next day, when I passed him on the hurricane deck. He was looking at the coast through a pair of binoculars. We were running to the north, in perfect Pacific weather, under a soft blue sky that was patrolled by little soft white clouds. The land lay broad to starboard, a land of yellow hills with surf-beaten outliers of black reef. Here and there we passed villages in the watered valleys, each with its whitewashed church and copper smeltry. The umbrella-man was looking beyond these, at the hills.

He was a little man, this man who had prodded me, with a long, pale face and pale eyes, a long reddish beard, and hair rather darker, both hair and beard being sparse. He was a fidgety person, always twitching with his hands, and he walked with something of a strut, as though the earth belonged to him. He snapped-to the case of his binoculars as though he had sheathed a sword.

Later in the day, after supper, in the second dog-watch, as I sat smoking on the fore-coamings, he came up to me and spoke to me. "You know zees coas'?" he asked. Yes, I knew the coast. "What you zink?" he asked; "you like 'eem?" No, I didn't like 'eem. "Ah," he said, "You 'ave been wizzin?" I asked him what he meant. "Wizzin," he repeated, "wizzen, in ze contry. You 'ave know ze land, ze peoples?" I growled that I had been within, to Lima, and to Santiago, and that I had been ashore at the Chincha Islands. "Ah," he said, with a strange quickening of interest, "you 'ave been to Lima; you like 'eem?" No, I had not. "I go wizzen," he said proudly. "It is because I go; zat is why I ask. Zere is few 'ave gone wizzen." An old quartermaster walked up to us. "There's very few come back, sir," he said. "Them Indians——" "Ah, ze Indians," said the little man scornfully, "ze Indians; I zeenk nozzin of ze Indians." "Beg pardon, sir," said the old sailor, "They're a tough crowd, them copper fellers." "I no understan'," said the Frenchman. "They pickle people's heads," said the old sailor, "in the sand or somethin'. They keep for ever pretty near when once they're pickled. They pickle every one's head and sell 'em in Lima: I've knowed 'em get a matter of three pound for a good head." "Heads?" said another sailor. "I had one myself once. I got it at Tacna, but it wasn't properly pickled or something—it was a red-headed beggar the chap as owned it—I had to throw it away. It got too strong for the crowd," he explained. "Ah zose Indians," said the Frenchman. "I 'ave 'eard; zey tell me, zey tell me at Valparaiso. But ah, it ees a fool; it ees a fool; zere is no Indians." "Beg pardon, sir," said the old sailor, "but if you go up among them jokers, you'll have to look slippy with a gun, sir," "Ah, a gon," he answered, "a gon. I was not to be bozzered wiz a gon. I 'ave what you call 'eem—peestol." He produced a boy's derringer, which might have cost about ten dollars, Spanish dollars, in the pawnshops of Santiago. "Peestol," murmured a sailor, gasping, as he shambled forward to laugh, "peestol, the gawdem Dago's balmy."

Page 197

During the next few days I saw the Frenchman frequently. He was a wonder to us, and his plans were discussed at every meal, and in every watch below. In the dog-watches he would come forward, with his eternal questions: "What is wizzin? In ze contry?" We would tell him, "Indians, or highwaymen," or "a push of highbinders;" and he would answer: "It ees nozzin, it ees a fool." Once he asked us if we had heard of any gold being found "wizzen." "Gold?" said one of us. "Gold? O' course there's gold, any God's quantity. Them Incas ate gold; they're buried in it." "Ave you know zem, ze Incas?" he asked eagerly. "I seen a tomb of theirs once," said the sailor; "it were in a cove, like the fo'c'sle yonder, and full of knittin'-needles." "What is zem?" said the Frenchman. The sailor shambled below to his chest, and returned with a handful of little sticks round which some balls of coloured threads were bound. "Knittin'-needles," said the sailor. "Them ain't no knittin'-needles. Writin'? How could them be writin'? Well, I heard tell once," replied the other. "It ees zeir way of writing," said the Frenchman; "I 'ave seen; zat is zeir way of writing; ze knots is zeir letters." "Bleedin' funny letters, I call 'em," said the needles-theorist. "You and your needles," said the other. "Now, what d'ye call 'em?" The bell upon the bridge clanged. "Eight bells," said the company; "aft to muster, boys." The bugle at the saloon-door announced supper.

We were getting pretty well to the north—Mollendo, or thereabouts—when I had my last conversation with the Frenchman. He came up to me one night, as I sat on the deck to leeward of the winch, keeping the first watch as snugly as I could. "You know zees coast long?" he asked. I had not. Then came the never-ceasing, "Ave you know of ze Incas?" Yes, lot of general talk; and I had seen Incas curios, mostly earthware, in every port in Peru. "You 'ave seen gold?" No; there was never any gold. The Spaniards made a pretty general average of any gold there was. "It ees a fool," he answered. "I tell you," he went on, "it ees a fool. Zay have say zat; zey 'ave all say zat; it ees a fool. Zere is gold. Zere is a hundred million pounds; zere is twenty tousan' million dollars; zere is El Dorado. Beyond ze mountains zere is El Dorado; zere is a town of gold. Zay say zere is no gold? Zere is. I go to find ze gold; zat is what I do; I fin' ze gold, I, Paul Bac." "Alone?" I asked. "I, Paul Bac," he answered.

I looked at him a moment. He was a little red-haired man, slightly made, but alert and active-looking. He knew no Spanish, no Indian dialects, and he had no comrade. I told him that I thought he didn't know what he was doing. "Ha!" he said. "Listen: I go to Payta; I go by train to Chito; zen I reach ze Morona River; from zere I reach Marinha. Listen: El Dorado is between ze Caqueta and ze Putumayo Rivers, in ze forest." I would have asked him how he knew, but I had to break away to relieve the lookout. I wished the little man good night; I never spoke with him again.

Page 198

I thought of him all that watch, as I kept scanning the seas. I should be going up and down, I thought, landing passengers through surf, or swaying bananas out of launches, or crying the sounds as we came to moorings. He would be going on under the stars, full of unquenchable hope, stumbling on the bones of kings. He would be wading across bogs, through rivers and swamps, through unutterable and deathly places, singing some songs, and thinking of the golden city. He was a pilgrim, a poet, a person to reverence. And if he got there, if he found El Dorado—but that was absurd. I thought of him sadly, with the feeling that he had learned how to live, and that he would die by applying his knowledge. I wondered how he would die. He would be alone there, in the tangle, stumbling across creepers. The poisoned blow-pipe, from the long, polished blow-pipe, such as I had seen in the museums. He would fall on his face, among the jungle. Then the silent Indian would hack off his head with a flint, and pickle it for the Lima markets. He would never get to the Caqueta. Or perhaps he would be caught in an electric storm, an aire, as they call them, and be stricken down among the hills on his way to Chito. More probably he would die of hunger or thirst, as so many had died before him. I remembered a cowboy whom I had found under a thorn bush in the Argentine. Paul Bac would be like that cowboy; he would run short of water, and kill his horse for the blood, and then go mad and die.

I was in my bunk when he went ashore at Payta, but a fellow in the other watch told me how he left the ship. There was a discussion in the forecabin that night as to the way the heads were prepared. Some said it was sand; some said it was the leaf of the puro bush; one or two held out for a mixture of pepper and nitrate. One man speculated as to the probable price the head would fetch; and the general vote was for two pounds, or two pounds ten. "It wouldn't give me no pleasure," said one of us, "to have that ginger-nob in my chest." "Nor me, it wouldn't," said another; "I draw the line at having a corpse on my tobacker." "And I do," said several. Clearly the Frenchman was destined for a town museum.

It was more than a year after that I heard of the end of the El Dorado hunter. I was in New York when I heard it, serving behind the bar of a saloon. One evening, as I was mixing cocktails, I heard myself hailed by a customer; and there was Billy Neeld, one of our quartermasters, just come ashore from an Atlantic Transport boat. We had a drink together, and yarned of old times. The names of our old shipmates were like incantations. The breathing of them brought the past before us; the past which was so recent, yet so far away; the past which is so dear to a sailor and so depressing to a landsman. So and so was dead, and Jimmy had gone among the Islands, and Dick had pulled out for home because "he couldn't stick that Mr. Jenkins." Very few of them remained on the Coast; the brothers of the Coast are a shifty crowd.

Page 199

"D'ye remember the Frenchman," I asked, "the man who was always asking about the Incas?" "The ginger-headed feller?" "Yes, a little fellow." "A red-headed, ambitious little runt? I remember him," said Billy; "he left us at Payta, the time we fouled the launch." "That's the man," I said; "have you heard anything of him?" "Oh, he's dead all right," said Billy. "His mother came out after him; there was a piece in the *Chile Times* about him." "He was killed, I suppose?" "Yes, them Indians got him, somewhere in Ecuador, Tommy Hains told me. They got his head back, though. It was being sold in the streets; his old mother offered a reward, and the Dagoes got it back for her. He's dead all right, he is; he might ha' known as much, going alone among them Indians. Dead? I guess he is dead; none but a red-headed runt'd have been such a lunk as to try it." "He was an ambitious lad," I said. "Yes," said Billy, "he was. Them ambitious fellers, they want the earth, and they get their blooming heads pickled; that's what they get by it. Here's happy days, young feller."