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Author: Harry Collingwood

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Harry Collingwood

"For Treasure Bound"

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### Chapter One.

#### The Wreck.

It was the last week in the month of November, 18—.

The weather, for some days previous, had been unusually boisterous for the time of year, and had culminated, on the morning on which my story opens, in a "November gale" from the south-west, exceeding in violence any previous gale within the memory of "the oldest inhabitant" of the locality. This is saying a great deal, for I was at the time living in Weymouth, a most delightful summer resort, where, however, the feelings are likely to be more or less harrowed every winter by fearful wrecks on the far-famed and much-dreaded Chesil Beach, which connects the mis-named *island* of Portland with the mainland.

We had dined, as usual, at the primitive hour of one o'clock; and with Bob Trunnion—about whom I shall have more to say anon—I had turned out under the verandah to enjoy our post-prandial smoke, according to invariable usage. My sister Ada would not permit us the indulgence of that luxury indoors, and no conceivable disturbance of the elements could compel us to forego it altogether.

We were pacing the verandah side by side, quarter-deck fashion, with our hands behind our backs and our weeds between our teeth, making an occasional remark about the weather as the sheeted rain swept past us, and the trees in the distance and the leaf-denuded shrubs in the garden bowed before the fury of the blast, when a coastguard-man, whom I had occasionally encountered and spoken to in my rambles, came running past, enveloped in oilskins and topped by a sou'-wester.

As he went by, seeing us, he shouted, "Ship coming ashore in the West Bay, sir!" and was the next minute at the bottom of the hill, *en route*, as fast as his legs could carry him, for the town.

Our house was situated in a pleasant suburb called Rodwell; the high-road which passed our door led direct to the Smallmouth Sands, at the farther extremity of which was the Chesil Beach; and we conjectured that the coastguard-man had come from the beach along this road to give notice to the chief officer stationed in the town.

To run indoors, don our foul-weather rigging, and notify my sister that we were off to the scene of the anticipated wreck, was the work of a moment. The next we were in the road, inclined forward at an angle of forty-five degrees against the wind, and staggering slowly ahead in the direction of the sands. The coastguard-man had a fair wind of it, and was going a good eight knots when he passed us; but just at the top of the hill, as we were exposed to the full strength of the gale, we did not forge ahead at more than about one knot. However, matters mended soon after, for we surmounted the brow of the hill, and began the descent on the opposite side; here the road took a slight bend, which brought the wind well abeam; so keeping close under the hedge to windward of us, we rattled away as fast as we could go.

After nearly an hour's severe exertion we reached the beach. The vessel which was expected to come on shore was a full-rigged ship, apparently of about eight hundred or a thousand tons, and evidently a foreigner, by her build and rig. Some conjectured her to be French, some Spanish, and others avowed their belief that she was a German; but she was still too far off, and the weather too thick, to enable any one to form a clear judgment as to her nationality.

"Whoever she is," said the chief boatman, "the skipper of her is a downright good seaman, and doesn't intend to lose his ship whilst he can do anything to save her. He drove into the bay about two hours ago, sir," said he, turning to me, "and this is the second time that he's tried to fetch out again; but, Lord! he don't know this place so well as I do, or he'd be as sartin as I be that she'll never go outside o' the Bill o' Portland again. The ship don't float that, with her

sails alone, could get out of the bay, once she got into it, with the wind and tide the way it is now; and afore the tide turns he'll be knocked into match-wood, or my name's not Joe Grummet. There he comes round again," continued the man, who had kept his eye on the vessel all the time he was speaking; "but it's no good; he's more 'n a mile to leeward of where he fetched last time, and he'd better give it up and run her ashore whilst 'tis light enough to get the hands out of her, if so be as it please God to let any on 'em come ashore alive."

The vessel had, as Grummet remarked, altered her course; running off rapidly before the wind, and consequently towards the land; and those who knew nothing about nautical matters would have supposed that her commander had at length given up the contest, and was about to run her on shore.

But we knew better. The vessel had merely been kept away in order to *wear* her; *staying* in such a tremendous gale and sea being utterly out of the question. And as we watched we saw her come slowly to the wind on the opposite tack; her yards were braced sharp up, her sheets flattened in, and once more the battle for life was resumed against the hostile elements.

But it was evident that the noble ship's career was ended. The operation of *wearing* had brought her into fearful proximity with the land; and though she carried reefed mainsail and foresail under close-reefed topsails, and fore and main topmast staysails, it was evident that she was driving to leeward at a frightful rate, and that the period of her existence must now be measured in minutes.

"Now, lads! bear a hand!" shouted Grummet, "and let's signal her to run in here. The beach is steeper here than anywhere within the next three or four mile; and if he happens to come in on the back of a sea, he'll run up pretty near high and dry; and we may get some of the poor souls ashore alive, and cheat Davy Jones out of the best part of his bargain this bout, anyway."

A large red bandana handkerchief was produced and seized to the end of a boat-hook; this extempore flag and staff Grummet took in his hand, and, proceeding to the summit of the beach, commenced waving it to and fro, to attract the attention of the people on board the doomed ship. She was now so close that we could see the two men at her wheel, and a man, whom we supposed to be the master, standing by the mizen rigging.

Just abaft the mainmast, and huddled together under the shelter of the weather bulwarks, we could see some seven or eight more of her crew, and others were doubtless cowering elsewhere out of sight.

Grummet waved his flag energetically from the crest of the beach, and the coastguardmen busied themselves in making such slight preparations as were in their power to assist the crew in escaping from the wreck. Several coils of line had been brought down to the beach; one man, who announced himself to be a good swimmer, had secured an end of the smallest of these to his waist; he now stood prepared to divest himself of all his superfluous clothing at a moment's notice, and to attempt the hazardous experiment of rushing into the boiling surf, to drag out any poor unfortunate whom he might be able to reach. Others were engaged in various ways in preparing themselves to render what assistance was in their power, when a cry from Grummet announced that the crisis had arrived; on looking up we saw that the stranger's fore-topmast had gone in the cap; and now hung to leeward, with the topsail and topmast staysail thrashing to ribbons; the latter threatening at every jerk to take the bowsprit out of the ship. The foresail was also split from head to foot; and, even as we looked, the overstrained canvas gave way, and, fluttering for a moment in the furious gale, parted from the bolt-ropes, and came flying like a shred of cloud to leeward.

The ship, thus deprived of her head-sail, luffed into the wind; and the moment that the rest of her canvas shook, away it came also, leaving her helpless and unmanageable, with the sea sweeping her deck fore and aft.

"Now stand by, men," shouted Grummet, "and each one do his best for the poor souls; for they were never nearer to death's door than they will be in another two minutes. If he had run her stem on to the beach they might have stood a chance; but I fear it is all over with them now, for she'll come ashore broadside-on, and all on us knows what that means."

Fortunately, the catastrophe had happened immediately to windward of that part of the beach on which we stood; a spot, as Grummet had observed, where the shipwrecked crew would have a better chance of reaching the shore alive than they would have had if stranded on any other part of it for some miles on either side; but the loss of their sails had rendered the prospect of their escape considerably less than it would have been had they been able to watch their chance, *sail* the ship in on the crest of a wave, and so beach her.

The next half-minute or so was one of most intense and painful excitement to us spectators on shore. Each man moved nearer to the water, and cast off some article of clothing, or gave a last look to the line, or a final adjustment to the life-buoy round his waist. For myself, I had stripped off my jacket and waistcoat, and placed them, together with my hat, in the hands of my friend Bob; and I now stood with the end of a line, knotted into a bowline, in my hand, ready to do anything which the emergency of the moment might require.

The master of the vessel appeared to be aware of our intention, and the meaning of the signal which Grummet had shown; and as it was now impossible to run the ship *stem* on upon the beach, he did the next best thing; and waving his hand to the men who, like true seamen, still stuck to the wheel, they put the helm hard up, that she might come in stern on.

The manoeuvre was partially successful; but unfortunately she came ashore between two seas; and the undertow of the one taking her stern, whilst the succeeding sea struck her bow, she fell broadside-to in an instant, her three masts went by the board, and the sea made a clean breach over her.

One poor fellow was seen to leap overboard at the moment that the ship struck; and half-a-dozen of the men on the beach rushed down into the water, making frantic efforts to get at him. But he could not swim; and those who tried to

reach him were flung back, bruised and senseless, upon the beach, only to be dragged away again as the sea receded; and had it not been for the ropes and life-buoys round their waists, by which their comrades hauled them on shore, they must have lost their lives. As it was, one of them, in some way or other, got out of the life-buoy, and we saw him swept away almost from our very feet.

I was an expert swimmer; and as soon as I saw the poor fellow being swept away, I slipped my head and shoulders through the bowline knot I held in my hand, dashed into the surf, and, resorting to my usual tactics of diving through the breakers, managed to get hold of the man with one hand, while I raised the other above my head, as a signal to those on shore to haul away upon their end of the line.

As soon as I felt the line tighten round me, I grasped the man round the body, and in another moment we were both on the beach, in the arms of those who had run down to meet us. By these we were dragged up out of reach of the sea, and, on staggering to my feet, I had the satisfaction of seeing the man who had jumped overboard from the wreck being hauled on board again.

Loud were the thanks and praises I received for my conduct in bringing the other on shore; but without waiting to listen to them, I hastily explained that I would try to take a line on board the wreck, as, if I could succeed in this, there might possibly be some chance of saving the major portion, if not the whole of the crew. Accordingly I dashed into the surf once more; and at length, after the most superhuman efforts, though the distance was barely thirty yards, I reached the ship's side, and was drawn on board by a line which her crew threw to me. The men crowded round me, rapidly talking in some language which I could not understand, and looking as much relieved as though I had the power of taking them all on my back at once, and swimming on shore with them. I stood for a moment to recover my breath; and at the same time looked about to see what resources might be at my command. I noticed a towing hawser coiled away upon what had originally been the deckhouse forward, but which was now stove in and battered almost out of recognition. An eye was spliced in one end of this hawser; and taking it up, I signed to the men to pass it over the stump of the foremast. They understood me, and, seeing my object in wishing it done, they had it over in a twinkling; in another moment, they had the heavy coil capsized, the other end bent on to the line which I had brought on board with me, and were paying it rapidly over the side.

As I turned to address the master of the vessel, who, I noticed as I was hauled up the side, was then standing at the break of the poop, issuing instructions to his crew, I saw him in the act of descending the poop-ladder, and I stepped towards him. At this moment the ship was lifted up by a perfect mountain of a sea, and hove over on her beam-ends; all hands of us were flung violently to leeward; and before apparently any of us had time to recover our feet, another sea swept down upon us; there was a terrific—an ear-splitting crash, a wild, agonised cry, and I found myself clear of the wreck, struggling wildly for life, with the body of the master within arm's length of me.

He was apparently dead, and floating face downwards; but I grasped him by the hair, turned him on his back, and struck out for the beach. Twice were we flung like corks upon the pebbles of the strand, and twice dragged off into deep water again by the merciless undertow. The first time I dug my fingers, knees, and the toes of my boots into the pebbles, in the hope of bringing myself and my senseless charge to an anchor; but I might as well have attempted to grasp the air. The whole of that portion of the beach which was exposed to the action of the sea was a vast moving mass, the shingle being alternately thrown up and sucked back again in tons, as the water hurled itself high upon the beach and then rushed back into the foaming abyss.

The second time we were thrown up with such violence that I was stunned; but the third time the brave fellows on the beach, who had been making the most frantic efforts to get at us, would take no denial. They watched their chance, and as they saw us again drifting in, two, with ropes round their waists, rushed into the sea, grasped us, one each, firmly round the body; and, though they were lifted off their feet and dragged away to seaward like feathers by the retiring breaker, never let go their hold until we were hauled up high and dry, clear beyond the reach of the heaviest wave.

The efforts made to restore me to consciousness were soon successful, but my fellow-sufferer, the master of the vessel, appeared to be seriously injured. It was nearly half an hour before the faintest signs of returning animation were perceived; and when at length consciousness returned, the poor fellow appeared to be suffering the most excruciating agony.

As soon as I was once more able to look about me, I found that the wave which had washed the master and me overboard, had broken the wreck in two just abaft the mainmast, flinging the stern portion much nearer the shore, whilst it had turned the other half fairly bottom up, precipitating, of course, all the poor fellows, who were so busy paying out the hawser, into the sea. The people on the beach watched eagerly for their reappearance above water, but not one of them was ever seen again. It afterwards transpired that there was not a swimmer amongst the entire crew, which, all told, amounted to fifteen hands.

The intelligence of a wreck had attracted a large concourse of people to the spot, notwithstanding the discomfort attendant on being abroad in so violent a gale; and one gentleman had taken upon himself to despatch omnibuses from the town, well supplied with blankets, etcetera, for the relief and benefit of any poor sufferers who might reach the shore alive. Into one of these vehicles the unfortunate master of the ship was now placed with the utmost care, a couch being extemporised for him in the bottom of the 'bus by piling together all the blankets which had been sent. In spite, however, of the utmost care in driving, the jolts were frequent, and sometimes rather heavy, and the poor fellow's groans indicated such intensity of suffering, that by the time we were half-way to town I decided I would take him to my own house, whereby he would be spared nearly half an hour of anguish.

It fortunately happened that, just as I had come to this resolution, a gentleman rode up, and learning who we had inside, volunteered his services. I immediately accepted them, desiring him to ride back to the town, and despatch to my house the ablest physician he could find. When the 'bus drew up at our door, the doctor was there in readiness for his patient, whom we lifted out, apparently in the last stage of exhaustion, and carried carefully into the house

and upstairs into my own room, where my sister (advertised by Bob, who had made the best of his way home on foot) had a cheerful fire blazing in the grate, hot water in abundance, and everything else ready that her womanly sympathy could suggest.

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## Chapter Two.

### The Secret.

The doctor remained with the sick man more than half an hour; and when I heard his footstep descending the staircase I went out and met him.

“The poor fellow is sinking rapidly,” said he, in reply to my inquiries; “he has received severe internal injuries, and is bleeding to death inwardly. I can do nothing, absolutely *nothing* for him. Keep him quiet, and humour him as much as you can; excitement of any kind will only hasten his dissolution.” I cheerfully promised to do all I could for the dying man; and the doctor took his leave, promising to call again the last thing in the evening.

As soon as the doctor was out of the house I went upstairs and into the sick-room, where I found the patient in bed, and Bob, with his boots off, gliding as quietly about the room as a trained hospital nurse, doing all he could to contribute to the comfort of his charge.

The opening of the door attracted the sick man’s attention, and he feebly turned his head in my direction. As soon as he recognised me, he beckoned me to approach; and I drew a chair to the side of the bed, asking him how he felt.

“Like one whose moments are numbered,” replied he in perfectly pure English, but with a sonorous ring in the articulation of the words, which betrayed the fact that he was not speaking in his mother tongue. “Señor,” he continued, “I am dying; the doctor has candidly told me so, though I needed no such assurance from him. The dreadful pangs which shoot through my tortured frame are such as no man could long endure and live. I am a true Catholic, señor, and I would fain see a priest, or some good man of my own creed, that I may confess, and clear my guilty soul from the stains which a life of sinful indulgence and contempt of Heaven’s laws has polluted it with. I know there are many of my faith in England; it may be that there are some in this place. Know you of any such?”

I replied that there certainly was a Catholic church in the town, but it was situated at some distance from the house in which he now lay; consequently it would perhaps be an hour before the priest could be found and brought to him; “but,” added I, “I will send for him forthwith, and until he arrive I will sit here and keep you company.”

So saying, I called Bob on one side, and directed him to proceed, as quickly as possible, into town, and bring the Reverend Father without a moment’s delay to the house.

As soon as Bob had departed, I resumed my seat by the bedside. Extending his burning hand towards me, he clasped mine, and endeavoured to raise it to his lips. “Señor,” said he, “since it is the will of God that I am to die, I can but bow to that will in submission; but I would I could have been spared for a *few* years to testify my gratitude to you for your brave and noble efforts in behalf of my crew and myself—my poor people, my poor people,” he sobbed—“all, all lost!”

He was silent for nearly five minutes; and I took advantage of the opportunity to explain to him that what I had done was no more than any other Englishman would do if he had the power, under similar circumstances; that such conduct was thought nothing of among our nation; being regarded as simply a duty which each man owed to every other, in like circumstances of distress with his own.

“I know—I know,” replied he, “the English are as generous as they are brave; but still I would I had it in my power to express my thanks otherwise than in words. But I am alone in the world which I am so soon to leave. Not one have I of my own name or blood to whom I can bequeath my debt of gratitude; and when my ship went to pieces to-day (she was my own property, señor), I became a beggar. I have not so much property left as will pay the expenses of my burial; and here I lie, indebted to a stranger, and that stranger a foreigner, for the shelter which covers my dying head, as I soon shall be for the coffin and the grave which await my lifeless clay.”

I was beginning to say something, with the intention of diverting his mind from so painful a train of thought, when he interrupted me eagerly.

“And yet,” continued he, “poor as I am, it is in my power to make you rich—ay, beyond the utmost scope of your imagination. And I will, I *will*! Why should I take this secret to the grave with me? In a few hours I shall be beyond the want of earthly riches, but you, señor, are young, and look forward to a long life; doubtless, like other men, you have already indulged in many a bright day-dream which the possession of wealth would go far to realise. Listen, gentil señor; I must be brief, for I feel that I have no time to lose. I have been shipwrecked once before. It is now nearly three years ago since I sailed from Valparaiso for Canton, whence we were to proceed to Bombay, and so home round the Cape of Good Hope. I was then chief-mate. We met with nothing but calms for the first three weeks of our passage, after which the weather changed, and we had a succession of adverse gales until we were within fifteen degrees of the line. Here we were worse off than ever, for at one moment we were lying in a glassy calm, and perhaps in five minutes afterwards were under close-reefed canvas, or possibly bare poles. At length a furious squall threw the ship on her beam-ends, and we were compelled to cut away all three of her masts to save her from foundering. And then the squall settled down into a perfect hurricane, and we could do nothing but suffer the ship to drive dead before it. Near midnight we were flung violently to the deck by a tremendous shock. The ship was on shore, dashing her bottom out upon the rocks. And it was so dark, señor, that we were unable to see each other. Oh! the horror of that night; it is as fresh upon me now as it was at the moment that it happened.”

The poor fellow's face was streaming with perspiration. I begged he would not distress himself by recalling such painful recollections, but in spite of my remonstrance he continued his story.

"The ship broke up beneath our feet, and I found myself swimming, I knew not where, in the midst of a quantity of floating wreck, to a piece of which I clung. I was surrounded on every side by breakers; but not far from me I could perceive, by the absence of the phosphorescence, that the water was smooth. I urged myself, and the plank to which I clung, in that direction, and soon reached the smooth water; after which I suffered myself to drift. The water was quite warm, and I experienced no inconvenience whatever from my immersion. After the lapse of perhaps an hour, possibly more, I felt the ground beneath my feet, and staggering out of the water, I flung myself upon the dry land, and, notwithstanding the howling of the wind and the roar of the breakers, I fell into a deep and dreamless sleep.

"When I awoke the sun was beating fiercely down upon my uncovered head; the sky was cloudless; and a calm had succeeded to the gale of the night before. I rose to my feet, and on looking about me, discovered that I had been cast upon one of those coral islands which so thickly stud some portions of the Pacific. I was—as I am now—the only one who escaped the wreck alive. The bodies of my shipmates lay scattered along the shore; and a long and arduous day was spent in burying them where they lay, in such shallow graves as I could scoop in the sand with the aid of a piece of splintered plank. The beach was strewn with wreckage which had been washed over the reef and into the smooth water; and I was overjoyed to find amongst this the long-boat, perfectly uninjured. In her I visited the scene of the wreck; and there, after diligent search, I found the means and a sufficiency of appropriate materials to enable me to fit her for a lengthened voyage.

"I was more than two months on the island before my preparations were complete, for life was very enjoyable in that delightful spot, and I felt in no hurry to get away. At length, whilst walking along the beach one evening, my attention was attracted to three or four pieces of old, worm-eaten, weather-worn timber, which I had often noticed before, projecting above the sand; and curiosity now impelled me to walk up to and examine them. A careful scrutiny revealed to me that they formed part of the framework of a ship; and I resolved that I would return the next day and ascertain whether what I saw was merely a detached piece of wreck, or whether the entire hull lay there embedded in the sand.

"The next morning I repaired to the spot, armed with a primitive substitute for a shovel, which I had contrived to manufacture, and an iron bolt, to serve the purpose of a crow-bar, which I had procured the previous night by burning it out of a piece of wreck. I had worked for perhaps an hour, when I reached some planking, which I immediately recognised as the deck of the ship. This I proceeded to clear of sand, uncovering the deck in an extending circle from the spot where I had first encountered it, until I had an area of about fifteen or sixteen feet laid bare. And now I met with a breach in the deck; so instead of clearing away further, I began to dig down again. I toiled thus for four days, señor; by which time I had discovered that the wreck was that of a small vessel, of perhaps one hundred and thirty tons (though, small as she was, she had been built with a full poop); that she was a very ancient craft indeed; and that her cargo consisted of nothing but *gold*, señor, that is, with the solitary exception of a strong wooden box (which, even after so long an interment, offered considerable resistance to my efforts to open it), containing an assortment of what I took to be pebbles of different kinds, but which I afterwards found were unpolished gems. Yes, señor; there lay the gold in ingots, each wrapped in matting, and each ingot as much in weight as I could well lift. The matting was decayed in the first three or four tiers, and the metal discoloured almost to blackness; but towards the centre of the cargo (which is, probably, not more than twelve tiers deep altogether), the matting, though so rotten that it crumbled to dust as I touched it, had preserved the colour of the metal; and there it lay, bar after bar, gleaming with the dull yellow lustre peculiar to virgin gold.

"I ballasted my boat entirely with ingots; selecting the most discoloured I could reach, so that they might be less easily recognisable as gold, and the risk I ran of being ultimately robbed of them reduced in the same proportion. I also took a few of the pebbles (as I thought them) out of the box; after which I set to work to cover in the whole once more. I completed my task by burning down the timbers which had at first attracted my attention (and which I found were a portion of her stern frame), so that nothing remained above the surface of the sand to betray the whereabouts of my treasure. I then carefully marked the spot in such a manner that I could find it again; and completed my preparations for departure with all speed.

"I had been at sea ten days, when I was taken ill. Whether it was the effect of excitement or exposure I know not; but I fell into a raging fever, which left me almost at the point of death. I was so weak that I had not strength to crawl to the water-cask; and the feeble efforts I made to reach it so exhausted me that at length I fell in a swoon to the bottom of the boat. In this condition I was discovered by a passing ship, the crew of which took me on board; but, as a smart breeze happened to be blowing at the time, they would not wait to hoist in my boat; and she was set adrift with enough gold on board her to have purchased a principality.

"Regrets were useless, and the loss, heavy as it was, troubled me little; I knew where to find sufficient to satisfy my utmost needs. At length I reached home, and, by the merest accident, bethought myself one day of my pebbles. I suspected they were valuable, or they would not have been found where they were. Judge of my surprise when I learned that the four I had left (for I lost the rest somewhere) were worth a sufficient sum to enable me to do exactly what I wished; viz., buy a ship of my own. I did so; and was on my way in her to my treasure-island, when the gale sprung up which has reduced me to my present condition.

"And now, señor, I am about to put *you* in possession of such information as will enable you to find my island. It is in latitude about — South, and in longitude about — West, as nearly as I had the means of ascertaining; and is uninhabited, and, I should say, unknown; for during my entire stay there, I never observed one solitary sign of man's foot having ever pressed the soil. You will readily recognise the island from the fact that it has a remarkable isolated group of seven cocoa-nut trees growing closely together on the extreme northernmost point of the island. The central tree of this group, and one of the others, bears a mark (made by the removal of a piece of bark) as large as a man's two hands. When you have identified these trees, walk away from them, keeping them *in one*, until you open, clear of the trees on the southern end of the island, a portion of the reef which you will observe just rising above the water's

edge. When you have done this, you will be standing, as nearly as possible, immediately above the hole in the deck of the wreck, through which I burrowed to her golden cargo.”

The Spaniard (for such I found him to be) then went on to describe the manner in which I should find the passage through the reef into the lagoon, giving me as much information as he could from memory of the various dangers to be avoided. He had carefully prepared a chart of the channel before leaving the island; but this was on board the vessel he had just lost.

I could see that the excitement produced by so much talking was fearfully reducing his strength, and I more than once endeavoured to persuade him to postpone the completion of his narrative; but he was sensible that he had but a short time to live, and so anxious was he to give me all the information necessary to enable me to discover this strangely buried treasure, that my endeavour to stop him did more harm even than the talking, so I was compelled perforce to suffer him to proceed. And though I felt it my duty to urge him not to excite himself, I must confess that I was deeply interested to learn how I might become possessed of the wealth to which he had referred in such glowing terms; for since it was manifest that he could not live to enjoy it himself, and as he had declared he had no relative in the world, I thought I might as well become his heir.

He continued to talk for some time longer, until he had explained to me everything he could think of which would facilitate my efforts to reach the buried treasure; and then, with a sigh of mingled exhaustion and relief, he closed his eyes, and seemed to sink into a half sleep, from which he roused himself at frequent intervals, to crave the refreshment of a draught of lemonade.

At length the sound of carriage wheels was heard; and almost immediately afterwards Bob returned, accompanied by the Catholic priest. The sick man opened his eyes, and feebly welcomed the good old man who had so readily answered his appeal for spiritual consolation. I then retired, leaving them alone to engage in the most solemn rite appertaining to their religion.

After we had reverently laid the Spaniard to rest in his alien grave, I gave my friend Bob a full and accurate account of all that had passed, showing him at the same time the copious notes I had, at the earliest opportunity, jotted down to assist and refresh my memory in case I should ever find myself in a position to seek the hidden treasure.

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## **Chapter Three.**

### **Bob's Proposition.**

I was at this time just turned twenty-one, and had received my education at the Royal Naval School at Greenwich, with the understanding that I was to join my father on its completion, when he would continue and finish what is there so well begun, thus making me “every inch a sailor.”

On leaving school I joined my father (who was master and part owner of a fine dashing clipper), in the capacity of midshipman, and went some six or seven voyages with him: on the last of which, or rather, a few days after its termination, I was seized with a violent attack of rheumatic fever, from which I had not recovered sufficiently to rejoin the ship by the time that she was once more ready for sea. I was consequently left at home under Ada's care (my dear mother had been dead some years), to recover at leisure, and amuse myself as well as I could until another voyage should be accomplished, and an opportunity once more offered for me to repossess myself of my quarters in the old familiar berth. That opportunity never arrived, for at the time my story opens, my father had been two years “missing.” He sailed from Canton with the first cargo of the new season's teas, and from the moment that the good ship disappeared seaward she had never been heard of; not the faintest trace of a clue to the mystery of her fate having, so far, been discovered.

Bob Trunnion was a middle-aged man, of medium stature, great personal strength, and no very marked pretensions to beauty; but he was as thorough an old sea-dog as ever looked upon salt water. His visage was burnt to a deep brick-red by years of exposure to all sorts of weather; and his hair and beard, which had once been brown, were now changed to the hue of old oakum by the same process, except where, here and there, a slight sprinkling of grey discovered itself. He had been a sailor almost all his life, having “crept in through the hawse-pipe” when he was only twelve years old; since when, by close application and perseverance, he had gradually worked his way aft to the quarter-deck. He joined my father's ship as second mate, on the same voyage as I did, and on the following voyage took the chief-mate's berth, in place of a man whom my father was compelled to discharge for confirmed drunkenness.

The last time that my poor father passed down Channel, outward-bound, Bob had the misfortune (as we thought it then), to fall off the poop and break his arm. It was what the surgeons call a compound fracture, and certainly looked to be a very ugly one; so, as the ship happened at the time to be off Saint Alban's Head, my father ran into Weymouth roads, and sent Bob ashore to our house to be cured, and to bear me company; shipping in his stead the second mate, and picking up a new second mate somewhere about the town.

Thus it happened that Bob and I, old shipmates as we were, happened to be both away from our ship when her mysterious fate overtook her. As soon as we were both recovered, we sought and obtained berths, always in the same ship, for short voyages; returning home about once in every six weeks or two months, with the hope of hearing either that my father had returned, or that some news had arrived of him. For the last twelve months we had abandoned the former hope, but the latter would probably be many years before it finally took its flight.

Ada Collingwood, my only sister, was just seventeen.

This introduction and explanation are necessary to the understanding of what is to follow; and now, having fairly

weathered them both, we may take up the thread of the story, and follow it out to the end without further interruption.

I have already said that I took an early opportunity to give Bob a detailed account of the Spaniard's revelation to me. This was on the evening of the day on which we laid the poor fellow in his grave; and I told my story while we and my sister were seated comfortably round the fire after tea, with the curtains drawn close, and everything made snug for the night.

Bob listened with the utmost attention to my story (as did also my sister), occasionally requesting me to "say that ag'in," as some point in the narrative was reached which he wished to bear particularly in mind; and when I had finished he sat for some time staring meditatively between the bars of the grate.

At length, "Well, Harry, my lad, what do you intend to do?" said he.

"That," replied I, "is just the point upon which I want your advice. If this story be true—"

"No fear about that," said Bob. "It's true enough. The thing's as plain and circumstantial as the ship's course when it's pricked off upon the chart. There ain't a kink in the yarn from end to end; it's all coiled down as neat and snug as a new hawser in the ropemaker's yard; and besides, dyin' men don't spin yarns with no truth in 'em, just for divarsion's sake, like."

"Well," said I, "I have not the means of purchasing a ship of my own; and if I had, do you think it would be safe to trust so much treasure with a crew, picked up though ever so carefully?"

"Ah! now you 'pawls me," replied Bob, rubbing the back of his head reflectively. "I've sailed with crews as you might ha' trusted with untold gold, at least, I've thowt so at the time I was with 'em; but mayhap, if temptation was throwed in their way, they mightn't be able to stand out agin it; there's no gettin' to the bottom o' the heart o' man. As to the ship, that's easy enough. If you ain't got the cash to *buy*, you can always *charter*."

"True," said I, "and if I could *make sure* of finding a sufficient number of thorough good men, that is the course I should be inclined to pursue. Do you think, Bob, that by diligent search we could find some six or eight really reliable men? The craft need not be a large one, you know—"

"There you've hit the solution of the enigmy, as the schoolmaster said," replied Bob, bringing his clenched fist down upon my knee with an emphasis which impressed me for the remainder of the evening: "How much of that gold now do you reckon would make your fortune, lad? you're pretty good at figures; just cipher it up and let's hear?"

"How much!" exclaimed I; "oh, a very small portion of the whole cargo would satisfy me if I had it here at this moment."

"How much?" persisted Bob. "Would a *ton* of it be enough for you, boy?"

"Yes, indeed," laughed I; "a ton of pure gold - why, what do you suppose that would be worth, Bob?"

"Hain't much of a 'idee," replied he.

"A ton of pure gold," said I, "is worth over one hundred thousand pounds, Bob; I believe one hundred and twenty-five thousand pounds is nearer its value; though I cannot say for certain."

"Then," said Bob, "if we can manage to get, say, a couple of tons of it home, you will be satisfied—eh?"

"Perfectly," I replied; "but how do you propose to accomplish this?" for I saw he had a scheme to bring forward.

"Nothing easier," replied Bob. "Build a little craft big enough to accommodate the two of us; with room to stow away our grub and water, and the two tons of gold; and up anchor and away."

"But," said I, "you forget that this island is somewhere in the Pacific. Such a craft as you speak of would be totally unfit for the voyage we contemplate."

"Why?" inquired Bob.

"Why?" repeated I, astonished at the question. "Simply because we should never get across the Bay of Biscay in her, to say nothing of the remainder of the voyage."

"Why not?" demanded Bob, rather pugnaciously.

"Do you mean to say," I retorted, "that you can sit there and propose in cold blood such a hair-brained scheme as that we two should undertake a voyage to the Pacific in a mere *boat*?"

"I do," replied Bob emphatically. "That's a simple way out of all your difficulties. The craft will be your own; there will be no risk of the crew rising upon us for the sake of our cargo; and nobody to say 'What are we doing here?' or 'What do you want there?' Why, it will be a mere pleasure trip from end to end, all play and no work, leastways none to speak on!"

"But, my dear fellow, *do* be serious," protested I. "You know, as well as I do, that we should be swamped the first time we fell in with a capful of wind."

"Maybe we should, if we went to work like a couple of know-nothing land-lubbers," retorted Bob; "but if we went to work like seamen, as we are, I should like to know what's to purvent our sailing round the world if we like! Answer me

that.”

“Come, Bob, old man, let us hear the full extent of your proposition,” said I. “I know that, whatever it may be, it will be the proposal of a thorough seaman, for if any one could carry out the wild scheme you have suggested, you are the man.”

“‘Tain’t such a very wild scheme neither,” replied Bob. “Answer me this. How many people was saved from the *London* when she foundered in the Bay of Biscay?”

“Nineteen, if I remember rightly,” replied I.

“Very well; now if a small boat of about twenty-five feet long or thereabouts, *open*, mind you, from stem to stern, could live twenty hours with nineteen people in her, as the *London’s* pinnace did, in weather that the old ship herself couldn’t stand up agin, how long will a full-decked boat of, say, thirty to thirty-five feet long, carefully constructed, and in good trim, live with only two men in her? And warn’t I,” continued he, “nineteen days *alone* in an open boat in the South Atlantic; and didn’t I make a v’y’ge of a thousand miles in her afore I struck soundings at Saint Helena?”

This last question referred to an adventure which had befallen Bob in his younger days, on an occasion when he had been cruelly deserted in a sinking ship by the rest of the crew, and had made his escape, as described by himself, after enduring unheard-of suffering.

“Then,” questioned I, “you seriously entertain the belief that the scheme you have suggested is practicable?”

“With ease and comfort,” replied Bob. “Now look here, Harry. You can afford to build a craft such as I have described, and fit her out for the v’y’ge, and still leave money enough at home to keep sauce-box here,” (indicating Ada, who was to him as the apple of his eye) “comfortable and happy like till we come back. You’ve a rare eye for a sea-boat, and mine ain’t bad, for that matter; let’s draught her out ourselves, since it’s our own lives as we are going to trust in her; and if we don’t turn out, between us, as pretty a sea-boat as ever floated, why, turn to and lay me up in ordinary for the rest of my days for a useless old hulk, that’s all. A boat thirty feet long, decked all over, and carefully designed, *can’t* sink, boy, because we can easily arrange matters so as to keep her dry inside; she’ll ride as light as a gull and as dry as a bone when big ships is making bad weather of it, and as for the matter of capsizing, bein’ run down, or cast away, why they’re dangers as we are liable to in any ship, and must be guarded against in every craft, large or small; and our little barkie would carry comfortable all we should want for the v’y’ge, for we could touch here and there out and home to make good deficiencies, and we two are men enough to handle her in all weathers. Rig her as a cutter, boy. I was once’t aboard a cutter yacht in a trip up the Mediterranean, and you’ve no idea what a handy rig it is, once you’re used to it. And the way them cutters ’ll hug the wind—why ’t would make a difference of nigh on a couple of thousand miles, out and home, in the length of the passage.”

I began to be infected with Bob’s enthusiasm. The scheme, which had at first appeared to me as the very acme of fool-hardiness, now, under the influence of Bob’s eloquence, gradually assumed an appearance of reasonableness, and a promising prospect of success, which was very fascinating. Nevertheless, I could not but remember that the proposed voyage would take us into latitudes subject to the most frightful and sudden tempests, and I could not help thinking (as I pointed out to Bob) that our cockle-shell would stand but a poor chance in a cyclone or a black squall.

“Look here, Harry, my boy,” remarked Bob gravely, “as I propose to ship on this here v’y’ge as chief-mate, I ain’t likely to forget that there’s such dangers as them you’ve just mentioned; But suppose you was to cork up a bottle, or clap the lid on an empty biscuit-tin, and heave ’em overboard, do you think they’d live through one or t’other? In course they would, because salt water can’t get inside of ’em, and as long as they keep dry holds they’ll float, let the weather be what it will, and so ’ll our craft, for the same reason. And when the weather’s too bad to sail the barkie, we can heave her to, and when it’s too bad for that we can *anchor* her, my boy, go below, slide on the top of the companion, and turn in until the weather clears.”

“But,” said I, “we cannot anchor in the middle of the Atlantic. Suppose we should be caught in a cyclone there, for instance?”

“We *can* anchor *there*, lad, with a *floating* anchor, which will keep her head to wind; and with everything snug aloft and on deck, and a floating-anchor ahead with about sixty fathoms of cable veered out, she would ride out *in safety* any gale that ever blew out of the heavens.”

This last remark closed the case, and secured a verdict for the defendant. I *knew* that every word Bob spoke was literally true, and the audacity of the enterprise so fascinated me that I resolved on the spot to undertake it, if it should be found, on going into details, that a craft, capable of being handled by our two selves, could stow away, without being overloaded, such provisions; etcetera, as we should need for the voyage.

The following morning, immediately after breakfast, I got out my drawing board, strained a sheet of paper upon it, and, with Bob at my side to give me the benefit of his opinion upon every line I traced upon the paper, set to in earnest to design the little craft in which we proposed to embark on our adventurous voyage.

Before putting a line upon paper, however, we settled the plan of her internal arrangements. It was our intention to make her lines as fine as her respective dimensions would permit; she was to be, in fact, a small *yacht*. We knew that every vessel with sharp lines must necessarily be wet, unless the weights she would have to carry were all concentrated about her midship section, or broadest part, so we decided that as far as was practicable such should be the arrangement with us; and we knew that, if we could succeed in this, our barkie might be as sharp as we could make her, and still be dry and comfortable. We accordingly prepared a list of our requirements, as far as we could think of them, calculated the space they and the ballast would occupy, and then roughly sketched out the proposed lines. These were altered, rearranged, and improved upon time after time, until at length we felt we had got them as near perfection as the dimensions of the boat and our own knowledge would carry us. And I may as well say at once



that throughout the entire voyage we never had the slightest reason to think our little vessel could be in any way improved upon by alteration.

It is not probable that so long a voyage as ours will be often undertaken again in such a very small craft as we accomplished it in; but there are many men, I have no doubt, who would gladly receive a hint as to the most advantageous form for a small boat in which they might safely adventure, alone, or with a friend, a cruise, say round the British Isles, or across the Channel and along the French coast; and therefore, as this story is written for the amusement only of such people as love boats, I think I may venture to trespass so far on my readers' patience as to give such a hint in the shape of a brief description of the *Water Lily*, as Ada christened her.

She was, then, thirty-six feet long, and twelve feet beam on the water-line; but, in designing her midship section, we caused her sides to swell out boldly *above* water, so that her greatest beam was fourteen feet, at a point one foot six inches above the water-line. At this point her side *tumbled home* two inches as it was carried upwards to her deck, and from the same point the side curved quickly inwards and downwards until it met the water-line, when it swept under water with an almost imperceptible curve for some distance, and then took a moderately quick bend downwards to meet her keel. This gave us a vessel in shape very much like the centre-board model of boat, but with a deep keel, and consequently great lateral resistance, and space low down in the hull for the stowage of ballast. We thus secured a *very* small displacement, a light buoyant hull, extraordinary stability, and a fair amount of *power*.

The hull was divided into three compartments by bulkheads with wide doors which, if necessary, we could close *water-tight*. In the *fore* compartment we decided to place *nothing* except the smallest and lightest cooking-stove we could find. In the midship compartment it was intended to stow our ballast, water-tank, provisions, the chain-cables, and in fact everything which we could possibly place there, leaving only a narrow passage amidships to pass to and fro. The after compartment we intended to make our cabin, and there we arranged also to sling our hammocks. It will easily be understood that there was not an inch of spare room anywhere; but as our lives would be spent almost entirely on deck, we did not mind that very much.

Having designed our craft, the next question was, who should build her? Bob was strongly in favour of having her built in the town, so that we might oversee the laying of every plank, and the driving of every nail; but I knew there were firms who could safely be trusted to honestly put the best of work and material into the little vessel without being watched; and I determined to put her into the hands of a very celebrated firm of London boat builders.

Accordingly, Bob and I ran up to town, taking my sister with us for a holiday, and on the morning after our arrival, having seen Ada safely disposed of for the day with some friends of ours, we two men set out for the building-yard.

I placed our design in the hands of the principal, telling him at the same time that we wanted a boat of those dimensions, and, if possible, built on those lines, and that she was intended to keep at sea in *all* weathers.

He looked rather surprised at the last stipulation; but after carefully examining the drawing, and asking us our reasons for certain little peculiarities of shape, he confessed that, as far as his experience went, he could frankly say he had never seen a model better adapted for the purpose.

"And yet, gentlemen," said he, "she will be wonderfully fast, for, in the first place, her *hull* is of such a shape that it will offer but a trifling resistance to forward motion; and, in the next place, these overhanging top-sides will, give her such extraordinary stability, as soon as she begins to heel over, that you will be able to carry enormous sails."

We were very glad to hear our own judgment thus confirmed by a man, part of whose business it was to form a correct opinion with respect to the points upon which he had touched, and we said as much.

He took a great deal of interest in what must, after all, have been a very trifling matter to him; and both Bob and I had reason often afterwards to congratulate ourselves that we had confided the building of our boat to such good hands.

He proposed that she should be *composite* built; that is, that for the sake of lightness and strength combined, her frame should be of steel, with an inner skin of thin steel plate, and an outer planking of two thicknesses of mahogany. The ribs were to be arranged *diagonally* crossing the keel at an angle of forty-five degrees, and intersecting each other at right angles, thus converting her entire frame into a sort of lattice-work girder.

It was arranged that all the fastenings of the inner thickness of planking should be of iron, whilst the outside planks should be secured with copper fastenings. The utmost care was exercised (and, as experience proved, with complete success) to prevent the slightest approach to galvanic action, and one of the precautions taken was, I remember well, the painting of the inner planking with melted india-rubber, which was laid on coat after coat until there was about one-sixteenth of an inch of the rubber between the outer and inner planks.

As we did not intend to sail until the following summer, the builder had about eight months in which to put our little ship together, a circumstance at which he expressed great satisfaction, as he said it would enable him to pick and choose his materials, and put careful work into her.

We arranged, at the same time, for the construction of a boat to take with us, as we felt that in the event of any untoward accident happening, we ought to have something to take to for the saving of our lives, and we knew also that there would be many occasions when we should require something to answer the purposes which a boat answers with regard to a ship.

The designing of this boat was beset by difficulties, all originating in one, viz., want of space in which to stow her. To think of carrying her on deck was out of the question, as the deck was not spacious enough, in the first place, to receive such a boat as we wanted; and even had it been, there was no chance of its remaining there; it would have been carried away by the first sea which swept over us. We required something large enough to carry us both, and a

stock of provisions in addition, so that should it be necessary to abandon the *Water Lily*, we might hope to reach land, or fall in with a ship. We also wanted something that should be essentially a *life-boat*, whilst she should also be very fast. How to obtain all these desiderata, and at the same time overcome the difficulty in respect to room, we knew not. But, resolved not to be baffled, we set our wits to work, and at length schemed out a design of an exceedingly novel character, which proved in all respects a most brilliant success.

Two hollow steel cylinders, of very thin metal, twenty-six feet long and one foot diameter in the centre, tapering gradually away to nothing at each end, were constructed in thirteen lengths of two feet each. These lengths, being of different diameters, stowed one within the other, thus taking up very little room indeed. In either end of each length was inserted a narrow band of metal thick enough to allow of a worm and screw, so that all the lengths of each cylinder could be screwed together perfectly water-tight. A light steel framework of simple arrangement connected the two cylinders together, at a distance of six feet apart, with their centre lines parallel, and supported, at a height of two feet above the top of the cylinders, a light stage ten feet long and six feet wide. On the top of the stage, and connected with the framework, was a step for a mast, and a gammon-iron for a bowsprit, and underneath the stage was a centre-board which we could lower or raise at pleasure. A broad rudder, fixed to the after-part of the stage, completed the design.

We spent a fortnight in London, and, having witnessed the laying of the *Water Lily's* keel, and inspected some of the timber which the builder proposed to use in her construction, I saw Ada safe home again, leaving Bob in London to look out for a ship, which, when I rejoined him a couple of days afterwards, he had found.

We shipped in her for a voyage to Constantinople and Trebizond, which occupied us for eight months, and when we returned to London, on the termination of this voyage, we found the *Water Lily* completed, with the exception of a few finishing touches, which the workmen were then giving her.

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## Chapter Four.

### Our Trial Trip.

Mr Wood, the shipbuilder, took us into his office, and there laid before us a sail draught, which he had carefully prepared for the guidance of the sailmaker, in making the *Water Lily's* sails.

"You have never told me, gentlemen," said he, "*why* you are having this little craft built; but the great pains which you have taken in the preparation of her design, and the whole tenour of your remarks when giving us the order to build her, impressed me at the time with a conviction that her destiny is to be something beyond that of most vessels of her size. As we proceeded with our work, I could not fail to be struck (as you will perhaps remember I was at my first glance at your drawing) with the fact, that whilst she is eminently calculated to prove a wonderfully fine little sea-boat, she is equally certain to develop most extraordinary sailing powers; and so great is the interest I take in her, that I could not be satisfied with intrusting the preparation of her sail draught to any other than myself; for I foresee that she will, in all probability, become a 'public character,' so to speak, and in that capacity she will undoubtedly reflect great credit on her builders. I have therefore calculated, with the utmost nicety, the proportion of her various sails, so that they may take effect to the greatest advantage; and this is the result of my labours," producing at the same time the drawing to which I have referred.

I must confess that, for my own part, I was staggered at the enormous spread of canvas Mr Wood proposed to pile upon our little boat; but he declared that she would carry it with the greatest ease. "In fact," said he, "I have kept rather *within* the limit of her powers, bearing in mind a remark you made to the effect that she would have to keep to sea *in all weathers*; and so confident am I that she is not over-sailed, that if you find I am wrong, I undertake to bear all the expense of a new outfit of sails, and the necessary reduction of spars. With regard to your 'boat' (though to my mind she looks much more like an ingeniously designed *raft*), the idea is so new that I cannot take it upon myself to utter an opinion about her, though I can see no reason why she should not be as fast as she undoubtedly is safe."

We sent off the sail-drawing to Laphorn of Gosport (determined to have the best made suit of sails it was possible to procure), with instructions to prepare them without delay, and then started off, by the first train, to Weymouth.

I found my dear sister safe and well, and more lovely than ever; but her spirits were subdued by contemplation of the dangers attending the voyage upon which we were now so soon to embark. The poor girl had been thinking of little else, it seemed, during our absence, until the liveliest alarm had taken the place of that confidence with which she had viewed the expedition when it was first broached.

But Bob and I had talked matters over together in many a quiet night-watch, canvassing the various emergencies which might arise, and the best mode of meeting them; and we were now confident that, with only the ordinary perils of the ocean to contend with, our adventure was not only feasible, but that it would certainly be crowned with success. And so we were well prepared to do battle with Ada's apprehensions, which we did so vigorously that we at length succeeded in restoring, in a great measure, the confidence she had lost.

We arranged, after a considerable amount of discussion, that our own house should be let, furnished as it was, during my absence, and that my sister should take up her quarters with an aunt who resided on the Esplanade, Mrs Moseley accompanying her, with unlimited leave of absence from time to time to visit her own relatives.

These arrangements completed, Bob and I set out for London again, to superintend the rigging of our boat and to bring her round to Weymouth, from whence we intended to take our final departure.

On our arrival we found the little craft already in the water, with her mast stepped and her ballast (which was of lead, cast to fit the shape of her bottom) in. A portion of her ballast, consisting of a piece of lead weighing five

hundredweight, was let into her keel about the midship section, and this, with two tons of lead inside, we thought would prove sufficient, after our "cargo" was stowed. Part of this cargo we intended to take from London with us, viz., the water-tank, filled, second suit of sails and flying-kites in the shape of spinnaker, jib-topsail, square-headed gaff-topsail, etcetera, also a four-pound rifle gun, with a stock of powder and shot, and a few percussion shells.

These we decided to take in case of our being obliged to assume a warlike attitude towards any savages we might come in contact with, as we had heard that the natives of some of the Pacific islands are particularly ferocious, and require to be dealt with promptly. We also provided ourselves with a couple of air-guns of improved construction and decidedly formidable character, four six-chambered revolving rifles, and the same number of revolver pistols, also a small but excellent chest of carpenter's tools, a medicine-chest, etcetera.

But when these and our boat were all stowed away, there still remained more room than I expected in our midship compartment, and the little craft floated with her load-line nearly a foot above the water's edge. I proposed ballasting her down to her proper depth with sand-bags, but Bob seemed anxious to test her sail-carrying powers light as she was, urging that though we should start well down in the water, she would lift as our provisions grew short; and it was desirable to know by experiment beforehand how far we could lighten her with safety.

Our sails had arrived, and we proceeded to bend these forthwith, and set them; as the weather being fine, with light air, a very favourable opportunity offered for stretching them gently and uniformly. We were as pleased with these sails as we were with the hull of our little craft. They were perfect masterpieces of the sailmaker's art, the jibs being angulated, and the mainsail, square-headed gaff-topsail, and trysail being made with gored cloths.

This latter arrangement was an extravagant one as to the amount of cloth used in the making of each sail, but we were more than repaid for it by the perfection of *set* in the sails, which stood as flat as boards. Our storm-sails were made of stout canvas, and the fine-weather ones of American cotton canvas, a most beautiful material, extremely light, yet so close woven that not a breath of the faintest breeze was lost, and they were white as snow.

Our standing rigging was of wire, this being lighter, and offering less windage than hemp-rigging of the same strength; but, in order to counteract its rigidity and give play to the spars, we adopted the expedient of connecting the deadeyes to the chain-plates by a bolt and shackle arrangement, interposing a thick india-rubber washer between the shackle and the bolt-head. This plan answered most admirably, and I would strongly recommend it to all users of wire-rigging. I am confident that, in a fresh breeze and a chopping sea, we gained fully a knot per hour in speed by it.

Whilst our sails were stretching, Bob and I occupied our time in looking about us for a few things which we thought we could better obtain in London than anywhere else. Amongst these were a couple of air mattresses for our hammocks, which, when fully inflated, were capable of sustaining the weight of three men each in the water. Another article was a cooking-stove, the smallest, lightest, and most compact thing of the kind I ever saw.

It had a boiler capable of heating a quart of water, and an oven large enough to bake a fowl, with kettle, saucepan, etcetera, for the top. The grate proper was filled with fragments of some substance, the name of which I have forgotten, and underneath the grate was a sliding tray which held a six-wicked lamp. The lamp being lighted and placed in position, speedily raised the substance in the grate to a state of incandescence, and there was our fire, which gave out a tremendous heat for the size of the grate. As an aid to this stove, and an economiser of fuel, we purchased also a most extraordinary invention, which was named the "Norwegian cooking-stove" if I remember rightly.

This was not a stove at all, though it performed the functions of one. It was simply a *box*, so constructed that it retained all the heat your dish might happen to contain when placed in it. The mode of operation was to place your fowl or pie, or what not, in the oven until it was thoroughly hot through, then take it out, place it in the "Norwegian," shut it up for two or three hours, take it out, and lo! your dinner was cooked to perfection. The fuel which this affair saved us during the voyage would have bought a dozen of them. We spent a week looking about for such things as these, and I am confident that, but for the economy of space which we were able to secure through the aid of these contrivances, our voyage must have come to a sudden and ignominious conclusion.

At length we were all at aunto; sails stretched to perfection and properly bent, our *impedimenta* all carefully and snugly stowed, and everything ready for a start. At the instigation and through the kindness of some yachting friends of mine, I had been introduced to and was elected a member of the Royal — Yacht Club; so one fine morning towards the latter end of July we loosed our sails, set them, ran our Club burgee up to the mast-head and the ensign up to the peak, and made a start for Weymouth. At the last moment Mr Wood, the builder of our little craft, came on board, saying that as he had nothing very pressing for the day, and was curious to see something of the way in which the *Water Lily* behaved, he would take a passage with us as far as Gravesend, if we had no objection.

We were only too pleased to have his company, and of course gave him a cordial welcome. The moment he came on board we cast off our moorings, ran up the jib and foresail, and slid rapidly away from the shore. The wind was moderately fresh from the northward, so we started under mainsail, foresail, and jib, but with the topmast lowered, as, being in very light trim, I did not think it advisable to run any risks by crowding sail upon the barkie.

We found, as I had expected, that on an even keel she was crank, though not to the extent I had anticipated; but as she began to heel over her overhanging topside supported her; so that, as the breeze freshened (which it did gradually), the more she lay down to it the stiffer she became.

As our confidence in her stability and sail-carrying powers thus became established, we grew anxious to try her paces, and forthwith got her topmast on end, the rigging set up, and put the square-headed gaff-topsail upon her. This was a very large sail for the size of the vessel, though, like the mainsail, it was not particularly high in the *hoist*; but both sails were very much peaked, the gaff-topsail so much so that the yard was almost straight up and down.

With the setting of our big topsail an immediate and very marked improvement in speed became manifest. Before this we had been darting along at a very respectable speed, passing some smart-looking schooners as though they had been at anchor; but now the little craft fairly rushed through the water, making it hiss and smoke under her sharp bows, and leaving a long wake of bubbles behind her. She heeled over still more, of course, but it was with a steady kind of resistance to the force of the wind which did finally away with any lurking fears we might have had that we were over-sparred or over-sailed.

We hove our patent log, and found that we were spinning along a good eight knots through the water; and indeed we came up with, and passed with ease, several vessels which were being towed down the river. Bob and I were enchanted, and Mr Wood scarcely less so; and when, shortly after luncheon, he stepped into the boat which he had hailed to put him on shore at Gravesend, he said, "I am sure the little craft will come with credit out of the ordeal through which you are going to put her, whatever it may be; so, gentlemen, I hope you will favour me on your return with a full account of your and her adventures."

We took leave of him with a hearty shake of the hand, and a faithful promise that we would do so (a promise which I intend to fulfil by sending him a handsomely-bound copy of this "log" as soon as printed); let draw the fore-sheet, and resumed our course down the river.

We met with no adventure worthy of record on our passage down, unless I except the amusement we derived from the chagrin of the crew of a French steamer bound to Havre, who, to their amazement, found that the little English yacht, by cutting off corners, skimming across shoals, and similar manoeuvres, was slowly drawing ahead of them; and though, after passing Sheerness, she gradually crept ahead of us at first, yet as the wind freshened, and we continued to "carry on" until the water was over our deck on the lee-side half-way up to the companion, we actually overtook and passed her, until, to escape an ignominious defeat, she set her own sails and so drew away from us.

By eight o'clock that night we were off the North Foreland, bowling along at a slashing pace, with our mainsail boomed out to starboard, and our spinnaker set on the port side, jib and foresail stowed.

It was a glorious summer evening, and there was every prospect of its being a fine night; the aneroid evinced, if anything, a tendency to rise, and there was a good slice of the moon left, though she would be rather late in rising, so we determined to keep going all night.

By ten o'clock we were flying through the Downs; and very ticklish work it was to thread in and out between the ships at anchor there and those beating up, without experiencing a jibe, but by dint of a sharp look-out we did it. By midnight we were off Dover, and here we took in the spinnaker, jibbed the boom over to port, and set our jib and foresail. Bob wanted the spinnaker set again on the starboard side; but I would not agree to this, as, though we had both been on deck hitherto, he insisted on taking the middle watch alone, while I went below for a four hours' sleep, and I did not think it prudent to leave him alone with so large and unmanageable a sail.

I wanted to take in the gaff-topsail also, but Bob would not hear of such a thing. He insisted that she was under easy and manageable canvas, and that there was nothing like making a passage while we had the opportunity. In this sentiment I fully agreed with him; but still I thought it better to err on the safe side, at least for the present, until we had become better acquainted with the capabilities of the craft. But Bob was obdurate, and at last I had to give in and rest content with the assurance that he would give me timely warning if it should become necessary to shorten sail.

When I came on deck at four o'clock I found we were just off Dungeness, and in the midst of an outward-bound fleet of ships of all sizes and almost all nations. The wind appeared to have freshened somewhat during Bob's watch; but the morning was beautifully clear and fine; and, as our spars seemed to bear with the utmost ease the sail we were carrying, I thought we might venture to try the effect of a little extra "muslin."

Accordingly, before relieving Bob at the tiller, I roused out our spinnaker again; and as we had hauled up a couple of points for Beachy Head just as I came on deck, I got it to the bowsprit-end and set it, with its sheet led aft to the main-boom-end, in place of the jib, which, with the foresail, I stowed. Bob then went below and turned in, first giving me strict injunctions to call him at "seven-bells," that he might turn out and prepare breakfast, for it now appeared that he intended to unite the functions of chief-mate and cook and steward, on the voyage we had just started upon so auspiciously.

The substitution of the spinnaker for the jib and foresail made a very great difference in our rate of sailing. When I first came on deck I noticed some distance astern a splendid clipper-ship, bowling along with every stitch of canvas set that would draw, up to skysails and royal studding-sails. By the time I had got my spinnaker set she was abreast of us, about half a mile outside and consequently to leeward. But *now* she was unable to draw away from us an inch, so great was our speed through the smooth water; and when Bob came on deck at "seven-bells," she still lay as nearly as possible in the same position with regard to us as when he went below.

"Phew!" whistled he, as his eye fell on her, "so the big chap has found his match, has he, in a craft the size of his own long-boat. My eyes! Harry, but this here *is* a little flyer, and no mistake. Why, the post-office people 'll be wanting us to carry their mails for 'em, if so be as they gets to hear on us, eh, lad?"

Closing this remark with a chuckle of intense satisfaction and a leer at our big neighbour, Bob dived below again; and shortly afterwards a frizzling sound from forward, and an odour strongly suggestive of bacon and eggs, which was wafted upwards from the companion, informed me that he had entered upon the duties of the less dignified but equally important part of his combined self-appointment.

We made a hearty breakfast off the aforesaid bacon and eggs, with *soft tack* laid in the day before, and washed all down with some most excellent coffee, in the concoction of which beverage Bob was an adept, and then, as soon as he had washed up, and put matters to rights in his pantry, and made arrangements for dinner, I went below and

turned in until noon.

When I went upon deck again, I found that the breeze had softened down very considerably, and we were slipping along barely five knots through the water. Our big neighbour, the ship, could do nothing with us in such light airs, and he was now a good six miles astern.

During the afternoon, the wind dropped still more, and by eight o'clock in the evening we had little more than steerage-way.

The water was absolutely without a ripple; our sails flapped, the main-boom swung inboard with every heave of the little craft over the long, gentle undulations of the ground-swell; and the different vessels in sight were heading to all points of the compass.

It was, to all appearance, stark calm; yet there must have been a light though imperceptible air, for on looking over the bows there was a smooth unbroken ripple stretching away on each side, showing that we were moving through the water still, though very gently; and the fact that the little craft answered her helm was additional testimony to the same effect.

During the night a little air came out from off the land, and we mended our pace somewhat; but it was not until the following noon that we got fairly abreast of Saint Catherine's Point.

About eight o'clock the same evening, the wind still being light, we were abreast of the Needles; about a couple of miles to the westward of them, and apparently steering pretty nearly the same course as ourselves, we saw a cutter yacht about our own size.

By midnight we were abreast of Durlstone Head, and had gained so much upon the other cutter that we could make out that she had a large and apparently a very merry party on board. Hearty peals of laughter came frequently across the water towards us from her, and occasionally a song, generally with a good rattling chorus.

We continued to creep up to her, and at length got abreast of and so near her that, with the advantage of a good run, an active man might have leaped from one vessel to the other.

As we ranged up alongside, a most aristocratic-looking man stepped to leeward, and, grasping lightly with one hand the aftermost shroud, while with the other he slightly lifted his straw hat in salute, he inquired:

"What cutter is that?"

"The *Water Lily*, Royal — Yacht Club," replied I. "What cutter is that?"

"The *Emerald*, Royal Victoria," answered our new acquaintance. "You have a singularly fast vessel under you," continued he; "I believe I may say she is the first that ever passed me in such weather as this. I have hitherto thought that, in light winds, the *Emerald* has not her match afloat; yet you are stealing through my lee as if we were at anchor. I presume, by the course you are steering, that you are, like ourselves, bound to Weymouth. If so, I should like to step on board you when we arrive, if you will allow me. I am curious to see a little more of the craft that is able to slip away from us as you are doing, in our own weather. I am Lord —," he explained, thinking, I suppose, that we should like to know who it was who thus invited himself on board a perfect stranger.

I shouted back (for we were by this time some distance ahead of the *Emerald*) that I should be happy to see his lordship on board whenever he pleased to come; and then the conversation ceased, the distance between the two vessels having become too great to permit of its being continued with comfort.

It was now Bob's watch below; but the night was so very close that he had brought his bed on deck, and was preparing to "turn in" on the weather-side of the companion for his four hours' sleep. As he arranged the bedding to his satisfaction, he cast his eyes frequently astern to the *Emerald*, whose sails gleamed ghostly in the feeble light of the moon, which, in her third quarter, was just rising.

"By George, Harry," exclaimed he, "if they *Emeralds* bain't shifting topsails, I'm a miserable sinner! Ay, there goes his 'ballooner' aloft. His lordship don't like the looks of our tail, seemin'ly; but I doubt whether, in this light breeze, his big topsail will enable him to catch us. My eyes! how we *did* slip through his lee, sure enough! Tell ye what, Harry, lad; that topsail of our'n is a good un—a *rare* good un for a reach, and in a moderate breeze; but we ought to have a 'ballooner' for running off the wind in light weather—a whacking big un, with a 'jack' as long as the bowsprit, and a yard as long as the lower-mast. I'm beginning to think we are under-sparred and under-sailed."

I could scarcely agree with Bob in this. It is true that in fine weather we could carry considerably more canvas than we had; but I had a thought for the heavy weather also, and I knew that as soon as it came on to blow we should find our present sails quite as large as we could manage. Nevertheless, I made up my mind that we *would* have a balloon-topsail, as the voyage would be a long one, and it was possible that we might have spells of light winds for days together, when such a sail could be carried to the utmost advantage.

Notwithstanding the change of topsails, we still continued to creep away from the *Emerald*, and when we let go our anchor in Weymouth Roads, about six o'clock the next morning, she was still a good three miles outside of us; the wind had, in the meantime, fallen away so light, that it was not until after we had breakfasted that she drifted slowly in and brought up close to us.

Shortly afterwards, Lord — came on board, accompanied by two or three friends; and his astonishment was great when he found that we only mustered two hands, all told. He noticed the absence of a boat from our decks, and inquired whether we had lost ours, and was still more astonished when we informed him that it was taken to pieces

and stowed snugly away below.

This led to a request that he might be allowed to see it; and gradually it all came out that we were bound on nothing less than a voyage to the Pacific.

He was by no means inquisitive; his questions were merely such as one yachtsman would naturally put to another. But we knew beforehand that it would be difficult to conceal the fact that we were not merely cruising for pleasure; so we had come to the conclusion that it would be best to put a bold face upon the matter, and state at once that we were going a long trip; and Bob had proposed that, in the event of any questions being asked, we should give out that we were going to seek for some traces of my father.

To this I willingly agreed, as I really meant, it possible, to endeavour to find some clue to his fate; though I could not help acknowledging to myself that, if we *did* make any discoveries, it would be by the merest accident.

Lord — seemed to be singularly struck with the model of the *Water Lily*; the only fault he found with her being the deficiency of head-room below. This fault, however, was inseparable from her peculiar shape, for, as I have already stated, she had a very shallow body, and a flat floor; and although she drew seven feet of water aft, her depth below her platform was entirely taken up with the ballast and water-tank, leaving only a height of four feet between the top of the platform and the under side of the beams; she was, in short, an exceedingly small craft for her tonnage.

We went ashore in his lordship's boat at his invitation; and as I casually mentioned that I meant on the morrow to put our "boat" together and give her a trial, he very kindly offered to accompany us in the *Emerald*.

My sister was, of course, delighted to see us both, and equally delighted to hear how thoroughly satisfied we were with our little vessel. It was evident that she had not quite conquered her apprehensions on the score of our long voyage in so small a craft; but our eulogiums upon the *Water Lily's* many good qualities were so enthusiastic, and the confidence we expressed in her sea-going powers so thorough, that Ada soon came to regard the voyage as in no degree more perilous than it would have been if undertaken in a vessel of four or five hundred tons.

We did not think it necessary to point out to her that we should probably be exposed to many perils besides those of the sea; and so the dear girl became satisfied, and learned to contemplate our speedy departure with comparative equanimity.

The next morning we made arrangements with a boatman for the hire of his punt during the short time that we intended to remain in Weymouth, as we wished our tubular boat to come into use only when we had no other to fall back upon.

Having struck our bargain, Bob and I jumped into the hired punt, and rowed off to the *Water Lily*, which lay at anchor in the roadstead.

It was necessary to pass close to the *Emerald* to reach our own craft, and as we pulled under her stern, Lord — hailed us to know whether we still intended to make our trial trip, and, if so, how long it would be ere we should be ready.

I replied that I hoped to be ready in about an hour, whereupon his lordship jumped into his boat to pay a visit to the post-office, saying he would be back in time to go out with us.

As soon as we got on board the *Water Lily*, we got our tubes on deck, screwed the different sections together, and launched them overboard. The framework connecting the two tubes together, and supporting the stage or deck, was next fixed; then the deck itself, which was in three pieces, and so contrived that, when properly put together and laid in its place, a single bolt secured the whole immovably. Our centre-board and rudder were soon in their places, and nothing remained but to step the mast and bowsprit, set up the rigging, bend sails, and be off.

These latter operations took but a very short time, as every device had been adopted which would facilitate the boat's equipment; and, having timed ourselves, we found that our boat was ready and under weigh *within* an hour of the time at which we had first begun to work at her. We considered this very smart work, but we hoped to shorten the time considerably after a little practice. We took a few turns in the bay, whilst the *Emerald* was getting under weigh, and tried a few manoeuvres with perfect success. There was only one thing about which we had any doubt, and that was whether she would *stay* or no. In the smooth water close to the shore (the wind was strong from the south-west, that day) she tacked beautifully, head-reaching a long way in stays; and later on in the day we found that in this respect rough water made very little difference to her, owing to the peculiar shape of her tubes.

It was blowing a strong breeze from the south-west, as I have already said, and we took down a reef in our mainsail, whilst the *Emerald* started under trysail and jib, keeping her mainsail stowed, so as not to run away from us.

We intended to run out round the *Shambles* light-ship and back; but as soon as I got clear of the bay, and from under the lee of the *Nothe*, I hauled sharp upon a wind to test the stability of my craft. To my astonishment, she did not appear to feel the effect of the wind at all, except as it tended to urge her through the water. She skimmed along very fast, but stood quite upright. Under these circumstances we, of course, shook our reef out and bore up for a run away to leeward.

The *Emerald* could do nothing with us at this game, much to the chagrin of her noble owner; so she was obliged to in trysail and set her mainsail, whilst we hove-to and waited for her. But even after her mainsail was set we had the advantage of her.

She was a regular racer—long, lean, and deep in the water; whilst we floated entirely upon the surface, the tubes being exactly half submerged, as we noticed when we first started. The consequence was that we skimmed along like a feather, whilst the *Emerald* had to displace many tons of water with every foot of progress which she made.

We passed through the opening in the magnificent breakwater which shelters the roadstead at Portland, and soon afterwards began to feel the heave of the Channel. Our tube-boat rushed along over the crests of the waves with a very easy and steady motion, but the *Emerald* started rolling; and as we drew farther off the land, and got more into the influence of the rough water, this rolling motion became so violent that her boom had to be topped up pretty high to prevent it from dipping and dragging in the water every time she rolled to leeward.

Bob sat watching her attentively for some time, and at length—

“Aren’t this here *Emerald* the little eight-tonner as took so many prizes last year in the regattas?” said he.

I replied that she was.

“Well,” said he, “we beat her all to nothing in a calm, or next door to it, last night in the *Lily*, and I’m thinking we could run her under water in a breeze like this here, with such a jump of a sea as we shall get when we rounds to on our road back. What’s your idee, my lad?”

“I think we could,” replied I. “She is so long and narrow that she must be a regular wet one close-hauled, as I expect we shall see shortly. If I remember rightly, all her prizes were won in light winds or smooth water; and though I do not believe we could do anything with her in a staggering whole-sail breeze in *smooth* water, I fancy we could give a good account of her in a Channel match. But you must bear in mind, Bob, that the *Lily* is the larger craft of the two.”

“That I deny,” retorted Bob. “Heavier we may be as to tonnage, accordin’ to the way tonnage is measured; but she’s got double our power. I’ll bet my ’lowance of grog for the next month to come that she’s got good seven ton or more of lead stowed away under her cabin floor; whilst we’ve got two, besides the trifle in our keel; and *power*, as you know well, Harry, is what tells in a breeze. Take us all round, and, in spite of our difference of tonnage, I reckon we’re pretty much of a size, and consequently a very fair match, so far as that goes. I should like to be alongside of her in the *Lily* in such a breeze and such water as this.”

By this time we were close to the light-ship, still leading, and in another minute we shot under her stern and hauled up on the port tack. We now felt the full strength of the breeze, and I was somewhat alarmed to find how fresh it was blowing. But we were as stiff as a house, and could have carried half as much sail again, had there been more to set. We lowered our centre-board just before hauling up, and now we found ourselves tearing along, in a manner which perfectly astounded me.

Our long, slender, pointed tubes appeared to offer no resistance whatever to our passage through the water. The motion was delightfully easy and gentle, the tubes piercing the body of each wave, as it rolled towards us, without the slightest shock, and lifting us gently and easily over the cap of it, just as it seemed upon the point of coming in upon our deck. There was not an atom of spray; we were as dry going to windward as when running free.

With the *Emerald* it was very different. Her huge mainsail was almost too much for her, now that she was hauled close upon a wind; and as we looked astern, we could see her taking plunge after plunge, and sending her sharp bows clear through the seas at every dive, until her jib and foresail were wet half-way up to their heads, whilst her lee-rail was completely buried in the boiling surge.

Now that we were close-hauled, the *Emerald* walked up to us, though by no means so rapidly as might have been expected. There was no comparison between the powers of the two craft, yet, though we certainly dropped to leeward a little more than she did, it was *only* a little; and the difference in our speeds was very trifling, considering the great difference in size between the cutter and ourselves.

About a quarter of an hour after we rounded the light-ship, the *Emerald* passed us close to windward. She presented a most beautiful sight, at least to a nautical eye, as she swept by. She was heeling over to such an extent that the water was up over her deck, on the lee-side, nearly to the skylights and companion; and her immense sails were driving her so irresistibly through the short, jumping seas, that she had no time to rise to each as she met it. Her bowsprit plunged deeply into the advancing wave, her sharp bows cleft it asunder, and then, as they rose through it, amidst a blinding shower of spray, the water shipped forward, rushed foaming aft and to leeward like a swollen mountain torrent, until it mingled with the water which flooded her decks to leeward.

As soon as she was past us, her crew hauled down a couple of reefs in her mainsail, and set a smaller jib. This, of course, relieved her very materially, and, if anything, rather increased than diminished her speed, as she kept sailing round and round us with ease, until we were well over towards Weymouth Roads once more, and it had become perfectly evident that we needed no looking after.

As soon as he was quite satisfied of this, Lord — made the best of his way to the anchorage, and brought up, having had such a dusting as ought to have satisfied him for some time to come.

As for Bob and myself, we were as pleased with our novel boat as it was possible to be. She proved to be a perfect success in every way; and when we took the tubes to pieces to stow them away, we found, so accurately had the joints been made, that not a drop of water had penetrated to the interior of either.

One alteration, however, we resolved to make, and that was in the size of the sails. The boat was stiff enough to carry much larger sails than we had provided for her; and as we did not know but that a time *might* come when speed would be a matter of the most vital importance to us, we determined to furnish her with sails as large as it was prudent to carry.

We also decided to alter her rig somewhat, by substituting what is known among the initiated as a “sliding-gunter” for a gaff-mainsail. This gives you a mainsail and jib-headed topsail in one, whilst it does away with the gaff altogether, whereby you obtain a much flatter standing sail; indeed, when this sail is properly cut (and it is not a

difficult sail to shape), there is nothing to beat it in this respect.

Accordingly, we despatched an order to Laphorn that night for the new suit of sails, and also for a balloon-topsail for the *Water Lily*, the dimensions of which satisfied even Bob, greedy as he was for canvas.

Meantime, the remainder of our stores were ordered, received, and shipped, and ten days after our arrival in Weymouth Roads we had everything on board which we could think of as necessary or likely to be in any degree useful to us on our voyage.

But when all was shipped, we found we had made a mistake somewhere in our calculations, and not only had rather more room than we expected, but our little craft still floated rather higher than her regular load-line. We therefore took in half a ton more lead ballast, which brought her down to within an inch of her proper trim, and with that we determined to rest satisfied.

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## Chapter Five.

### A Gale in the Bay of Biscay.

On the evening of Wednesday, August 8th, 18—, having wished all our friends good-bye, and pressed my last kiss upon the lips of my sobbing sister, I ran hastily down the flight of stone steps before my aunt's front door, crossed the road, and walked briskly down the Esplanade until I overtook Bob, who had gone on before me; we then proceeded together to the New Quay end, found the man of whom we had hired our punt, paid him his money, and got him to row us on board the *Water Lily*.

We had arranged to start at daybreak on the following morning; but as we pulled off to the cutter we remarked that there was a nice little breeze blowing from the westward, and as the evening was beautifully fine and clear, with the promise of a brilliant starlight when the night should have fully set in, the idea occurred to us both that we might just as well be getting on down Channel at once, as be lying at anchor all night.

Accordingly, as soon as we got on board, we loosed and set our canvas, hove up our anchor, and in half an hour afterwards were slipping through the opening in the Portland Breakwater.

In little more than half an hour after that we were clear of the dreaded Bill, when, noticing that a small drain of flood-tide was still making, we hauled our wind on the port tack, and stood in towards Bridport for an hour; then tacked again, and stood out towards mid-Channel, so as to obtain the full benefit of the ebb-tide, which by this time had begun to make.

By "six bells," or seven o'clock, on the following morning we were abreast the Start, about six miles distant. We stood on until eight o'clock, when we tacked again towards the land, having now a flood-tide against us, and had breakfast.

By noon we were *in* Plymouth Sound, when we made a short leg to the southward until we could weather Rame Head; then went about once more, stretched across Whitesand Bay until the ebb-tide began to make again, and then again hove about and stood to the southward and westward, on the starboard tack.

At six o'clock that evening we passed the Lizard lighthouse, distant two and a half miles, and here we *took our departure*.

For the benefit of those who may be ignorant of the meaning of this expression, I may as well explain that the commander of a vessel *takes his departure* from the last *well-known* point of land he expects to see before launching into mid-ocean, by noting, as accurately as he possibly can, its compass-bearing and distance from his ship at a particular hour.

With these data he is enabled to lay down upon his chart the exact position of his ship at that hour, and from this spot the *ship's reckoning* commences. The courses she steers, and the number of *knots* or nautical miles (sixty of which are equal to sixty-nine and a half English miles) she sails every hour, together with certain other items of information, such as the direction of the wind, the direction and speed of the currents, if any, which she passes through, and the state of the weather, the *lee-way* the ship makes, etcetera, etcetera, are all entered in the log-book; and at noon every day, by means of certain simple calculations, the ship's position is ascertained from these particulars.

The entering of all these particulars in the log-book is termed *keeping the dead reckoning*, and the working out of the calculations just referred to is called *working up the days work*.

This, however, only gives the ship's position *approximately*, because it is difficult to judge *accurately* of the amount of lee-way which a ship makes, and it is not at all times easy to detect the presence of currents, both of which produce a certain amount of deviation from the apparent course of the ship.

To correct, therefore, all errors of this kind, which are otherwise impossible to detect when the ship is out of sight of land, various observations of the sun, moon, or stars are taken, whereby the *exact* latitude or longitude (or sometimes both together) of the ship at the moment of observation is ascertained.

This short lesson in navigation over, we will now rejoin the *Water Lily*, which we left at six p.m. off the Lizard, on the starboard tack.

It was my "eight hours out" that night, and when I took the tiller at eight o'clock we were dashing along a good honest eight knots, under whole canvas and a jib-headed gaff-topsail. The night was as fine as the previous one, but



with a little more wind, and we were just beginning to get within the influence of the Atlantic swell. There was no sea on, but the long, majestic, heaving swell was sweeping with stately motion towards the Channel, rising like low hills on either side of us as our little barkie sank between them, and gleaming coldly, like polished steel, where the moon's rays fell upon their crests. But the little *Lily* sprang gaily onward upon her course, mounting the watery ridges and gliding down into the liquid valleys with the ease and grace of a seabird, and without throwing so much as a drop of water upon her deck.

The serenity and beauty of the night, the brilliancy of the stars which studded the deep purple vault above me, and the gentle murmur of the wind through the cutter's rigging, combined to produce a sensation of solemnity almost amounting to melancholy within me, and my thoughts flew back to the beloved sister I had so recently parted with, wondering whether she was at that moment thinking of me, or whether we should ever meet again, and, if so, how long hence and under what circumstances; and so on, and so on, until I was recalled to myself by a sprinkling of spray upon my cheek, whereupon I awoke, in the first place, to the fact that the breeze had so far freshened that the *Lily* was flying through the water with her lee gunwale pretty well under; and, in the second, to the knowledge that I had outstayed my watch a good half-hour.

I lost no time in calling Bob, and as soon as he came upon deck we got our gaff-topsail down and our topmast housed.

I then went below and turned in; but I had time, before leaving the deck, to notice that we went through the water quite as fast (if not a trifle faster), now that our lee gunwale was just awash, as we did when it was buried a couple of planks up the deck in water.

When Bob called me at the expiration of his watch, I found, on going on deck, that the wind had continued to freshen all through the four hours I had been below, and it was now blowing quite a strong breeze. It had gradually hauled round to about north-west, too, which brought it well upon our starboard quarter, and we were flying along at a tremendous pace, with all our sheets eased well off.

But although by this change we were running *off* the wind, and consequently did not feel its full force, I decided to take down a single reef in the mainsail, and shift the jib; for there was a windy look in the sky that seemed to promise a very strong blow shortly. I did not wish to disturb Bob when perhaps about half-way through his four hours' sleep, so I got him to assist me in making my preparations before he left the deck. And the promise was amply fulfilled as the sun rose higher in the sky, the wind freshening rapidly, but hauling still farther round from the northward as it did so.

By the time that Bob came on deck again, at seven-bells, to prepare breakfast, I had my hands full. The sea was fast getting up, and I began to tremble for my spars and gear. The glass had fallen rather suddenly, and altogether there seemed to be every prospect of a regular summer gale.

Bob was of the same opinion as myself in this respect, so we decided to get everything snug and in readiness for the blow before thinking of breakfast.

This was rather a ticklish job, for it was now blowing far too strong to round-to and shorten sail, and it required something more than freshwater seamanship to get our big mainsail in without getting into trouble. But Bob seemed perfectly at home. He set the weather-topping-lift up hand-taut, and took a turn with the lee one; then dropped the peak of the mainsail until the end of the gaff was pressing against the lee-lift; triced the tack right up to the throat; then let run the throat-halliards, and hauled down the throat of the sail by the tack tripping-line; whilst I rounded in upon the main-sheet. Then, by lowering away the peak, and carefully gathering in the canvas as it came down, we got our big sail snugly down without any trouble. This we carefully stowed and covered up with its coat.

Next, Bob got the jib in, close-reefed the bowsprit, and set the smallest or *storm* jib, with its sheet eased well off. I hauled in the weather fore-sheet until it was just in the wake of the mast, and our little barkie was then left to take care of herself whilst we got the trysail bent and set.

This done, we filled away again upon our course, with reduced speed, it is true, but very comfortably indeed.

It was well we took these precautions when we did, for by noon that day it had hardened down into a regular summer gale, with a really formidable sea for so small a craft. Still, we continued to run away very nearly dead before it, and that too without deviating from our proper course.

I managed, with the utmost difficulty, in consequence of the violent motion of the boat, to get an observation at noon, by which I found that we had run, since six o'clock on the previous evening, a distance of no less than one hundred and sixty-four miles. This placed us at about the entrance to the Bay of Biscay, which we were thus running into in a gale of wind. Still, I did not experience the slightest degree of alarm: our little craft was behaving beautifully — *angelically*. Bob termed it, and really it almost merited the expression. As she fell away into the trough of the sea, our low sails would become almost becalmed under the lee of the following wave; but as she lifted with it, the wind would again fill them out, and she would dart away again just in time to escape the mishap of being *pooped* by its breaking and hissing crest.

At four p.m. I again succeeded in obtaining an observation, this time for the longitude. On working it up, we proved to be rather to leeward of our proper track; so we hauled up a point or so, and at six o'clock decided to try what she was like when hove-to.

Watching an opportunity, we brought her to the wind on the starboard tack, first stowing our foresail, and found, to our great delight, that she rode like a gull. Beyond an occasional shower of spray, she shipped not a drop of water, although the gale was still increasing, and the sea rising rapidly.

We took a reef in our trysail, afterwards hoisting the gaff as high as it would go, so as to avoid, as much as possible, being becalmed in the trough of the sea, and then we were snug for the night.

Bob was a veteran seaman, and I had been in many a heavy blow before this—in gales, in fact, to which this was a mere nothing, comparatively speaking; yet neither of us could help feeling impressed—and for myself I may say somewhat awe-stricken—at the sublimity of the scene as the evening closed in. Hitherto, our experiences of gales of wind had come to us with a good, wholesome ship under our feet; but now we found ourselves face to face with one in a mere *boat*, little more than a toy craft. The sea, though nothing like as high as I had frequently seen it before, now wore a more formidable aspect than I could ever have believed possible. The hackneyed expression of “running mountains high” seemed strictly applicable; and I fairly own to having experienced, for, I believe, the first time in my life, a qualm or two of fear on that night.

The liquid hills, their foaming ridges as high as the top of our lower-mast, swept down upon us with an impetuous fury which seemed irresistible; and the effect was further heightened, as darkness closed around us, by the phosphorescent glare and gleam of their breaking crests. But the *Lily* rose lightly and buoyantly to each as it rushed down upon her, surmounting its crest in a blinding shower of spray, and then settling easily into the trough between it and the next one.

The roaring of the gale, too, and the angry hiss of the storm-lashed waters, contributed their quota to the feeling of awe with which we looked abroad from our pigmy ark.

But confidence returned after a while, as we watched the ease with which the little craft overrode the seas; and when I at length turned into my hammock, it was with a sense of security I could not have believed possible a couple of hours before.

We hoisted a carefully-trimmed and brilliant lamp well up on our fore-stay as soon as night closed in, for we were in the track of the outward-bound ships going to the southward, and should one of these gentlemen come booming down upon us before the gale during the night, it would be rather difficult to avoid him.

It was well that we took this precaution, for no less than five passed us in Bob’s watch, and three more in mine, one of them coming near enough to hail; but what he said it was impossible for me to hear, the howling of the wind and the hissing of the water so close to me utterly drowning the words.

I conjectured, however, that it was some inquiry as to whether we wanted assistance of any kind, and on the strength of this supposition I roared back at the top of my voice:

“All right; very comfortable.”

A figure in the mizzen-rigging waved his hand, and the noble craft (she looked like an Australian liner, and was carrying topmast and lower stunsails) swept onward, and was soon afterwards swallowed up in the darkness and mist.

The falling in with so tiny a craft so far at sea, and in a gale of wind, and the announcement that she was “all right and very comfortable,” must have been rather a novel experience for them, I imagine.

About noon next day the gale broke, and by four o’clock the wind had gone down sufficiently to justify us in making sail and filling away upon our course once more. This we did by setting our reefed mainsail, foresail, and Number 2 jib. The wind had continued to haul round too, and was now pretty steady at about north-east. This rapidly smoothed the water down, so that we had a comparatively quiet night; and the wind continuing to drop, we shook out our reefs next morning at eight bells, and got the big jib and small gaff-topsail upon her.

The evening but one following we got a glimpse of Cape Finisterre about six o’clock, and this enabled us to corroborate our position. From this point we shaped a course for Madeira, and after a splendid run of seven days from the Lizard and eight from Weymouth we arrived at Funchal at half-past five o’clock on the Wednesday evening following that on which I took leave of my dear sister.

As Bob was busy below getting tea, and I was stowing the canvas, a steamer came in with a flag flying, which, on taking a look at it through the glass, I recognised as the distinguishing flag of the Cape mail-boats, so I left everything just as it was, dashed down below, and penned a few hasty lines home, giving a brief outline of our adventures so far, and taking care not to lay too much stress upon the gale, whilst I was equally careful to do full justice to the *Water Lily’s* sea-going qualities, that my sister’s apprehensions might be as much allayed as possible.

As soon as I had finished and sealed the epistle, I joined Bob upon deck to assist him in putting our novel boat together, which done, we pulled on board the mail-boat, where we were very kindly received; and I gave my letter into the hands of the captain, who promised (and faithfully redeemed his promise too) to post it on his arrival home.

I afterwards found that he reported us also, so that the *Water Lily* duly appeared in the “shipping” columns of the various papers, and my yachting friends thus got an inkling of our success so far.

I shall not attempt any description of Madeira, or indeed of any other of the well-known spots at which we touched. The places have been so often and so fully described in the many books of travel which have been written, that any further description, or at all events such description as I could give, is quite superfluous. It will suffice for me merely to say that Bob and I spent three days stretching our somewhat cramped limbs in this most lovely island, and discussing which route we should take to the Pacific.

We had often discussed this question before; but it was with a feeling of indifference which precluded our arriving at any definite and absolute decision upon the matter. It was now, however, time that this point was settled, as it would

affect our course soon after leaving the island, or, at all events, when we came to the Cape de Verdes.

The eastern route would be much longer than the western; but I felt disposed to adopt it, in the belief that we should be favoured with much better weather. I entertained a very wholesome dread of the "Horn"—the notorious "Cape of Storms." Bob, on the other hand, was all for the western route.

"I'm willin' to allow," observed he, "that a trip round the Horn ain't like a day's cruise in the Solent—all pleasuring; but I've knowed ships to come round under r'yal stunsails, and that more than once. The place is bad enough; but, like many another thing, not so black as it's painted. It's got a bad name, and that, we know, sticks to a place or to a body through thick and thin. I've been round five times, twice outward-bound and three times homeward, and we always had plenty of wind; but only once did I round it in a reg'lar gale, and then, had the *Lily* been there, I'll lay my grog for the rest of the v'yage she'd have made better weather of it than the old barkie I was aboard of. It's risky, I know; but so's the whole trip, for that matter, though, so far, by what I've seen of the little craft, I'd as lieve be aboard *her* in a gale of wind as I would be in e'er a ship that ever was launched. She's cramped for room, and when you've said that you've said all as any man can say ag'in her. Besides, see how 'twill shorten the v'yage. Once round the Horn and you're there, as you may say, or next door to it. And then, there's 'Magellan;' if, when we get down about there, things don't look promising for a trip round outside of everything, ram her through the Straits. I've been through 'em once, and an ugly enough passage it was too, blowing a whole gale; but there's *thousands* of places where the *Lily* would lie as snug as if she was in dock, but where a large ship dursen't venture for her life."

I yielded, as I generally did in such matters, to Bob's judgment; and it was settled that the *Water Lily* should brave Cape Horn with all its perils. On the fourth day of our stay at Funchal we filled up our water-tank, made a few additions to our stores (among others, a small stock of the famous wine produced by the island); and towards evening stood out to sea again, with our main-boom well garnished with bunches of bananas and nets of various kinds of fruits; the wind at the time being light, from about east-south-east, with a fine settled look about the weather. This lasted us for four days, and ran us fairly into the "trades," and on the third day following, just as the sun was dipping beneath the horizon, we sighted Saint Antonio, the westernmost of the Cape Verde Islands.

The "trades" were blowing very moderately as it happened, and the weather was as fine as heart could wish, with a nearly full moon into the bargain, so we were able to carry not only a jib-headed topsail, but also our spinnaker at the bowsprit-end; and under this canvas the little beauty made uncommonly short miles of it, tripping along like a rustic belle going to her first ball. We fell in with several homeward-bound ships, all of whom we requested to report us on their arrival as "all well." So fine a run had we from the Cape de Verdes, that on the morning of the fifth day after sighting them we ran into the "doldrums," or region of calms and light variable airs which prevail about the line.

Here our light duck did us valuable service, for though the wind soon fell so light that it became imperceptible to us, and not a ripple disturbed the glassy surface of the water, by getting our enormous balloon gaff-topsail aloft we managed to catch enough wind from *somewhere* to fan us along at the rate of nearly three knots. True, the breeze was very variable, our boom being sometimes on one side and sometimes on the other, sometimes square out (at least as far as the little air of wind had power to project it), and sometimes hauled close in as the flaws headed us, and broke us off two or three points one side or the other of our course. But, in spite of the baffling airs, such good progress did we make, that by two o'clock that afternoon we were gliding slowly through a fleet of about forty sail of vessels which were so completely becalmed that they were heading in all directions, utterly without steerage-way.

We reported ourselves to such as we passed within hail of, and finally, about four o'clock, ranged up alongside of and boarded a beautiful little barque of about three hundred and fifty tons, whose monkey-poop we saw full of passengers (some of whom were ladies), regarding us with the utmost curiosity as we approached. She turned out to be from Natal, bound to London; and her captain (a perfect gentleman both in appearance and manner) not only promised to report us, but gave us a hearty welcome on board, and so cordial an invitation to dinner that there was no resisting it.

Our story, or at least as much of it as we chose to tell (which was simply that we were taking the cruise partly as an adventure, and partly with the object of seeking intelligence of my father), was of course soon drawn out of us; and, naturally enough, it excited the liveliest astonishment in the minds of our hearers, and soon got all over the ship. We excited some curiosity on board the other ships too, for no less than four captains lowered their boats and pulled alongside to learn where the pigmy cutter had sprung from.

The little craft was regarded with the greatest curiosity and admiration, especially by the ladies (who are of course good judges of the model of a vessel), some of them declaring that they would be *delighted* (with strong emphasis) to make a voyage in such a little *darling* of a yacht.

We mustered quite a strong party at the dinner-table, what with the regular party, the four visiting captains (who were also pressed to stay), and our two selves, and a very merry one withal. *We* contributed to the dessert from our stock on the main-boom; and they only who have enjoyed it can say what a luxury is fresh fruit on the line, especially when one has been a long time on board a ship.

The skipper produced unlimited champagne (of which, for a wonder, he still had a very fair stock) in honour of the occasion, and "a prosperous voyage, and success to the *Water Lily*" was drunk over and over again that evening. We kept it up until nearly midnight, the poop being converted into a ball-room by merely hanging a few lamps in the mizzen-rigging; the orchestra consisting of one of the seamen, who played the concertina better than I ever heard it played before or since.

The weather being as I have described it, without any signs of a change, such a departure from the ordinary routine of the ship was permissible, and I have no doubt everybody on board was glad enough of an occurrence which gave such an excuse for breaking in upon the monotony of the voyage.

Tedious enough they must have found it, for it appeared that they had already been becalmed five days, and had not altered their position as many miles; and there seemed every prospect of their being becalmed five days more, for the glass was as steady as if the mercury had been solid.

At last we visitors made signs of moving. The captains of the other vessels ordered their crews into their boats, and I was just about going over the side on my way to our small cabin to write a hasty line to Ada (our kind host having promised to post my letter for me immediately on his arrival), when a seaman stepped up to me, and with the usual nautical scrape of the foot and a respectful "Beg pardon, sir," intimated a desire to speak to me.

"There's a strange yarn going the rounds of this here craft's fo'c'sle," said he, "about your bein' on a sort of v'yage of discovery a'ter your father, sir."

I said, "Certainly; it was perfectly true."

"Well, sir," said he, "maybe I might be able to help you in your search. It needs no prophet to tell that you are Captain Collingwood's son, when a man gets a fair squint at your figure-head, axing your pardon, sir, for my boldness; and if you'll just give me your word that nothing I may say shall tell agin me, I'll tell you all I knows about it, and gladly too; for I sailed with your father, sir, and a kinder skipper or a better seaman never trod a deck than he was, as I've had good reason to know."

"Was?" exclaimed I, with a sudden sinking of heart.

"And is still, for aught I know, sir; at least I hope so; there's no reason why he mayn't be still alive," replied the man, fully understanding all the meaning of my exclamation.

"Thank God for that," replied I fervently. "But why is this strange pledge required? Surely, fellow, you will not have the temerity to tell *me*—his son—that he has been the victim of any foul play? If so—"

"Not on my part, sir, I'll take my Bible oath," said he, "What I did I was *forced* to do to save my own life. Gladly would I have helped the skipper if I could; but what can one man do agin a whole ship's crew."

"*Much*, if he have the will," replied I. "I will give no pledge whatever, beyond this. Tell me your story, and if I find you were powerless to prevent the evil which I begin to suspect has befallen my poor father, you have nothing to fear; but if I find that you have in any way aided—"

"Never, sir. If I could have had my will the skipper would not be where, I suppose, he is now; but you shall hear all I have to say, and then judge for yourself whether I could prevent anything that happened or no."

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## Chapter Six.

### The Fate of the "Amazon."

The man who, in this unexpected manner, brought me intelligence of my father, belonged to the crew of one of the visiting captains' boats, and a word or two of explanation was sufficient to procure the delay in the boat's departure necessary to permit the fellow to tell his story.

In order to be a little more alone, Bob (who was, in a few words, made acquainted with the facts of the case), the seaman, and I went down over the side to the *Water Lily's* deck, when, as soon as we had comfortably bestowed ourselves, the man thus began:

"You must know, gentlemen, to commence with, that I was shipped, among others, on board the *Amazon* at Canton. Dysentery was awful bad among the crews just at that time, and no less than seven was ashore from our old barkie bad, when she left. Two chaps run as soon as she got in, and couldn't be found agin; so there was nine berths in the fo'c'sle to be filled when she was ready to sail. As I was sayin', I was one of the new hands shipped. Englishmen was scarce somehow just then, and the skipper had to take what he could get. Consequence was, he shipped three Portuguese, a Spaniard, a Greek, two Frenchmen, and a Yankee, besides myself. The third mate was ashore bad, and the second mate had died, so the Yankee (who seemed a smartish sort of chap) was made second mate, and one of the old fo'c'sle men was put into the third mate's berth. When we got aboard, we found the hatches on, and all ready for a start, and that same a'ternoon we unmoored, and away we went.

"We was the first ship as went away with any of the new teas, and the skipper was awful anxious for a quick run home. We carried on night and day; but the weather was light with us, and we didn't get along half as such a smart ship ought to ha' done, for she was a reg'lar flyer, as perhaps you gentlemen both knows.

"Well, we hadn't been out above a week when, whether 'twas worryin' at the light winds, or what 'twas I can't say, but the poor skipper was laid on his beam-ends with fever, and it took the chief-mate all his time to prevent his jumping overboard. However, it didn't seem to matter so much, so far as the ship was consarned, for the Yankee second mate turned out to be a first-rate navigator, and he in a way took charge of the craft.

"Well, gentlemen, how it all came about, I can't say, for I never noticed anything wrong. True, some of the chaps talked a bit queer to me at times; but I thought 'twas all a bit of a flam; but, howsomever, one fine night my Yankee gentleman and the new hands takes the ship. At eight bells in the first watch, the watch below was called; and as soon as they came on deck three on 'em goes straight over and jines the mutineers without a word; so it was clear as 'twas all planned afore among 'em. That left only three whites out of the plot—the Lascars had all been bribed or frightened into jining in with t'others—and, out of us three, two was lying on deck, lashed hands and heels together when I come up through the fore-scuttle.

"The minute my foot touched the deck, I was tripped up and secured before I was fairly awake, and stowed alongside of the two other chaps. Then my noble Yankee, he steps up and stands in front of us three, and he says, says he, 'Now, you chaps, you see how it is; we've got the ship and we means to keep her; and we've made up our minds to do a little bit of pirating; make our fortunes; and then cut the sea and live like gentlemen for the rest of our days ashore. If you've a mind to jine us, well and good; if not, there's a plank sticking over the bows, and I'll be obliged to trouble you to take a short walk on it for the benefit of your constitooshuns. You've got five minutes allowed to make up your minds.'

"When the time was up, one of the chaps was unlashd, and the Yankee asks him what he intends to do.

"'I'll walk that — plank, if I must,' says he; 'but I hope I'm too honest to turn my hand to your — pirating,' says he.

"'Ah right,' says the Yankee; 'just as you please; there's no compulsion; only if you're so confounded honest,' says he, 'you'll have to leave this here ship,' says he, 'for we can't afford the room to stow away sich a bulky article as honesty. That's your road, and a pleasant passage to ye,' says he, pointin' to the plank.

"Poor Bill—I can see him now, it seems to me—he stood for about half a minute looking far away into the moonlit sky, thinking of his friends, maybe, if he had any; and then, without a word, he steps to the rail, puts his hands upon it, jumps up on to the top of the bulwarks, and next minute there was a splash alongside, and he was gone.

"T'other chap was then cast adrift, and *he* was asked the same question.

"'I've sailed with Bill,' says he, 'for nigh on six years, and never knew a truer-hearted shipmate, or a better seaman,' says he; 'and since it *must* be, here goes,' says he, 'to take our last cruise in company.'

"And he too jumps upon the rail just as Bill did, and, without waitin' a second, launches himself overboard a'ter him.

"It was now my turn. I'd been thinking matters over in my mind whilst all this was going on; and I'll confess I found it hard to make up my mind to die. 'Whilst there's life there's hope,' thinks I; 'and it can but come to a launch over the side at last, if the worst comes to the worst;' so when they asked me what I intended to do, says I. 'Tell me, first of all, what's become of the skipper?' says I.

"'He's below in his bunk,' says the Yankee, 'and the mate with him, and there they're welcome to stay so long as they don't interfere with us,' says he, 'and I'll take good care they don't,' says he. 'But what's that to do with you?'

"'Well,' says I, 'I likes the skipper; he's been a good friend to me, and I couldn't be content to see harm come to him. If you'll promise to shove him ashore all safe,' says I, 'I don't mind taking a hand in your little game.'

"'Very sensible indeed,' says the Yankee; 'you've a darned sight better notions in your head than they two stupid cusses as has just gone over the side with nothin' to ballast 'em but their—honesty,' says he; 'and as for the skipper—make your mind easy. We've no grudge agin him; all we wants is the ship; and now we've got her, we means to put the skipper and the mate both ashore somewheres where they can be snug and comfortable like together, but where there'll be no chance of our hearin' anything more from 'em for the rest of their lives.'

"And that's the way it was all settled," continued the man. "I made up my mind I'd never do no pirating if I could help it; and I thought maybe if I stuck to the craft, I might be able to help the skipper a bit somehow, and if ever I got a chance, why, I'd make a clean run for it, and I reckoned I should find a way to do that the first port we touched at.

"Well, as soon as matters was arranged, the Yankee takes the command, and makes the Greek chief-mate; the watches was divided, the course altered, and away we goes to the east'ard, on the starboard tack, with a taut bowline and everything set as would draw, from the skysails down. One hand is told off from each watch to keep a look-out in the cabin; and the steward has his orders to do everything he could for the poor skipper. He had a hard time of it, poor man, for when he was getting better, and the truth couldn't any longer be kept from him, the mate told him what had happened, and the news took him so completely aback that he got as bad as ever again, and the wonder is that he didn't slip his cables altogether. However, he managed to hold on to 'em, and at last the fever left him; but he was that weak he hadn't strength to turn over in his berth without help.

"All this time we were going to the east'ard, or about east-south-east, with everything set that the spars would bear. At last, about a month or maybe five weeks after the mutiny—I didn't keep much account of the time—we fetches up, all standing, one dark night, upon a coral reef, before we knowed where we was. There warn't much sea on, and we happened to touch where there was nearly water enough to float us; so we bumped and thumped gradually right over the reef into deep water—at least about ten fathoms—on t'other side. The well was sounded, and we found five feet of water in the hold; so, as there was land of some sort close aboard of us, the Yankee rams her straight on to it to save her from sinking under us.

"When daylight broke, we found ourselves on the sandy beach of a small island, with reefs all round us; but a space of about a quarter to half a mile of clear water everywhere between the reefs and the island.

"The cargo was roused out, and the ship examined, as well as it could be done, to learn the extent of the damage, for the Yankee talked about careening her to repair her bottom; but we soon found that the job was too much for us. So we stayed on the island about a week, fitting out the launch and the pinnace; and when all was ready, and everything stowed in the boats that it was thought we should want, we made sail to the nor'ard and east'ard; not, however, until the rest of the boats had been destroyed, and the skipper and mate made all snug and comfortable like in a tent ashore."

"Then you were inhuman enough," exclaimed I, "to leave my poor father, sick as he was, on a desert island?"

"He was better off there than he would ha' been with us," replied the man. "The island was a first-rate spot, with cocoa-nuts and bananas, and lots of other fruits, no end; plenty of fresh water, and the bulk of the ship's stores to draw from. It was a *lovely* spot; lots of shade, pure air, and pretty nigh everything a man could want, what with the stores, and the fruit, and so on. He *must* have died, had we taken him away in the boats, for the sun beat down upon us *awful*, and the heat was reflected back from the surface of the water to that extent we was nearly roasted.

"Well, we'd been to sea nigh on to three weeks, and was getting pretty short of water, though we touched at a couple of islands and filled up again, on our way, when one evening—there wasn't a breath of air blowing—we sighted a sail to the nor'ard of us. She was becalmed, like ourselves.

"The Yankee takes a good long look at her, or at least at her to'gallants'ls, which was all we could see, and then tells us he'd made up his mind to have a slap at the chap during the night. We carefully took her bearings, dowsed our canvas, and pulled leisurely towards her. At last, when we thought we were beginning to near her, we muffled our oars, and then paddled on again, both boats within oar's length of each other.

"We pulled for about an hour, and then waited for some sign of her whereabouts—for we reckoned we must be close aboard of her—but it was that dark you couldn't see the length of your nose. After waiting a goodish spell—none of us speaking a word for fear of giving an alarm—we hears eight bells struck, somewhere away upon our port quarter.

"We had passed her, so we pulled very quietly round and just paddled in the direction we thought she was lying. In about five minutes the Yankee says, 'I see her,' says he; and we stopped paddling. The pinnacle was hanging on astern of us, so's we shouldn't lose one another in the dark; and she was hauled up, the men in her told what to do, and the ship pointed out to them; and then we pulled away very quietly again.

"By this time we could just make out a dim something towering up in the darkness, which we knew to be her sails. In another minute our boat was alongside on her starboard quarter, and the pinnacle on her larboard quarter; we shinned up her low sides, and before the watch on deck could rub their eyelids open, we had her.

"She turned out to be a little Yankee brig, with a cargo of sandalwood, and was bound to Canton.

"Some of her crew joined us, the rest—the poor skipper and the first mate among 'em—was hove overboard, and the sharks had a good meal. She mounted four sixes, and had a well-stocked arm-chest, so that, with the arms we brought with us from the old *Amazon*, we was pretty well off. We mustered a good strong crew too—twenty-nine altogether, counting the Lascars—so, as the brig was a beautiful model, and, we soon found, sailed like a witch, our skipper decided to set up for a pirate at once.

"Well, gentlemen, it kept stark calm for two whole days after we'd took the brig, and Johnson—that was the Yankee's name, Edward Johnson—he kept us all busy during that time disguising the craft, by painting the hull and spars afresh, and such like; and the carpenter he was sent over the stern on a stage to fix a plank over the name, on which he'd carved a lot of flourishes and such like, and the word *Albatross*, which was what Johnson had re-christened her, and by the time we'd finished, her own builder wouldn't have knowed her.

"After everything was finished to his satisfaction, he calls us all aft, and tells us that he'd been thinking matters over, and he'd decided to take the ship to Hong-Kong, and get rid of the sandalwood there, and get a lot of things that was wanted to complete our outfit, and make us fit for a good long cruise.

"Accordin'ly, as soon as the breeze sprang up, away we goes, never falling in with anything as Johnson thought it worth his while to meddle with all the way.

"We had a pretty quick run, for the brig sailed quite wonderful; and all the while I was turning over in my mind how to get away. I intended to take the first chance as offered, as soon as we got in; but Johnson was a 'cute chap, none of us was let out of the ship any more'n he could help, and then only they as he knowed he could trust.

"At last the cargo was out and the ballast in, the brig cleared for the South Pacific, and everything ready for sailing next morning, and I'd had no chance to get away, and I was beginning to think things were looking queer with me. But I didn't give up all hope, for I knowed a chance *might* offer at the last minute, if I was but ready to take it.

"Some time during the night I woke up and went on deck for a minute or two, and found it as black as pitch. There wasn't a soul moving in the ship. I don't know where the anchor watch was; stowed away asleep somewheres, likely. Anyhow, I thought to myself that now was my chance, so, without waiting another minute, I climbs over the bows, and lets myself quietly down into the water by the cable. As soon as I was adrift, I lets the tide take me, for I was afraid of makin' so much as a splash whilst I was near the ship. I drifted astern for about five minutes, and then struck out. I hadn't taken no bearings, and didn't know where the shore was; but I saw a few lights, and I shaped a course for them.

"But after I'd swam about a matter of twenty minutes I found I was farther away from 'em than I was when I started; and then the thought flashed into my mind that the tide must be on the ebb, and that I was going out to sea. I was so took aback that I went under. But I didn't feel like giving up without I was obliged; so I struggled to the top of the water again, and then turned over on my back to think matters over a bit. But I didn't find much encouragement that way; and I was beginning to think it was all up with me—specially as I was getting pretty tired—when I heard a sound some distance away, like a coil of rope hove down on deck.

"I started to swim in the direction of the sound, and after perhaps about five minutes I makes out something away on my port bow. I gives a shout as loud as I could, and that sends me under again; so I soon found that game wouldn't answer.

"However, I stretched out as hard as I could, and got alongside; but there warn't nothing to take hold of, and she

slips past me. I was too done up to sing out again; but I starts to swim after her, when I strikes my head against something, and it turns out to be a boat towing astern. I got hold of the gunnel, and managed somehow to get aboard, and then down I goes into the bottom of her, too exhausted to do anything.

"I dropped off to sleep pretty soon, and was only woke up when the chaps came to hoist their boat in.

"The craft turned out to be a coasting junk, bound to Shanghai, as I managed to make out, but not another syllable could I understand of their lingo or they of mine 'twould seem.

"Blest if the very next night we wasn't run down by something or other—I never knowed what 'twas, for they hadn't the good manners to stop and pick us up.

"The mainmast of the junk was knocked out of her in the smash, and I managed to get hold of it and lash myself to it, just in the eyes of the rigging. The yard happened to be undermost, and so I had a pretty good berth.

"I floated about on that — spar for four days and nights without a bit or drop of anything, and then my senses broke adrift, and I knew nothing more of what happened to me for some time.

"When I came to myself I found I was on board a Dutch ship, homeward-bound. It turned out that they passed close to my spar, and seein' me lashed to it they picked me up.

"At least so I made it out; but I knew no Dutch, and there was only one chap aboard that thought he knowed English; but Lord bless ye, gentlemen, / couldn't make top nor tail of what he said. I managed to make out hows'ever that I'd had a narrow squeak of it, and that's about all.

"By the time I was able to get about on deck again, we was well out in the Indian Ocean, and everything seemed going on all right; but, as it turned out, it was all *wrong*, for early one morning we makes land ahead, the wind bein' light and dead on shore.

"The skipper hauled sharp up on the port tack to try and claw off; but a current had got hold of us, and away we sagged to leeward, do what we would, and at last we had to anchor.

"By-and-by the breeze freshened; but we was in a very ugly berth, and the skipper didn't like to make a move.

"However, we didn't have a chance to settle the matter for ourselves, for just about sunset the old barkie struck adrift, and, before we could get the canvas on her, she was in among the rocks and bilged.

"We all got ashore, there bein' no great matter of a sea running, and, to make a long story short, was made prisoners by the natives. What become of the rest of the hands I never knowed—they may be there yet for all I can say. An old chap picked me out, and made a sort of servant of me, and, on the whole, I had pretty easy times of it I got to find out, at last, that I was somewhere on the island of Madagascar.

"I stayed here nigh on two years, I reckon; but at last I got a chance to steal a canoe and slip off to a small craft that was becalmed in the offing. She was luckier than the Dutchman, as we got a breeze off the land about an hour after I boarded her.

"She was bound to the Cape, and there I left her, shipping the very same day in the craft I now belong to, and sailing for home the same a'ternoon."

"Well," said I, as soon as the man had finished, "if your story is true—and I see no reason to doubt it—*you* at least are blameless as far as the wrong done to my father is concerned. The only question now is, whereabouts is the island on which he was left?"

"Ah, sir," replied he, "that's more'n I can tell. I *did* hear Johnson mention the latitude and longitude of it once; but I'm blest if I can remember 'em now."

I was determined, however, to get *some* clue if possible, however faint it might be; and I took him into our little cabin, and spread a chart of the Pacific on the table. Then I got him to recall, as nearly as he could, the courses and distances steered by the *Amazon* until the time of her wreck.

We managed to trace her as far as the north-western extremity of New Guinea, the man happening to remember hearing Johnson point out some land in sight as the Cape of Good Hope.

This must manifestly have been the headland of that name on the north-west coast of New Guinea; but from this point he became bewildered. He remembered passing a great many islands after sighting this headland, however, and was of opinion that the average courses steered were about south-east, and he thought it was nearly a month afterwards when the ship was lost.

This placed the scene of the wreck on one of the islands in the large group in which we expected to find our treasure-island.

I questioned the fellow until I found I had extracted really every particle of information it was in his power to give, and then, after rewarding him for his information, I let him go.

As soon as he was gone, I wrote a hasty note to my sister, cautiously conveying to her the intelligence that we had obtained a faint trace of the *Amazons* fate; a trace which, I added, we intended to follow up as far as we could, and having sealed and addressed my missive, I hurried up over the barque's side, and placed it in her captain's hands, and then took leave of him with a hearty shake of the hand and many good wishes on his part that we might have a

safe and pleasant voyage.

It was time we were off, for a gentle breeze was springing up, and all parties were anxious to avail themselves of it to the utmost extent. As soon as we had once more got all our light canvas spread, Bob, instead of turning in as he had a right to do, it being his watch below, came and sat down beside me, and we began to discuss the strange story to which we had so lately listened.

"It has enabled me definitely to make up my mind upon one point, which I will now confess has troubled me not a little," said I, "and that is your proposal to go round the 'Horn,' Bob. Ever since we settled upon that route, I have been thinking of the great risks we must run by adopting such a course, and I really think that, but for this, I should have hauled sharp up upon the port tack as soon as we fell in with the south-east trades. *Now*, however, I feel so anxious about my father, and his condition, that I would incur double the amount of risk, if need were, in order to reach the Pacific as soon as possible, and, Bob, we must find *him* before we give a thought to the treasure.

"Right you are," exclaimed Bob heartily; "and there's my hand upon it, Harry, my lad. The treasure can wait; but it may be of the greatest consequence to the skipper to be found as soon as possible. He may be ill, or tormented by a parcel of cannibal savages, or a thousand things may be happening to him to make it important for him to have a couple of trustworthy hands like ourselves added to his crew as soon as may be. So shove the huzzey's nose as straight for the Cape as she'll look, and let's get that part of the job over as soon as we can. And as to the *danger* of the expl'ite, we'll weather it somehow. The little beauty has showed us already what she can do, and with a couple of prime seamen—which I take it no man will deny *we* are—to handle her, take my word for it, she'll carry us round as safe as e'er a craft that floats."

"There's another thing I've been thinking of within the last hour," continued I. "We talked of going into Buenos Ayres when we first made up our minds to take the route round the Horn; but even that short detention I should now like to avoid if possible. Want of water is really the only cause which would *compel* us to call there, though I confess I should like to write a line to Ada from thence, to let her know we had safely reached so far—"

"As to the first," interrupted Bob, "I feel no consarn whatever. We are pretty certain to fall in with heavy rains afore we get very far south; and if the wind happens to be light we can easily spread one of the sails so as to catch the water, and one good heavy thunder-shower would fill our tank for us, and as to letters, why, we shall perhaps have such another chance as this here that we've just had, and that disposes of the second difficulty. If we *don't* get any rain before, there's a splendid harbour on the southernmost side of the Gulf of Saint Matias, hereaway on our starboard-bow, somewheres about two or three days' sail to the south'ard of Buenos Ayres, and we can fill up our water there. I've been into the place once, and a fine snug anchorage it is."

This was a great relief to me, for in my present feverish state of excitement it seemed to me that any stoppage, unless absolutely unavoidable, would be more than I could endure.

By this time it was Bob's watch on deck; but I felt that it would be utterly impossible to sleep if I turned in, so I insisted that he should go below instead, and, after some argument, he consented.

In about ten minutes more, certain sounds arising through the companion told me that my friend was too thorough a seaman to be kept awake by excitement, and I found myself alone and at liberty to indulge in the new hopes which had so lately been awakened within my breast.

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## Chapter Seven.

### The Sea-Serpent.

The breeze, though it continued light and rather baffling at times, still held when the sun rose next morning; and on looking astern, I found that the homeward-bound ships had all disappeared; and of the outward-bound craft, our light heels had enabled us to get so far ahead that the topsails of the nearest were already dipping. Of course, light winds and smooth water made exactly our kind of weather; and the enormous spread of our lighter sails caused the little craft to slip through the water in quite an extraordinary manner, whenever we could show them. There was just enough wind to barely ruffle the surface of the gently-swelling ocean, yet our patent log told us we were going rather over six knots, mainly through the persuasive influence of our spinnaker and gigantic balloon-topsail.

At noon our observations showed that we were nearly a degree south of the line; and I began to be sanguine that the breeze we now had would run us into the trades. In this, however, I was disappointed; for about sundown the wind fell so light that we barely had steerage-way. All night long it continued the same, and the greater part of next day; and for about sixteen hours I considered that we did not advance more than a knot per hour.

Towards the close of that afternoon, however, when I came on deck to take the first dog-watch, Bob directed my attention to the appearance of the sky in the south-eastern quarter, announcing it as his opinion that there was a look of the trades about it. And so it proved, for the breeze gradually freshened, and drew more round from the eastward, and by eight bells we were doing our nine knots, with a nice fresh breeze.

This was doubtless the first of the south-east trade-winds; for by midnight it had so far freshened that, for the sake of our spars, it became necessary to take in our spinnaker and balloon-topsail, and to substitute for them the working jib and our jib-headed topsail. Even this would have been deemed perilous sail for so tiny a craft by most persons; but we were by this time thoroughly acquainted with the *Lily*, and knew that she would carry with ease all the canvas that her spars would bear.

Nothing particular occurred for the next two days. The wind held, and continued to blow with a force which was, for



us, a good, staggering breeze, but without much sea; and we kept flying to the southward at a pace which left even my impatience no reason for complaint.

On the second day after getting the breeze, we passed the Brazilian mail-boat near enough to show our number in the yacht-list, and to ask him, by signal, to report us "all well."

The next morning it was my watch on deck until noon. Bob had cleared away the breakfast, carefully washing up everything, and stowing it away, and had been in his hammock about an hour.

I was enjoying the fresh beauty of the morning and the exultant feeling excited by our rapid motion, and picturing to my imagination the delight with which my father would welcome the appearance of our snowy canvas—when we should heave in sight—when my visions were dispersed by a loud, cracking sound like the report of a rifle, from some distance away on our weatherbow. I looked in that direction, and caught a momentary glimpse of some distant object whirling in the air, and immediately afterwards the sound was repeated.

I stood up to get a better view over the low ridges of the sea, and at the same instant caught sight of what looked like a jet of steam rising out of the ocean.

"There she blows!" exclaimed I, involuntarily, aloud.

Again up whirled the object I had before observed; again it descended, and again came the rifle-like report I knew in an instant now what it was. An unfortunate whale had fallen in with his inveterate enemy, a "thresher," and had been forthwith attacked. I could plainly distinguish the huge creature plunging along at a great rate, and at an angle of about forty-five degrees with our course; so that he was standing in such a direction as would take him across our bows.

From the persistent manner in which he remained at the surface, I came to the conclusion that he had a second enemy to contend with in the shape of a sword-fish. Indeed, the way in which he began to plunge about soon put the matter almost beyond a doubt I was turning over in my mind whether I should call Bob to see this sight, when the whale, with a mighty effort, flung his huge bulk completely out of the water, to a height of, I should say, fifteen or twenty feet; and, sure enough, hanging to him was a large sword-fish, with his beak driven deep into the muscles about the root of the persecuted animal's tail.

I shouted to Bob to come on deck at once, for we had neared each other so much by this time, that I had an excellent view of the combat. And, moreover, it struck me that a slight deviation in the course of the combatants might bring them within extremely unpleasant proximity to the little *Lily*, and I thought it might be prudent to have Bob on deck.

He was up in an instant, not waiting to perform the almost superfluous ceremony of dressing, and there we both stood, so intensely absorbed in the interest of the exciting spectacle that the little craft was almost left to take care of herself.

The whale had got very nearly straight ahead of us by this time, and not more than half a mile distant.

Bob went forward, and stood leaning against the mast, to get a somewhat better view. Suddenly, the chase bore sharply up, and dashed away at tremendous speed in exactly the opposite direction to that which he had been pursuing before. Almost at the same instant Bob shrieked, in a shrill unnatural tone of voice:

"Luff! Harry—luff! round with her for the Lord's sake! Oh, my God!"

Down went the helm, and up flew the little *Lily* into the wind, and I was just stooping to let go the head-sheets (which led aft), when I caught a glimpse of Bob's face, white and drawn with horror, and his eyes—almost starting out of his head—staring fixedly at something apparently broad on our starboard-bow.

I looked, naturally, in the same direction myself, and never to my dying day shall I forget the frightful, appalling object which met my gaze.

At a distance of not more than three cables' lengths from us, rushing through the water at a speed equal to that of a railway train, and lashing the water into foam with the rapid movement of his huge convolutions, a monstrous serpent appeared, darting towards the wretched persecuted whale.

His vast head and fully twenty feet of his body towered nearly erect above the water, and I believe I am not exaggerating, nay, that I am *within* the mark, when I say that the remaining portion of his body, to the tail, was at *least* six times that length.

His head was shaped much like that of a python, and his enormous jaws, which he frequently opened, disclosed a formidable array of strong sharp fangs. His body was of a deep dead brown, broadly marked with irregular stripes and rings of pale stone-colour; and he emitted a strong musky odour, which, even at our distance from him, was almost overpowering.

Once, when he was closest to us, he turned his head in our direction, and for one dread moment he paused, seeming to gather his folds together as though about to dart upon us, and the bitterness of a frightful death thrilled through me.

The next instant he sped on once more at still greater speed, and before another minute passed the whale was overtaken.

The ocean was, for a single instant, lashed into the semblance of a boiling caldron; we saw a rapid whirling movement of the creature's enormous coils, and then followed the deep bellowing cries of the tortured whale, and

the crunching sound of its crushing bones.

During the minute or two which had passed since our helm was put down, the *Lily* had been lying to on the starboard tack; our head-sheets still remaining fast on the starboard side.

The seizure of the whale awoke me, as from a horrible nightmare, to the fearful peril to which we still remained exposed; and I jammed the helm hard up, and wore the craft sharp round on her heel until dead before the wind, when I eased off the main-sheet, and we hurried as fast as the wind would take us away from the spot.

As soon as we had got the *Water Lily* round, and were fairly running away from our dangerous neighbour, we both, with one accord, turned a look astern, to ascertain the condition of things in that quarter.

The serpent and the whale had both disappeared. Doubtless the former had sunk with his prey to those profound depths which form his usual habitat, there to enjoy his meal undisturbed.

"Well," at last exclaimed Bob, "I've been knocking about at sea now nigh on thirty year, and many's the strange sight these good-looking eyes of mine have looked upon in that time; but this here sarpent beats all. I never seed the likes of the thing afore, and I don't care if I never sees it ag'in. I've heern tell of such things bein' fallen in with, sartaintly; but I never could meet with a man as had act'ally seed the beast with his own eyes; and I put it all down as a yarn for the marines. But seein' is believin'; and we've had a good look at him, and no mistake. I'm quite satisfied; I don't want to see no more to make me a believer in sich things."

"No," replied I; "it was impossible to make any mistake, with such a view as we obtained of the creature; and I shall henceforward be far more ready than I have hitherto been to give credit to the accounts which are occasionally published of such appearances. I do not at all expect that *we* shall be believed when we make known our adventure, any more than others have been; but that will not alter the facts of the case. The almost universal scepticism with which announcements of such creatures' appearances are treated is, after all, not very difficult to account for. They doubtless inhabit only the extreme depths of the ocean, and are probably endowed with the means of sustaining life whilst sunk for long periods—if not for an indefinite time—at those depths; it is easy, therefore (supposing such to be the case) to understand that it may be quite opposed to the creature's habits to appear at the surface *at all*; and that, when it does so, it will be—as, indeed, we have every reason to suppose—at very lengthened intervals; and then, probably, only in consequence of some unusually disturbing influence. The opportunities of seeing the reptile must necessarily, under such circumstances, be extremely few; and it is quite possible, or rather I should say, very likely, that many of its visits to the upper world have been entirely unwitnessed. In the present instance, for example, no eyes but ours were witnesses of the scene which so lately took place; and had we been but a dozen miles from the spot, it would have passed unnoticed even by us. And my observation of mankind, Bob, has led me to the conclusion that the race are extremely sceptical as to the existence of everything but what is *well* known."

"Very true, Harry, my lad," returned Bob; "you reels it all off just like a book, and therein you shows the advantages of larning. I knows by my own feelin's how difficult 'tis to believe a thing a man don't understand. But it seems to me, 'to return to the practical'—as I've heard the poor old skipper say—that we might as well haul up on our course ag'in now; and I'll go and look after the dinner; for I shall be afraid to go to sleep ag'in for the next fortnight; that blamed old sarpent 'll ha'nt me like a nightmare now, if I so much as shut my eyes for five minutes."

The sheets were flattened in, and the little craft's jaunty bowsprit once more pointed southward; whilst Bob dived below, and in a few minutes more a thin wreath of smoke issuing from the galley-funnel betrayed his whereabouts and his occupation.

Suddenly he reappeared at the companion, and with a serious countenance remarked:

"I say, Harry, lad, I s'pose there's no chance of that devil,"—with a jerk of the thumb in the direction of our weather-quarter—"getting a sniff of our dinner, and making sail in chase, is there?"

I assured him that, in my belief, there was a strong probability that the serpent was, at that moment, perhaps *miles* deep in the ocean, banqueting royally on the dead whale; and, seeing the reasonableness of this supposition, he retired, satisfied.

Nothing further occurred that day to disturb us. We continued to bowl away to the southward; and as we kept our canvas a good rap full, the little barkie tripped along a good honest nine knots every hour. The weather was as fine as we could possibly wish, with every appearance of being thoroughly settled; and there seemed to be a good promise of our making an exceptionally rapid passage.

It was my eight hours out that night; and when Bob relieved me at midnight the sky was as clear as a bell; and, though there was no moon, the stars were shining brilliantly, and with that mellow lustre so peculiar to the tropics.

Bob declared he was glad to be on deck again, for he had been tormented, all his watch below, by "that villainous sarpent;" visions of which so disturbed his restless slumbers that it was a real comfort to have the craft to look after, and something to occupy his mind.

I anticipated no such disturbing influence myself; for though I candidly confess I was awfully frightened at the moment, the effect had passed away almost with the disappearance of the monster; and the cool freshness of the night breeze had induced a feeling of drowsiness, particularly welcome to a man about to retire to his hammock.

In less than five minutes I was fast asleep. When I awoke, which I did without being called, I was surprised to find the sun streaming down through the skylight; and still more so when I observed that we seemed to have gone about during the night. The *Water Lily* was now certainly on the starboard tack; whereas, when I turned in, we were on the port tack.

"It *can't* be a change of wind, here in the heart of the trades," thought I. "What can Bob be about? and why has he allowed me to overrun my watch? Surely the old fellow was not *afraid* to come below and turn in? Hallo! Bob ahoy! what's wrong on deck?" shouted I, springing out of my hammock.

Just as I did so, I heard the mainsail fluttering, as though the boat had luffed into the wind; and at the same moment I caught sight, through the companion-way, of the vacant tiller swinging about.

"Gone forward to shift the jib," thought I; and I jumped on deck to lend a hand.

*Bob was nowhere to be seen.*

"Good heavens!" exclaimed I, "what dreadful thing has happened?"

I thought of the sea-serpent for one moment, but dismissed the idea the next, as being both too horrible and too unlikely.

The creature could hardly have approached without giving Bob the alarm, which I knew he would have instantly communicated to me.

At that moment my eyes fell upon the main-boom, and I missed the life-buoy which we kept suspended from it in readiness for any sudden emergency. Bob then had gone overboard, taking the life-buoy with him, and that too upon an impulse so sudden that there had been no time or opportunity to arouse me.

The *Lily* was indeed hove-to, as I had observed when I first awoke; but it was with *both* jib and fore-sheet to windward. The probability was then that, on Bob quitting the helm, she had flown up into the wind until her head sails were taken aback, when she would, of course, or *most probably*, pay off on the opposite tack, and remain hove-to. This must necessarily have happened *at least* four hours ago (it was now eight o'clock), because, had Bob been on deck at eight bells, he would, of course, have called me. And during all this time the boat had been sailing away from him, not very rapidly it is true, being hove-to, but probably at a rate of at least three knots an hour. What might not have happened to the poor fellow in that time? He was a splendid swimmer, I knew, having acquired the art on our last voyage, and well able to take care of himself in the water; and there was very little sea on. Besides, I felt pretty certain he had the life-buoy; and, with its assistance, I knew he could keep himself afloat in such weather until worn out with exhaustion from want of food. But there were other perils than that of drowning; and, if attacked by a shark, what chance had he?

These thoughts flashed through my mind whilst busily employed in taking the necessary steps to return in search of him, for I had no idea of continuing the voyage without making such a search; indeed, it would have been impossible. And my chances of success were not so meagre as might at first sight be supposed.

In the first place, knowing how difficult it would be to see such an object as a life-buoy, even with a man in it, at any great distance, from so low an elevation as our deck, I had taken the precaution to have each buoy fitted with a contrivance for hoisting a signal.

This consisted of a small bundle of jointed rods, which could be put together like a fishing-rod, and on the topmost of these was a white flag two feet square. On the buoy itself was firmly lashed a step similar to the "bucket" (I believe it is called) in which a carriage-whip is placed when not in use by the driver. The rods, taken to pieces, were securely lashed in a compact bundle to the buoy, and the bucket was a fixture. Thus, if Bob had the life-buoy, he also had the means of indicating his whereabouts, and that, too, at a considerable distance. And I knew pretty nearly in what direction I ought to steer, in order to take the most effectual means of finding him.

Whilst hove-to, the *Lily's* course or drift was, on the whole, as nearly as possible at right angles to the direction of the wind. It only remained then to turn her round and keep the wind directly abeam, and I should be going back pretty nearly over the same ground I had been traversing since Bob went overboard.

Accordingly, I lost no time in getting the *Lily* round, when I once more hove her to, and went aloft to the cross-trees with my glass to see if the white flag were visible.

A long and anxious scrutiny followed, but without any discovery. I did not feel any very great disappointment at this, for I thought it very probable I was too far away to discover so small an object, even with the aid of my glass.

Once satisfied that it was nowhere to be seen, I quickly descended to the deck, trimmed the sheets flowing, and away the little craft bounded over the bright flashing sea.

I stood on for an hour exactly, when I once more hauled the fore-sheet to windward, and went aloft with my glass again.

My first look was ahead, first with the naked eye, and then with the glass; but not a speck could I discern to break the monotony of the blue-grey of the sea, except an occasional curling foam-crest. I next carefully swept the ocean from forward round to windward, thinking I might have run too far off the wind.

Once or twice I thought I detected a flickering of something white, but it instantly disappeared again; and I was obliged to believe it was only the foam of a breaking wave. I was about to descend once more to the deck, when it occurred to me to take a glance to leeward. I once more levelled my glass, and swept it over the surface of the sea; but again I could see nothing. I reluctantly closed it, slung it over my shoulder, and swung myself off the cross-trees to go down by the mast-hoops, when my eye was arrested for a moment by what I *knew* at once to be the flag.

Almost as I caught sight of it, I lost it again; and as the craft was constantly falling off or coming up again into the wind, I hardly knew exactly in what point to look for it. However, I regained my position upon the cross-trees, levelling

my glass, rather inconveniently, on the fore side of the topmast, to clear the topsail, and presently I caught it again.

Yes, there it was, sure enough, about three miles dead to leeward; and what was more, I could not only see the flag, but also the buoy, and Bob in it. He seemed to be waving his arms about in a most frantic manner, and making a tremendous splashing, doubtless, I thought, with the view of making his position more apparent, as, of course, he could see the cutter, and knew I must be looking for him.

I slipped down on deck, quick as lightning, triced up the main tack just high enough to enable me to see under the foot of the sail, and squared dead away before the wind.

Ten minutes afterwards I caught a glimpse of the flag right ahead, as the boat rose on a sea; and then I edged away, taking room to run up alongside him on the port tack with my head-sheets to windward. I could now see Bob away on the port bow, every time the *Lily* rose on the top of a wave, and he was still, to my great surprise, splashing away furiously; and now I caught the sound of his voice, shouting.

“Surely,” thought I, “the poor fellow has not become insane through the dreadful strain to which his nerves have been subjected!”

A minute later the cause of his strange behaviour became apparent.

A dark object of triangular shape appeared, moving in narrow circles round the spot where poor Bob was floating, disappearing at frequent intervals, and then the splashing became more frantically vigorous than ever. It was a shark that was thus blockading Bob, and the splashing was resorted to, to frighten the creature from attacking him.

I carefully measured my distance, and exactly at the right moment jammed my helm hard down, hauling in the main-sheet as I did so.

The *Lily* shot into the wind, just clearing the buoy by a hair’s-breadth. I sprang to the rigging, stooped down, and seized Bob’s extended hand with mine as he came alongside, and then, exerting all the strength I could command, I fairly jerked him out of the water upon deck, just as the shark had apparently made up his mind to be no longer denied.

With such impetuosity did he make his rush, that his snout rose a good two feet fairly above our gunwale; and had not the impetus with which I jerked Bob out of the water been sufficient to fetch him clear inboard, the shark would have had him after all. As it was, we got a *glance* into his open jaws, and at his six rows of teeth, the remembrance of which makes me shudder to this day.

As the shark disappeared with a savage whisk of the tail, poor Bob turned to me; his lips quivered convulsively for a moment in an effort to speak, and then he fell to the deck in a dead faint.

Two or three buckets of water dashed in his face, and a glass of neat brandy, however, soon restored him, and it was almost pitiful to listen to the poor fellow’s heartfelt and reiterated expressions of gratitude for his rescue.

“Ever since about half an hour after sunrise was that incarnate devil alongside of me,” exclaimed he; “and hadn’t it been for my seeing the cutter’s sails, and knowin’ as you was on the look-out for me, I *must* have give in. Human natur’ couldn’t hold out ag’in’ that sort of thing for long. And now, I feel that weak and done up, that a child might pitch me overboard ag’in, if he was so minded, I do believe.”

The life-buoy came aboard again with Bob; so I unshipped the signal-staff and took it to pieces, made it up in a bundle once more, stopped it to the buoy, and slung the buoy itself in its old position on the boom.

The cutter was still hove-to, and I allowed her to remain so, whilst I went forward to see to the breakfast, Bob meanwhile changing his wet clothes for dry ones, and hanging the former in the rigging to dry.

I was still busy over the cookery, when Bob came into the fore-castle, and observed:

“I say, Harry, there’s that spiteful devil still alongside, and with a most onchristian longing to make a breakfast off of your old shipmate, I’ll go bail! Couldn’t we contrive somehow to put a stopper on his tormentin’ purpensities?”

“Ay, ay, Bob, old man!” replied I; “I think we may manage to do that without much difficulty. You get one of the air-guns out of the becketts, whilst I look after this coffee—it’s just on the boil—and we’ll try the virtues of cold lead upon his constitution, and the powers of the gun at the same time.”

As soon as I could leave the coffee, I got a piece of pork out of our small harness cask, and lashed it to a piece of line, whilst Bob, under my directions, charged the gun. This done, the pork was hung just outside the taffrail, and full in the shark’s view, but not in the water; and I lay down on deck with the gun ready for my gentleman, should he make a rush.

This, however, he seemed indisposed to do; eyeing the bait longingly, but keeping at a respectful distance. Gradually this distance shortened, however, and he finally ventured close under the boat’s stern, and within about three feet of the pork.

I kept the gun levelled at him, aiming at his eye; and now, having him so close, and so directly under me, I thought there was little fear of the bullet being diverted from its proper direction by the water, so I fired.

The lead sped true; the blood spirted from the creature’s eye, and with a tremendous spring he threw himself backward, only to roll over on his back with a convulsive writhe or two ere he floated motionless and dead.

“So much for bullyin’ honest seamen when they has the misfortin’ to walk overboard,” observed Bob, eyeing the carcass with much complacency. “I shall feel more comfortable like, now I knows as *your* cruise is over for good and all.”

“Walk overboard, Bob!” exclaimed I. “You surely do not mean to say you *walked* overboard?”

“’Twas little else, my lad. But I’ll tell ye all about it whilst we’re getting our breakfast stowed under hatches; for I’ll be bound you’re longing to hear the rights of the story.”

“That indeed I am, old fellow; so come along below, and let us get the yarn and our breakfasts at once; I am longing for both.”

Having taken a look all round, to see that nothing was in sight, we went below and seated ourselves at the cabin-table, and Bob forthwith proceeded with his story.

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## Chapter Eight.

### Bob’s Dream.

“You’ll maybe remember,” commenced Bob, “that when I came upon deck last night to take my watch, I mentioned that I was glad enough to be out of my hammock, and away from the tormentin’ dreams I’d had of that — sarpent!

“Well, and I was too—I felt better and calmer like the minute I set foot upon the deck; and, as soon as you was gone below, I makes myself comfortable in the chair,” (a low deck-chair in which we used frequently to sit whilst steering), “takes the tiller-rope in my hand, sets the little craft’s course by a star, and starts thinking how pleased the skipper will be when he sees his son and his old mate turning up some fine morning at the anchorage which, I doubt not, lies just under his parlour window.

“I got thinking and thinking, until it seemed to me as I could see the ‘old man’ as plain as I can see you now, coming down between the trees, with his hand held out, and his face all smiling and joyful like, and I steps forward to give him a hearty shake of the fin, when all of a sudden he changes into that infarnal old sarpent, and at me he comes, with his eyes glaring, and his jaws wide open.

“You may take your oath, Harry, I warn’t long in stays. Round I comes like a top, and away I scuds dead afore the wind; and he—the sarpent, I mean—arter me. It seemed to me as the faster I tried to run, the less headway I made; and presently he was close aboard of me.

“There was a great rock just ahead of me; and I makes a *tremenjous* jump to get behind it, when whack goes my head ag’in’ the main boom with that force it fairly stunned me, and afore I could recover myself I lost my balance, and overboard I goes.

“I felt myself going, and flung out my hands to save myself naterally, and by that means I managed to get hold of the becket of the life-buoy, which in course broke adrift from the boom, and came overboard with me.

“Well, I didn’t seem to know where I was or what I was doin’ for a minute or two; and then the cold water revived me. I slips my arm through the buoy, and takes a look round for the cutter.

“I must have run her pretty nigh dead off the wind in my sleep, for I could see her almost straight to leeward of me, still standin’ on, but comin’ slowly to the wind.

“She was a good quarter of a mile away from me, and I thinks as how I might still have a chance of fetching her ag’in, if she gets to luffing into the wind, and losing her way, so I strikes out a’ter her.

“But, Lord bless ye! Harry, you’ve no idea how the little hussy slips along, until you comes to be overboard, swimming in her wake.

“It seemed to me as though she’d *never* come to, and all the while she was walking away to the tune of a good seven knots.

“At last, when I rose on the top of a sea, I sees as she was in stays; and ‘All right,’ thinks I, ‘Harry’s come on deck and missed me, and he’s comin’ back a’ter me.’ But I soon saw as she’d run into the wind, and hove herself to, and that most likely you was still fast asleep in your hammock.

“I next tried to cut her off by swimming in the direction that she was heading, but after about half an hour’s hard tusslin’ I knowed it was no use; she fore-reached upon me as if I was at anchor. So I give the job up, and lay-to in the buoy for a rest, for I’d put out all my strength in chase, and was pretty nigh done up.

“I knowed you’d miss me some time in the morning, and that you’d miss the buoy too, and I felt sartain that you’d come back to look me up, so I sets to work to get my signal-pole on end and the flag flyin’, all ready for daylight.

“I watched the little barkie fairly out of sight, and then I began to feel lonesome like, and I’ll own that most oncomfortable thoughts came into my head about the sea-sarpent; but, strange as you may think it, I never give a thought to the sharks.

“I thought as day were never going to break ag’in; but at last I sees it light up a bit away to the east’ard, and it got grad’ally brighter and brighter; and presently I sees the sun just showin’ above the horizon.

"Then I felt a little bit more cheerful and satisfied like, for I knowed you'd soon be stirring, and I should have you back on the look-out for me.

"Of course I gave a good look all round as soon as there was light enough to see properly; but there warn't so much as a gull in sight, and away to the nor'ard, and east'ard where I knowed you was, the sun dazzled my eyes so's I couldn't see.

"Well, 'twas just as I'd caught a glimpse, as I thought, of the peak of the *Lily's* gaff-topsail, that I sees, about fifty fathom away, the fin of that shark scullin' quietly along. I kept pretty still, you may swear, hoping he'd pass me. But—not he. Down goes his helm, and he takes a sheer my way, and I thought it was all up with me.

"He ranged up alongside as quiet as you please, hows'ever, and just dodged round and round me, off and on, as if he didn't quite know what I was made of.

"I expect it was the flutterin' of the flag overhead as he didn't understand; but, any way, he kept very quiet and peaceable for a good long spell, and I was beginnin' to hope he wouldn't have no truck with me. And, to cheer me up still more, I sees the little *Lily* coming back to look for her chief-mate.

"If you'll believe me, Harry, I'm of opinion that devil saw you comin' as well as myself, and that he knowed he'd have to make up his mind pretty soon, or lose me altogether, for he began to swim round me now tolerable smart, and presently he makes a dive.

"I'd made up my mind what to do as soon as he took to that game; and I starts splashing hands and legs all I knowed, and shouting too, like fury; and presently he comes up again.

"Well, the chap kept me that busy, I hadn't a minute to spare; and when you ranged up alongside I was that tired out I didn't know how to make another splash."

"So much for going to sleep in your watch on deck, Master Bob," said I, as the mate brought his yarn to a conclusion.

"Ay! more shame to me that I should ever have done such a thing," replied he, greatly crestfallen; "but I lay the blame of the whole consarn, from beginnin' to end, on that — sarpent, though no amount of sarpents will excuse a man fallin' asleep in his watch, more especially when he has charge of the deck."

"Well," said I, "you have been pretty well punished for your fault, old man, at all events. But 'all's well that ends well;' and I am heartily glad that you are so well out of the scrape. And now, I shall insist on your going to your hammock for the rest of the day, and I'll take care of the craft. In fact, she will almost steer herself in this weather, so I shall manage very well indeed. Only don't have any more dreams which will cause you to jump overboard, please, for I really cannot afford to lose you."

The poor old fellow was so exhausted that, though he protested against the proposed arrangement, I could see he was glad enough to avail himself of it; and after a feeble attempt at remonstrance, he yielded to my persuasions, and turned in, and was quickly in a sound refreshing sleep.

Nothing further of importance occurred for several days to break the monotony of the voyage.

We continued to make good way to the southward, and ten days after crossing the line we lost the south-east trade-winds, and ran into a light southerly breeze. As we still had a very fair quantity of water on board, and indulged in good hopes of getting rain enough, shortly, to fill our tank up, without the necessity of putting in anywhere, and as the chances were very great that, as we got farther to the southward, we should meet with westerly winds, I determined to stand to the southward and westward, close-hauled, of course, on the port tack, so that *should* the wind come from the westward, as we expected, we should be in a good weatherly position; whilst, if we were disappointed in the matter of rain, we should have the land close aboard, and could run in and fill up.

The southerly wind lasted us a couple of days, and then veered gradually round to about south-west. As this broke us off considerably from our course, we hove the cutter about, and were then able to lie about south-and-by-east, a good rap full.

The wind now freshened considerably, and we had it stronger than at any time since leaving England, except in the gale in the Bay of Biscay, so that we were reduced to double-reefed mainsail, reefed foresail, and number three jib. Under this canvas the little *Lily* made very excellent weather of it, though the incessant showers of spray which she threw over herself necessitated the constant use of our macintoshes whilst on deck, and this we found extremely inconvenient, from their warmth.

However, as we had been wonderfully favoured in the matter of weather so far, we had no right to grumble if we were now treated to a few of the inconveniences of such a voyage as ours. Though still making very good way, we were not getting on so fast as we had been, our low canvas, and the heavy sea (for a craft of our size) which began to get up, not permitting us to do more than our seven knots.

Still, this was remarkably good work, and we ought to have been perfectly satisfied; but the little barkie had stepped out at such a rattling pace all the earlier part of the voyage, that we could not be contented with any reduction in speed.

This lasted for five days, and then, about one p.m., the wind suddenly dropped altogether, and left us tumbling helplessly about without even steerage-way. The sky had gradually become overcast, and the air suffocatingly close, and when I went below to look at the aneroid, I found it had gone back considerably.

This might mean only a thunderstorm, or it might mean something much worse, so we set to work to prepare for

whatever might come. The mainsail was stowed and the cover put on, the foresail hauled down and unbent, and the trysail bent, reefed, and stowed, to be set or not, as circumstances might require.

As it turned out, it was only a thunderstorm, but it was a regular tropical one whilst it lasted. The rain came down in *sheets*, without a breath of wind; and we not only filled our tank, but also every available cask, can, and empty bottle we had on board, and as this was done long before the rain was over (though the thunderstorm soon passed off), Bob and I stripped, and enjoyed to our heart's content the unwonted luxury of a wash from head to foot in the most deliciously soft water, after which we roused out our dirty clothes, and had a regular good washing-day.

The rain lasted about three hours, and then cleared away as rapidly as it had come on, leaving the air beautifully fresh and pure, the sea beaten down until nothing but a long, lazy swell remained of the late breeze, and ourselves refreshed beyond description by our soap and water bath. The sun came out again, clear and strong, drying our washing in about half an hour, and to complete the good work, a nice, steady wind from the north-east sprang up, and sent us bowling merrily along upon our course once more, with all our flying-kites aloft to woo the welcome breeze, the glass beginning to rise again immediately the thunderstorm was over.

Two nights after this, the wind still holding favourable, though rather fresher, so that our spars had as much as they could do, notwithstanding our preventer backstays, to bear the strain of our enormous spinnaker and balloon gaff-topsail, and the little *Water Lily* flying along at—as our patent log told us—over thirteen knots, we dashed past a half-consumed hencoop, a few charred pieces of planking, and some half-burnt spars, all of which had the appearance of having been but a short time in the water.

The spars were those of a ship of about a thousand tons; and we came to the conclusion that it was one of those melancholy cases in which the good ship, after perhaps successfully battling with a hundred storms, is made to succumb at last to that terrible foe to seamen, a fire, ignited by the merest and apparently most trivial of accidents. But the reader will see, further on, that we had but too good reason to alter this opinion.

We passed this wreckage about the middle of the second dog-watch, while Bob and I were discussing the propriety of shortening sail somewhat for the night; but as the breeze seemed disposed to grow lighter rather than otherwise, we decided to let everything stand for the present. When Bob called me at midnight, however, the wind had hauled so far round from the eastward that it became necessary to shift the spinnaker to the bowsprit-end; and this we accordingly did.

The wind had fallen much lighter while I was below, it continued to drop all my watch, and when I turned out next morning there was barely enough of it to fan us along at about three knots.

As the sun rose higher it died away altogether, and it was as much as we could do, through the day, to keep the cutter's head in the right direction. This would have been wearisome work in the tropics; but we had been out of them for some days, and were getting well to the southward, and the air began to feel quite fresh and chilly at night; so much so, indeed, that for the last night or two Bob and I had found our thick pilot jackets a very great comfort.

At last, by the time that tea was ready, the *Lily* was "boxing the compass," having lost steerage-way altogether; so, as our big sails were no use, we took them in and stowed them away, not knowing from whence or how strong the breeze might next come.

We took a good look all round at the weather, and then left the *Lily* to take care of herself, whilst we went below to our evening meal. This over, we both went on deck again to smoke our pipes, and have a chat until eight bells. It may be thought that two men situated as we were would soon exhaust all available topics of conversation; but this was by no means the case.

Bob, though he had no education but that pertaining to his profession, was a profound thinker, and he often amused and sometimes startled me by the originality of his remarks.

He had knocked about the world a good deal, and had the knack of not only a quick observation, but also of being able to clearly and accurately recall what he had seen, and the impressions thereby produced upon himself.

He was expatiating, on this occasion, on the charms of nature, of which he was an enthusiastic admirer, the subject having been suggested by the beauty of the sunset which we had both been watching, and I was thoroughly enjoying the rugged eloquence with which the scene had inspired him, when we were startled by a long, low, wailing cry which rang out upon the still air, apparently not half a dozen fathoms from us, making our blood curdle and our hair stiffen with horror at its unearthly and thrilling cadence.

We looked earnestly and eagerly in the direction from which the cry had seemed to proceed, but nothing was visible in that or, indeed, in any other direction.

The sun had set, and the grey of evening was deepening over the glassy surface of the water; but there was still light enough reflected from the sky to have enabled us to see any object within sight almost as distinctly as in broad day, but not an object of any description could we see, not even a solitary albatross.

We had carefully scanned, as far as was possible, the entire visible surface of the ocean, and had turned inquiringly towards each other, when once more rang out that mysterious cry, this time apparently close under our stern.

We turned, unutterably horror-stricken, in that direction, but there was *nothing*. Seamen are, as a rule, as brave as lions; but anything mysterious and unaccountable completely cows them, and such, I confess, was now the case with us.

The cry was too sharp and loud to have proceeded from any distance; and there was no visible explanation of it. It

was not repeated a third time, I am happy to say; and I wish never to hear anything like it again. What it was, or whence it came, we never knew, and I was, and am to this day, utterly unable to account for it.

I have since been informed that such sounds have occasionally been heard at sea by others as well as ourselves, but never with the result of any discovery as to their origin.

During the next three days we had nothing but light variable winds, and calms.

On the morning of the fourth day, at daybreak, we made a sail directly ahead. At this time we had a nice little breeze, and were going about six knots.

As we neared her, we noticed that she was hove-to, her courses brailed up, and her topgallant yards on the caps. When close to her, it struck us that something must be the matter on board, for not a soul could we see about her decks. The vessel herself too—a full-rigged ship of about fourteen hundred tons—struck us as being unusually deep in the water. There being no sea on, we decided to run alongside and board her, thinking she might possibly prove derelict. We did so, accordingly, rounding-to under her stern, and ranging up alongside on her lee quarter; having first, however, taken in our gaff-topsail and lowered our topmast, so as not to foul her rigging.

As we came gently alongside, an exclamation escaped Bob, who was standing forward, ready to heave a line on board or jump up the side with it, according to circumstances.

“There’s been some cursed foul play here, by the look of it, Harry,” exclaimed he.

Good heavens! what a sight met our horrified gaze as we leaped down upon the ship’s deck!

Some three or four and twenty corpses lay there, with the blood still slowly oozing in a few instances from wounds in various parts of their bodies.

The wounds were mostly inflicted by cutlasses and pistol-shots; but two of the bodies, apparently those of officers, had the heads almost severed from the trunks, the gashes having been evidently inflicted by a keener weapon than a ship’s cutlass. These bodies had the arms lashed tightly behind the back.

Too horror-stricken to speak a word, I walked aft, Bob following me, and entered the cabin, which was on deck, and from which I thought I heard a groan issuing. On entering, the first object I saw was the body of a young man, about four-and-twenty years of age, lying close across the doorway, and covered with wounds. His left arm was almost completely cut through; a long gash had laid his forehead open from above the right temple to the left eyebrow; a pistol-bullet had entered his forehead nearly fair between the eyes; and blood had evidently flowed copiously from his right breast. This body lay across three others, dressed in the usual attire of seamen.

On a sofa, which stretched entirely across the after-part of the cabin, lay the body of a young girl; and lastly, under the cabin-table, lay another body, from which, whilst we stood gazing in speechless horror at these evidences of diabolical atrocity, a faint groan issued.

Bob assisted me to draw the sufferer from under the table; and we then saw that he was an old man, grey-haired, and dressed in fine blue cloth garnished with gilt buttons, and a strip of gold lace round the cuffs of the jacket; no doubt the master of the vessel.

The cabin had, notwithstanding the ghastly appearance it presented, been the scene of a wild carouse, for the table was covered with glasses and wine and spirit bottles, and broken bottles and glasses littered the floor. I searched among the contents of the table until I found a bottle only partly empty, and from this I poured out a glass of its contents, which proved to be port, and managed with considerable difficulty to get a small quantity of the wine down the wounded man’s throat. The skylight was open, and the air, coming down through it in a cool gentle breeze, assisted the wine in restoring him to consciousness. He opened his eyes, and gazed round him vacantly for a moment or so, and then memory returned, and he burst violently into tears. We soothed him as well as we could, assuring him that we were friends, and that we would not leave him; and in a minute or two he recovered strength and composure enough to speak.

“Thank you, gentlemen, thank you,” said he, “but my time here is very short, and your well-meant efforts for my relief are not only useless, but they also increase my suffering. You are, I presume, from some ship which has come up with us since those fiends left. Kindly prop me up a little higher on the sofa, gentlemen, if you please, and I will endeavour to tell you what has happened before I pass away.”

We did so; and as we were making his position as easy as we could for him, his eye fell upon the body of the young girl, and once more his tears burst forth, mingled with prayers for her, and the most bitter curses upon her destroyers.

He raised one hand to his face as though to brush his tears away, and we then noticed for the first time—horror upon horror!—that his fingers had all been cut, or rather *hacked* out, at the knuckle-joints, the wounds still slowly bleeding.

He saw our looks of compassion, and said, as if in reply:

“Ah, gentlemen, willingly would I have submitted to be torn limb from limb by the demons, had they but spared my poor Rose—my darling, my only daughter.”

After another short pause, he began:

“It was about midnight, last night, that we noticed a sail ahead of us, which was duly reported. There was not very much wind at the time, and she did not near us until about six bells. As she closed with us, her movements became



so suspicious that I ordered the arm-chest on deck, called all hands, and served out the pistols and cutlasses to them.

“Our suspicions were very shortly confirmed, for when she was within a cable’s length of us she sheered suddenly alongside, and about fifty men leaped from her on to our deck. Our poor fellows gave them a warm reception; but they were all quickly cut down, and in about three minutes the pirates had the ship. They immediately began to plunder her, and a band of the most ruffianly of them, headed by their captain, made for the cabin. Seeing that all was lost, my son—his body lies at the door there—and I rushed in here, to make a desperate stand in defence of my daughter.

“The poor fellow killed three of them, whilst I severely wounded others; but he was shot down, and I fell, exhausted with the wounds I had already received. My poor girl was soon discovered and dragged from her berth.

“The chief then questioned me as to our cargo, where we were from, and so on; and believing that treasure was concealed somewhere in the ship, he mutilated me thus,” holding up his fingerless hands, “to force me to reveal its hiding-place. We had none, but he would not be convinced; and when my daughter also denied the existence of any treasure on board, the villain deliberately shot her before my eyes!

“They then ransacked the cabin, turned out the lockers, and drank and sang, until the mate, I suppose, of the pirate came in and reported that everything of value was transferred to the brig; when the leader—whom I once or twice heard addressed as Johnson,”—Bob and I started and looked at each other expressively—“ordered the ship to be scuttled, and for all hands but those employed on the work to return to the brig. They then left the cabin; and, about half an hour afterwards, I believe, they left the ship. She cannot—float ver—very much—longer; but I shall—shall be—gone before—”

His voice had been gradually growing weaker and weaker as he approached the end of his narrative, and now failed altogether. I tore open the front of his shirt to ascertain if his heart still beat, and now saw that he had received, in addition to other wounds, a shot through the chest.

There was no blood; but he no doubt bled internally. I could detect not the faintest flutter of the heart, so we laid him gently down on the sofa. As we did so, a small stream of blood trickled out of his mouth, he sighed heavily, and his jaw dropped.

Seeing that he was dead, we left the cabin, and stepped out once more into the bright sunshine. We noticed that, even during the short time we had been on board, the vessel had settled considerably in the water.

It was evidently quite time we were off; but we first went all round the deck, examining carefully each body, to see if any one exhibited the least sign of life; but all were utterly beyond the reach of our help. We accordingly cast *off*, and returned on board the *Water Lily*, making all the sail we could, to get as speedily as possible away from the scene of such diabolical atrocities.

We were about four miles distant from the ship, when we observed her roll once or twice slowly and heavily; her stern rose, and, her bows disappearing beneath the water, she gradually became almost perpendicular, when she paused for a moment and then sank gently out of sight.

The moment that Johnson’s name was mentioned, the same idea flashed into both our minds; that this was the same man, and probably the same ship, of which we had so lately heard. The captain spoke of the pirate vessel as a brig; and we felt no manner of doubt that she was the *Albatross*.

So, then, these men,—the men who had showed such base treachery to my father,—were still at large, and in full prosecution of their villainous designs. And not only so, but they were in the same quarter of the globe as ourselves, and manifestly at no very great distance.

We felt no difficulty whatever now in attaching a very different and much more sinister significance to the charred fragments of wreck we had lately passed. Our little craft would of course be but a poor prize to these rascals; but since they seemed so to luxuriate in cruelty, it behoved us to give them as wide a berth as possible.

The presence of this craft, and that, too, in our immediate vicinity, was a source of the greatest anxiety to us; so much so, that we took in our gaff-topsail, and housed our topmast, to show but a low spread of canvas; and one or other of us remained posted at the mast-head all day, on the look-out, so as, if possible, to sight her before being seen ourselves, should it happen that we were both proceeding in the same direction, or on such courses as would bring us together.

We maintained this ceaseless watch for the pirate-brig for four days, when, judging from the experience we had already obtained of our sailing powers in fine weather as compared with those of other vessels that we had fallen in with, we came to the conclusion that all immediate danger of a *rencontre* with her was past; and we accordingly relaxed our vigilance, and allowed ourselves some rest, which, by this time, we greatly needed.

About noon on the seventh day after boarding the ship scuttled by the pirates (the name of which I forgot to mention was *the Massachusetts*, of New York), land appeared ahead. It was the Falkland group of barren and desolate islands in the vicinity of Cape Horn. As we had been expecting, the wind now drew round from the westward, fresh, though not so much so as to prevent our showing a jib-headed gaff-topsail to it. Under this sail the little *Water Lily* made most excellent way; going a good eight knots through the water, close-hauled, and against a very respectable head-sea. As the day drew on, the wind freshened; and, though we carried on as long as we dared, wishing to get round the dreaded Cape as quickly as possible, we were obliged at sunset to take our topsail in, in order to save our topmast.

By breakfast-time next morning it became necessary to further reduce our canvas, and we accordingly took down a

reef in our mainsail. The question now arose whether it would be better to go round outside of everything, or to attempt the Straits of Magellan. We hoisted the little craft to, and went below and carefully examined the chart; discussing, as we did so, the comparative advantages and disadvantages of the two routes.

Bob had experience of both; and he seemed to feel that in the present state of the weather, and with the wind as it was, we were likely to make a quicker passage by going on to the southward, and passing round the Horn. I was of the same opinion, by no means liking the intricacies of the navigation of the Straits, or the violent tides which our sailing directions told us swept through them.

We accordingly filled away again, carrying on, notwithstanding the still freshening breeze, until the little *Water Lily* seemed alternately to threaten diving to the bottom with us or taking flight altogether into the air. We were nearly blinded by the copious showers of spray which flew over us, and our mainsail was wet to its very peak; yet it was a real pleasure to see the ease and lightness with which the boat skimmed over the now formidable and angry sea.

About four bells in the morning watch, we passed within three miles of the easternmost end of Staten Island. An hour later, the breeze freshened upon us so fiercely that we saw it would be dangerous to trifle with it any longer; so we hauled down our mainsail and stowed it; and bent and set the trysail in its place, single-reefed. This change proved a very great relief to the little craft, the sway and leverage of the heavy main-boom having made her plunge tremendously; whereas, now, she went along without shipping a drop of water beyond the spray which she of course still continued to throw over herself.

It was whilst we were busy shifting our after canvas that the little *Lily* experienced perhaps one of the most narrow escapes of the whole voyage. We were too much occupied with our work to keep a very bright look-out; indeed, we considered that, beyond the state of the weather, there was nothing to demand our attention.

We had just completed the bending of the trysail, when away to windward of us, not more than a quarter of a mile distant, we observed a large ship running down directly upon us before the wind, under topgallant stunsails.

The *Lily* was almost stationary at the time; and the ship was heading as straight as she possibly could for us. How the trysail went up, it is impossible for me to say; we pulled like demons, and it seemed to rise instantaneously into its place, fully set. I sprang aft, and put the helm hard up, to gather way; and we had just begun to draw through the water, when the ship took a sheer as though to cross our bows. I kept the tiller jammed hard over, and eased away the trysail sheet, intending to wear, when the ship took another sheer directly towards us.

She was now close aboard of us, and not a soul could I see on the look-out. Bob rushed aft, with his eye on the ship's bowsprit, evidently prepared for a spring; whilst I shifted the tiller and flattened in the trysail sheet once more. That saved us. The cutter luffed just in time, and shot literally from beneath the ship's bows. So close were we, that had the stranger been *pitching* instead of *'scending* at the moment, her jib-boom-end must have passed through the peak of our trysail.

It may seem to the uninitiated an easy matter to keep out of an approaching ship's way, by simply observing the precise direction in which she is steering; but, as a matter of fact, a ship, when running before the wind, sails in anything but a straight line, *sheering* first one way and then another, and it is quite impossible for a spectator to judge with accuracy in which direction she will sheer at a given moment; hence the danger in which we so unexpectedly found ourselves.

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## Chapter Nine.

### A Cape Horn Gale.

We stood on to the southward and westward during the remainder of that day, the wind continuing still to freshen, and the sea getting up with most fearful rapidity. The glass fell slowly too, and there appeared to be every prospect of our getting a taste of the quality of the weather for which Cape Horn is so notorious.

As the sun set, the veil of cloud-wrack which had obscured the heavens all day was rent asunder in the western quarter, and we caught a glimpse of the great luminary hanging upon the verge of the horizon like a ball of molten copper.

His level beams shot for a few moments across the broad expanse of the heaving and wildly-leaping waters, tinging the wave-crests immediately in his wake with deep blood-red, whilst all around elsewhere the angry ocean was darkest indigo. A few rays shot upward, gleaming wildly among the flying scud, and then the orb of day sank into the ocean, shooting abroad as he did so a sudden baleful crimson glare, which gradually died out in the gloom of increasing storm and coming night.

Bob stood by my side watching the wild scene I have so feebly described, and as the sun disappeared, he turned to me and remarked:

"My eyes, Harry! what d'ye think of that, lad? To my mind it needs no prophet to tell us with that afore our eyes that we're booked for a reg'lar thorough-bred Cape Horn gale of wind; and my advice as chief-mate of this here barkie is, that we makes her just as snug as we knows how, for, depend upon it, afore morning we shall have as thorough a trial of her seagoin' qualities as we're likely to want for many a day to come."

"My own idea, Bob," replied I; "I have seldom seen a wilder sunset, and if it does not mean wind, and plenty of it too, all my weather-lore must go for nothing, and I shall have to turn to and learn everything over afresh."

"Ay, ay! you may say that," returned he, "and I the same; but we've both knocked about too many years at sea to make any mistake in our reading when Natur' opens so plain a page of her book for us as yon; so the sooner we turns to the better, say I, or we shall have the darkness upon us afore we're ready for it. Thank God, we've plenty of sea-room; so let's rouse up that floating-anchor contrivance of yourn, my lad, for, depend upon it, if ever the *Lily* is likely to need the consarn, she will to-night."

This floating-anchor I will describe for the benefit of those who may not have seen such a thing, for it is a most useful affair, and no small craft should undertake a long cruise without one. Ours was formed of two flat bars of iron, each ten feet in length, riveted together in the centre in such a way that they would either fold flat one upon the other (for convenience of stowage), or open out at right angles, forming a cross of four equal arms.

In each end of each bar was a hole capable of taking a good stout rope swifter, which was set up taut when the bars were opened, so as to keep them spread at right angles. Four other holes were punched, two in each bar, about midway between each end and the centre rivet; these were for the reception of a crowfoot.

As soon as the bars were spread open, and the swifter passed and set up, a square sheet of the stoutest canvas, painted, was spread over them, the edges laced to the swifter with a stout lacing, and the crowfoot toggled through the intermediate holes in the bars and corresponding holes in the canvas.

A buoy was then attached to the end of one arm to float the anchor, with a sufficient amount of buoy-rope to allow it to sink to the requisite depth; the end of the cable was shackled into the thimble of the crowfoot, the buoy streamed overboard, and the anchor let go.

I may as well state here, that for the economisation of space the buoy for floating out anchor was an india-rubber ball, made of the same materials as an ordinary air-cushion, and distended in the same way. This was enclosed in a strong net of three-strand sinnet, which net was attached to the buoy-rope.

We hove the craft to whilst we were preparing the anchor, and glad enough was I when it was ready; for by this time the sea was running so high and breaking so heavily, that I was afraid once or twice, when we were caught broadside-to, that we should be capsized.

We let go the anchor with only two fathoms of buoy-rope, so as to sink it just deep enough to keep us head to sea without materially interfering with the craft's drift, as we thought we should ride all the easier for such an arrangement, and so it proved.

As soon as the anchor was let go, we got our head-sail in, ran in the bowsprit, and got our topmast on deck; the trysail was close-reefed, and the sheet trimmed amidships, the anchor-light hoisted well up on the fore-stay, and our preparations for the night were complete.

By this time it was blowing tremendously heavy, and the howling of the gale overhead, the shriek of the wind through our scanty rigging, and the hiss of the foaming water around us, mingled into such a deafening sound that Bob and I had fairly to *shout*, even when close alongside of each other, to make ourselves heard. And then it began to thunder and lighten heavily, still further increasing the wild and impressive grandeur of the scene upon which we gazed in awe-struck admiration.

At one moment all would be deep black pitchy night, lighted up only by the pale unearthly shimmer of some foaming wave-crest as it rolled menacingly down upon us, gleaming with phosphorescent light; anon the canopy above would be rent asunder by the vivid lightning-flash, and for an instant the vast whirling forms of the torn and shredded clouds would be revealed, with a momentary vision of the writhing, leaping, and storm-driven waters beneath them, illumined by the ghastly glare of the levin-brand, and stricken into sudden rigidity by the rapidity of the flash.

We stayed on deck for about an hour after our anchor was let go, watching this grand manifestation of the power of the Deity, sublime as terrible, terrible as sublime; and then, finding that no improvement suggested itself in our arrangements, and that the *Lily* rode like a cork over the mountain-billows—though occasionally the comb of a more than usually heavy sea would curl in over the bows and send a foaming cataract of water aft and out over her taffrail—we descended to the cabin to get our suppers, for which, by this time, we were quite ready.

So easy was the motion of the little craft, that when we got below we found no difficulty whatever in boiling the water, and making ourselves a cup of good strong tea. While discussing this refreshing beverage and a few biscuits, we arrived at the conclusion that as we had done all it was possible to do for the safety of the boat, it was useless to keep a watch through the night, and that we would, therefore, take advantage of the opportunity to get a good undisturbed night's rest, leaving the "sweet little cherub that sits up aloft" to look out.

Accordingly, as soon as our meal was over, I left Bob to straighten up below, while I went on deck to take a last look round and see that everything was snug and as it should be, and our light burning brightly.

I found everything satisfactory, except that it seemed to be blowing harder than ever; however, I could not help that, so I went below again, closing the companion after me, and we both turned in, chatted awhile, listened to the roaring of the gale and the occasional heavy wash of water along the deck, and finally dropped off to sleep.

I awoke two or three times during the night, and once I turned out and pushed the slide of the companion far enough back to put my head outside; but the night was still as black as pitch, it was blowing harder if anything than before, and the air was full of spindrift and scud-water; so I pushed over the slide again, and tumbled once more into my comfortable hammock, very vividly impressed both with a sense of our helplessness in the midst of such a heavy gale, and also with the comparative degrees of comfort between the decks and the cabin.

Bob was the first to make a muster in the morning; and his first act, like mine during the night, was to take a look out

upon deck.

"Blowing hard enough to blow the devil's horns off," I heard him exclaim, "and as thick as a hedge. And, my precious eyes! what a sea! come up and take a look at it, Harry, boy; I never see'd nothing like it all the years I've been afloat. Hurrah, young un! *that's* your sort," as the cutter rose fearfully near to the perpendicular in surmounting the crest of a sea, and then slid down, down, down into the trough, until it seemed as though she would sink to the very ocean's bed. "And *don't* the little hussy behave beautifully! She's as floaty as a gull, Hal; and drier than e'er a seventy-four that ever was launched would be in a sea like this. Now, what lubber comes here with his eyes sealed up instead of looking before him? Jump up, Harry; quick, boy! we are in a mess here, and no mistake. No, no; it's all right, he'll clear us a'ter all. No thanks to him though, for there's not a soul—ah! so you're beginning to wake up at last, eh!"

Here I put my head up through the companion, alongside of Bob's lovely phiz, and saw within forty fathoms of us, over the ridge of a sea, and broad on our port beam, the topmast-heads of a brig. As we both rose together on the same sea, her sails first, and then her hull, came into view.

She was not a large vessel; about two hundred tons or thereabouts, apparently; painted all black down to her copper, excepting a narrow red ribbon which marked the line of her sheer.

She was hove-to on the port tack under a storm-staysail, and her topgallant-masts were down on deck. Everything was very trim and man-o'-warlike on board her; but no government dockyard ever turned out such a beautiful model as she was.

When I first caught sight of her, she was heading directly for us; but as we watched her, her head paid off, and she swept slowly down across our stern, near enough for us to have hove a biscuit on board her.

Some ten or a dozen heads peered curiously at us over her weather bulwarks as she drove slowly past us, and one man aft on the quarter-deck, the officer of the watch apparently, seized a trumpet to hail us; but whether he did so or not, or, if he did, what he said, we neither of us knew; for at that moment we both sank once more into the trough with a perfect mountain of water between us, until we lost sight of him altogether for a moment, even to his mast-heads.

I took the glass, which we always kept slung in beackets in the companion-way, open and adjusted ready for immediate use, and as she rose once more into view I applied it to my eye, and the first thing which caught my attention was her name, painted on her stern, which was now towards us.

"The *Albatross*, by all that's unlucky!" exclaimed I.

"Blest if we mightn't have guessed as much if we'd been in a guessin' humour," ejaculated Bob. "Honest-going merchant ships ain't so plaguy careful of their spars as that chap—leastways, not such small fry as he is. Pity but what they was, I often says; but where d'ye find a skipper who'll be bothered to send down his top hamper every time it pipes up a bit of a breeze? No; 'Let it stand if 'twill,' is the word, 'and if 'twon't, let it blow away.' But the chap is a real good seaman, Harry, no man'll deny that; look how snug he's got everything; and all hauled taut and coiled down neat and reg'lar man-o'-war fashion I'll be bound."

We got, I think, a clearer idea of the tremendous strength of the gale by watching the brig than we did even by the motions of our own little craft. She was tossed about like the merest cockle-shell, and every time that she rose upon the crest of a sea, the wind took her rag of a staysail, distending it as though it would tear it clean out of the bolt-ropes, and heeling the vessel over until we could see the whole of her bottom nearly down to her keel; and then her sharp bows would cleave the wave-crest in a perfect cataract of foam and spray, and away she would settle down once more with a heavy weather-roll into the trough.

"Well," exclaimed Bob, as we lost sight of her in the driving scud, "she's a pretty sea-boat, is yon brig; but I'm blest if the little *Lily* don't beat her even at that game. What say you, Harry; ain't she proving true the very words I spoke that night when we first began to talk about this here v'yage?"

"Indeed she is, Bob," I answered; "I am as surprised as I am delighted at her behaviour; I could never have believed, without seeing it myself, that so small a craft would even live in such weather, much less be as comfortable as she is. But I don't like *that*" continued I, as the comb of a tremendous sea came curling in over our bows, fairly smothering the little craft in foam for a moment, though she came up immediately afterwards, "shaking her feathers" like a duck. "I'm afraid one of these gentlemen will be starting our skylight or companion for us; and that would be a very serious matter."

"Never fear," returned Bob confidently. "Our bit of a windlass and the mast breaks the force of it before it reaches the skylight. And that idee of yours in having it rounded at the fore end is a capital one; it turns the water off each side almost like the stem of a ship, besides bein' stronger than a square-shaped consarn. At the same time, all this water coming in on deck don't do no *good* if it don't do no *harm*; but how's it to be pervented?"

"I have an idea," said I, "and it's worth a trial. It can do no harm, and if it fails we are no worse off than we were before."

So saying, I dived below and got out a bottle of oil, through the cork of which I bored three or four holes with a corkscrew, but left the cork in. To the neck of the bottle I made fast the end of about a fathom of marline, and then, going forward, I made fast the other end of the marline to one of the links of the chain-cable by which we were riding to our floating-anchor.

I then sung out to Bob to give her a few fathoms more chain, and as he did so I hove the bottle overboard.

In about five minutes the success of my experiment became manifest. The oil leaked slowly out through the holes I had bored in the cork, and, diffusing itself on the surface of the water, caused the seas to sweep by us either without breaking at all, or, if they *did* break, it was with such diminished force that no more water came on board.

I had heard of "oil on troubled waters" before, but at the time that I did so I never expected to put its virtues to so thoroughly practical a test.

We went below and got breakfast under weigh; and whilst discussing the meal, our conversation naturally turned upon the appearance of the *Albatross*.

"There can be no question, I fear, as to its being that scoundrel Johnson and his gang of desperadoes," said I, half hoping to hear Bob dispute the probability.

But he was quite of my opinion.

"No, no," said he, "that's the scamp, never a doubt of it. I noticed the name on his stern; but there warn't no name of a port where he hails from, for the simple reason that he hails from nowhere in particular. Besides, a man with half an eye could tell by looking at that craft that she's strong-handed. Depend on't, Harry, there's too many hammocks in her fo'c'stle for an honest trader. And, worst luck, she's bound the same road as ourselves—at least, she's going round the Horn; but a'ter she gets round it's not so easy to say what course she may steer. We must hope she's on the look-out for some stray Spaniard or other coming down the coast; for if we falls in with her ag'in, she'll have some'at to say to us, mark my words."

"You surely do not suppose the man will condescend to give such a pigmy as ourselves a thought, do you?"

"That's just what he's doing at this identical moment, it's my opinion," returned Bob. "He is not fool enough to suppose we're down here somewheres off the Horn, in this cockle-shell, on a pleasure trip; and that we're not come down here to trade he also knows pretty well, or we should have a craft big enough to stow away something like a paying cargo; and if we're here for neither one nor t'other of them objects, he'll want to know what we *are* here for; and, depend upon it, he won't be happy till he's found out. So take my advice, Harry, and, if we fall in with him again, let's give him a wide berth."

"Decidedly; I shall do so if possible," returned I. "But that may prove no such easy matter with so smart a vessel as he has under his feet."

"Not in heavy weather, certainly," said Bob; "but give us weather in which we can carry a topsail, even if it's no more nor a jib-header, and I'll say, 'Catch who catch can!' Why, we can lay a good two pints closer to the wind than he can, and still keep a good clean full; and the square-rigged craft that can beat us in going to wind'ard must be an out-and-out flyer, and no mistake. We must keep a bright look-out, and not be caught napping, that's all; and give *everything* a good wide berth till we're pretty certain of what it is."

"Well," said I, "I trust we shall not fall in with him again. The Pacific is a pretty big place, and it's not so easy to find a craft in it when you don't know where to look for her. If we *do* meet with him again, we must do all we can to avoid him, and hope for the best."

"Ay, ay," returned Bob, "'hope for the best and prepare for the worst' is a good maxim for any man. It takes him clear of many a difficulty, and enables him to lay his course on the v'yage of life clean full, and with slack bowlines. As for this here Johnson, I'd ask nothing better than to have him just out of gun-shot under our lee, with a nice breeze, and not too much sea for the little *Lily*, and then let him catch us if he's man enough for the job."

I certainly could not echo this wish of Bob's; but it was satisfactory to find that he had such great confidence in the boat and in her ability to escape from the *Albatross*, so I allowed him to remain in undisturbed enjoyment of his own opinion, especially as it seemed to afford him considerable entertainment, and went on deck to take another look at the weather.

There was no sign of the gale breaking; in fact, it seemed to be scarcely at its height, for away to windward it looked as dirty and as full of wind as ever; and the sea was something awful to contemplate. It looked, of course, worse to us than it would to those on the deck of a large ship; but even allowing for that, it was unquestionably running far higher than anything I had ever seen before.

I have read somewhere that scientific men assert that even in the heaviest gales and in mid-ocean the sea never attains a greater height than twenty feet from trough to crest; but with all due respect to them and their science-founded opinions, I take leave to assert that they are in this instance mistaken.

An intelligent sailor (and I modestly claim to be at least this much) is as capable of judging the height of a sea as the most scientific of mortals; and I am confident of this, that *many* of the seas I watched that morning ran as high as our cross-trees, which were a trifle over thirty feet above the surface of the water.

Indeed, to satisfy myself *thoroughly* upon this point I climbed so high (with the utmost difficulty, and at very great risk of being blown overboard), and whilst looking over the cross-trees, I saw the crest of more than one sea rearing itself between my eye and the horizon.

So far the *Water Lily* had weathered the gale scatheless; there was not so much as a ropeyarn out of its place or carried away; and as there seemed to be no greater danger than there had been through the night, and as I had taken a good look round when aloft without seeing anything, we both went below to enjoy the comfort of the cabin, for on deck everything was cold, wet, and dismal in the extreme.

I was anxious to get a sight of the sun at noon, if possible, so as to ascertain our exact latitude. I knew we were not very far to the southward of Staten; and I did not know but there might be a current setting us toward it, in which case we might find ourselves very awkwardly situated.

It looked half inclined to break away two or three times during the morning; but as mid-day approached it became as bad as ever, and I had the vexation of seeing noon pass by without so much as a momentary glimpse of the sun.

Towards evening, therefore, I took advantage of an exceptionally clear moment, and again scrambled aloft and took a thorough good look all round, and especially to the northward. There was nothing in sight, and with this I was obliged to rest satisfied.

We noticed just about this time that the seas were beginning to break on board again, so I concluded that our bottle of oil was exhausted, and accordingly got out another, and having bored holes in the cork, as I had done with the first, it was bent on to the cable, more cable paid out, and we again rode all the easier. Our anchor-light was trimmed and lighted and hoisted up, and we went below to our tea, or *supper*, as sailors generally term it.

We had found the day dreadfully tedious, cooped up as we were in our low cabin, and a meal was a most welcome break in the monotony.

We sat long over this one, therefore, prolonging it to its utmost extent; and when it was over, we both turned to and cleared up the wreck.

By the time that all was done it was intensely dark; but, before settling down below for the night, we both put our heads up through the companion to take a last look round.

Bob was rather beforehand with me, and he had no sooner put his head outside than he pulled it in again, exclaiming, in an awe-struck tone:

“Look here, Harry; what d’ye think of this?”

I looked in the direction he indicated, and there, upon our lower-mast-head, and also upon the trysail gaff-end, was a globe of pale, sickly green light, which wavered to and fro, lengthening out and flattening in again as the cutter tossed wildly over the mountainous seas.

It had not the appearance of flame, but rather of highly luminous mist, brilliant at the core, and softening off and becoming more dim as the circumference of the globe was reached; and it emitted a feeble and unearthly light of no great power.

I had never seen such a thing before, but I had often heard of it, and I recognised our strange visitors at once as *corposants*, or “lamps of Saint Elmo,” as they are called by the seamen of the Mediterranean; though our own sailors call them by the less dignified name of “Davy Jones’ lanterns.”

“What d’ye think of bein’ boarded by the likes of that?” again queried Bob, in a hoarse whisper. “Old Davy is out on a cruise to-night, I reckon; and it looks as though he meant to pay *us* a visit, by his h’isting them two lanterns of his’n in our rigging. Did ye ever see anything like it afore, Harry, lad?”

“Never,” replied I, “but I have often heard them spoken of, old man; and though they certainly *are* rather queer to look at, they are easily accounted for. I have heard, it said that they are the result of a peculiar electrical condition of the atmosphere, and that the electricity, attracted by any such points as the yard-arms or mast-heads of a ship, accumulates there until it becomes visible in the form we are now looking at.”

“And is the light never visible except at the end of a spar?” queried Bob.

“I believe not,” I replied; “but—”

“Then sail ho!” exclaimed Bob excitedly, pointing in the direction of our starboard-bow.

I looked in the direction he indicated, but was too late: we were on the very summit of a wave at the moment that Bob spoke, but were now settling into the trough. As we rose to the next sea, however, I not only saw the ghostly light, but also got an indistinct view of the ship herself.

She was fearfully close, but appeared to be at the moment sheering away from us. She looked long enough for a three-masted vessel, but one mast only was standing, evidently the mainmast. The *corposant* appeared to have attached itself to the stump of her foremast, which had been carried away about fifteen or twenty feet from the deck, and I thought her bowsprit seemed also to be missing.

She was scudding under close-reefed maintopsail, and, from her sluggish movements, was evidently very much overloaded, or, what I thought more probable, had a great deal of water in her. I was the more inclined to this opinion from the peculiar character of her motions.

As she rose on the back of a sea, her stern seemed at first to be *pinned down*, as it were, until it appeared as though the following wave would run clean over her; but gradually her stern rose until it was a considerable height above the water, whilst her bow in its turn seemed weighed down, as would be the case with a large body of water rushing from aft forward.

They evidently saw our light, for a faint hail of “— ahoy!” came down the wind to us from her.

“In distress and wants assistance, by the look of it,” remarked Bob. “But, poor chaps, it’s little of that we can give

'em. Heaven and 'arth! look at that, Harry."

As he spoke, the ship, which was rushing forward furiously on the back of a sea, suddenly sheered wildly to port, until she lay broadside-to; the crest of the sea overtook her, and, breaking on board her in one vast volume of wildly flashing foam, threw her down upon her beam-ends, and, as it swept over her, her mast declined more and more towards the water, until it lay submerged.

Then, as we gazed in speechless horror at the dreadful catastrophe, a loud, piercing shriek rang out clear and shrill above the hoarse diapason of the howling tempest. She rolled completely bottom upwards, and then disappeared.

"Broached to, and capsized!" ejaculated we both in the same breath.

"Jump below, Bob, and rouse up a coil of line, whilst I get the life-buoys ready," exclaimed I, after a single moment's pause to collect my scattered faculties.

In an instant I had all four of the buoys ready, and two of them bent on to the longest rope-ends I could lay my hands on, and, in another, that glorious Bob appeared with a coil of ratline on his shoulder and a lighted blue-light in his hand.

The stops were cut and the ends of the coil cleared in no time, and the two remaining buoys bent on, while Bob held the blue-light aloft at arm's length, for the double purpose of throwing the light as far as possible over the water, and also to indicate our whereabouts to any strong swimmer who might be struggling for his life among the mountain surges, and to guide him to our tiny ark of refuge.

For nearly an hour did we peer anxiously into the gloom, in the hope of seeing some poor soul within reach of such assistance as it was in our power to afford, but in vain; there is no doubt that the vessel sucked all hands down with her when she sank into her watery grave.

When at last we reluctantly desisted from our efforts, and were in the act of securing the lifebuoys once more, Bob cast his eyes aloft, and called my attention to the fact that the corposants had disappeared.

"Depend on't, Harry," quoth he, "them lanterns didn't come aboard of us for nothing. They mightn't have meant mischief for *us* exactly—for you can't always read Old Davy's signs aright; but you see they *did* mean mischief, and plenty of it too, for they no sooner appears aloft than a fine ship and her crew goes down close alongside of us; and as soon as that bit of work was over, away they go somewhere else to light up the scene of further devilry, I make no manner of doubt."

It was utterly in vain that I attempted to argue the honest fellow out of his belief that their appearance was a portent of disaster, for his mind was deeply imbued with all those superstitious notions which appear to take such peculiarly firm hold on the ideas of sailors; and against superstitions of lifelong duration, argument and reason are of but little avail.

As may readily be believed, our slumbers that night, after witnessing so distressing a scene, were anything but sound. Bob and I were up and down between the deck and the cabin at least half a dozen times before morning, and it was with a sense of unutterable relief that, as day broke, we found that the gale was breaking also.

By the time that breakfast was over there was a sensible diminution in the force of the wind, and by noon it cleared away sufficiently overhead to enable me to get an observation, not a particularly good one certainly—the sea was running far too high for that; but it enabled me to ascertain that we were at least sixty miles to the southward of Staten.

About four p.m. I got a very much better observation for my longitude, and I found by it that our drift had not been anything like so great as I had calculated it would be. This I thought might possibly arise from our being in a weather-setting current.

There was still rather too much of both wind and sea to make us disposed to get under way that night, but we managed to get the craft up to the buoy of our floating-anchor, which we weighed and let go again with five fathoms of buoy-rope.

This was to prevent as much as possible any further drift to leeward, and to take full advantage of the current, the existence of which we suspected.

Next morning, however, the weather had so far moderated that, tired of our long inaction, we resolved to make a start once more, so shaking the reefs out of the trysail, and rigging our bowsprit out far enough to set a small jib, we got our floating-anchor in, and stood away to the southward and westward, with the wind out from about west-nor'-west.

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## Chapter Ten.

### Chased by Pirates.

The weather now rapidly became finer, and the ocean, no longer lashed into fury by the breath of the tempest, subsided once more into long regular undulations. The wind hauled gradually more round from the northward too, and blew warm and balmy; a most welcome change after the raw and chilly weather we had lately experienced.

We once more cracked on sail upon the little *Water Lily*; and on the morning following that upon which we filled away

upon our course, finding by observation that we were well clear of the Cape, and that we had plenty of room even should the wind once more back round from the westward, we hauled close-up, and stood away on a nor'-west-and-by-westerly course.

Nothing of importance occurred for more than a week. The weather continued settled, and the glass stood high; the wind was out at about north, and sufficiently moderate to permit of our carrying our jib-headed topsail; and day after day we flew forward upon our course, seldom making less than ten knots in the hour, and occasionally reaching as high as thirteen.

We were perfectly jubilant; for having rounded the Cape in safety we now considered our troubles over and our ultimate success as certain. We were fairly in the Pacific, the region of fine weather; and our little barkie had behaved so well in the gale that our confidence in her seaworthiness was thoroughly established; so that all fear of future danger from bad weather was completely taken off our minds.

One morning, the wind having fallen considerably lighter during the preceding night, as soon as breakfast was over I roused up our square-headed topsail, with the intention of setting it in the room of the small one.

But when I proceeded to take the latter in, I found that the halliards were somehow jammed aloft, and I shinned up to clear them. No sailor, if he really be a *seaman*, and not a tinker or a tailor, ever goes aloft without taking a good look round him; so after I had cleared the halliards I clung to the slim spar for a minute or two whilst I swept the horizon carefully around.

"Sail ho!" shouted I, as I caught a glimpse of the royals of a vessel gleaming snowy white in the brilliant sunshine far away in the south-western board.

"Where away?" shouted Bob.

"Broad on our lee-bow," I answered, still clinging to the thin wire topmast shrouds.

"What d'ye make her out to be, Harry, my lad?" was the next question.

"Either a barque or a brig," answered I; "the latter I am inclined to believe, though he is still too far away for his mizzen-mast to show, if he has one."

"Why d'ye think it's a brig, Harry?" queried Bob.

"His canvas looks too small for that of a barque," replied I, as I slid down on deck, having seen all that it was possible to see at present.

"Then it's that murderin' *Albatross* again, for a thousand," ejaculated Bob, in a tone of deep disgust. "That's just the p'int where he might reasonably be looked for. He made sail long enough afore we did, a'ter the gale had blowed itself out, and consequently got a good long leg to the west'ard of us; but as we've been steering perhaps a couple of p'int higher than he has for most of the time since, we've overhauled him; and now he's come round to go to the nor'ard, and we've fallen in with him once more."

I was inclined to take the same view of the matter that Bob did. It is true that when once a ship passes out of sight at sea you can never be sure of her exact position afterwards; yet, under certain circumstances, taking the direction of the wind and the state of the weather as data upon which to base your argument, and, in conjunction with these, the course the vessel was steering when last seen, or the part of the world to which you have reason to believe she is bound, it is astonishing how near a guess may be and is not unfrequently made as to her whereabouts.

Now we knew that the *Albatross* was bound to the Pacific when we last saw her, because she was then hove-to, evidently with the intention of maintaining as weatherly a position as possible. Had she been bound to the eastward, the weather was not so bad at that time as to have prevented her scudding before it, which she undoubtedly would have done under such circumstances, making a fair wind of it.

At the same time there was of course a possibility of our being mistaken as to the craft in sight being the pirate-brig, it being by no means an unusual thing for vessels as small as she was, or even smaller, to venture round the Cape.

"Well," said I, "perhaps it will be safest, Bob, to assume for the present that this brig *is* the *Albatross*. What, under such circumstances, is your advice?"

"Which of us has the weather-gauge, d'ye think?" queried Bob.

"It is rather difficult to decide at present," I replied. "Much depends upon which of us is the fastest. If we are both going at about the same speed, I should say we shall pass extremely close to her."

"How is she heading, Harry?" was the next question.

"To the northward, rather edging down towards us, if anything, I thought."

"Ay, ay," chuckled Bob, "it ain't *every* craft as can stick her bowsprit into the wind's eye like this here little barkie. Now I dare swear he's jammed hard up upon a taut bowline, and here *we* are going as close to the wind as he is, and every thread ramping full. Take hold of her a minute, Hal, and let's see what these old eyes of mine can tell us about the stranger."

I took hold of the tiller, and Bob went aloft with the deliberation of the seaman who is in no particular hurry. Having reached the cross-trees, he stood upon them, with one hand grasping the peak-halliards to steady himself, whilst



with the other he shaded his eyes.

"I see her, I see her," he exclaimed; "we're raising her fast, Harry, my boy; and in another half-hour or so we shall see her from the deck." He then went as high as the yard of the topsail, and clung there for a good five minutes, reading all the signs which a seaman sees in the almost imperceptible peculiarities of rig, shape of sails, etcetera. Having satisfied himself, he descended deliberately to the deck, evidently ruminating deeply.

"Now I'll tell ye what I think of the matter, Harry," said he, as he came aft and seated himself beside me. "There's a familiar sort of a look with that craft away yonder; I seems to recognise her as some 'at I've seen afore; and I've no moral doubt in the world but what it's that villain Johnson, although we can't be *sartin* of it until we gets a nearer look at her. And I've an idee that, if anything, it's *we* that's got the weather-gauge; and if *so*, by all means keep it, even if we has to run the gauntlet of her broadside for a minute or two. Once let's be to wind'ard, and in such weather as this I wouldn't fear the smartest *square-rigged* craft that ever was launched. We could lead 'em no end of a dance, and then give 'em the slip a'terwards when we was tired of the fun. So my advice is to luff up as close as you can; not *too* close ye know, lad; let her go through it; but spring your luff all as you can get, and let's try what our friend yonder is made of. As long as we're to *leeward* of him the game is *his*; but let's get to *wind'ard* of him and it's *ours* to do what we like with it."

I had it in my mind to take in all the canvas and lie *perdu* until the brig had crossed our course and was well out of our road to the northward; but that would still be leaving him the weather-gauge; and I saw fully as clearly as Bob did the advantage of obtaining this, if possible; so on we stood, boldly, lying a good point higher than we had been before steering, yet keeping every sail a good clean full, and drawing to perfection.

The wind, however, was dropping fast; and by the time that the sun was on the meridian we were not going more than five knots. This made me extremely anxious; more particularly as the stranger proved a remarkably fast vessel; so much *so*, that it still remained a matter of doubt which of us would cross the other.

Bob, on the other hand, was delighted beyond measure, stoutly avowing that the falling breeze was little, if anything, short of a divine manifestation in our favour. He declared himself ready to stake all he was possessed of in the world (and if the brig should turn out to be the pirate, he actually *was* staking his life) on our speed as against that of the stranger in light winds, and was already chuckling in anticipation over that craft's discomfiture.

She was within about five miles of us, still maintaining her relative position of about four points on our lee-bow, when Bob served dinner on deck, as was our custom in fine weather.

We were very busy with the viands, keeping one eye always on the brig however, when we noticed something fluttering over her taffrail; and the next moment a flag of some sort floated up to her peak.

I was at the tiller; so Bob took the glass, and levelling it at the brig, gave her a more thorough scrutiny than we had bestowed upon her at all hitherto.

"The stars and stripes, and a pennant!" exclaimed he, with his eye still at the tube. "Lord bless us for the two pretty innocents he takes us for, Harry; but there, of course he don't know as we've got his character and all about him at our fingers' ends. Well, anyhow, we won't be behindhand with him in the matter of politeness;" and therewith Master Bob dived below, returning in a moment with our ensign and club burgee in his hand, which he bent to their respective halliards and ran them up—the one to our gaff-end, and the other to our mast-head.

As we had by this time finished our meal, Bob cleared the things away, muttering something about having "plenty to do afore long besides eating and drinking."

Our colours had not been displayed above a minute, when four small balls were seen ascending to the brig's main royal-mast-head, where they broke abroad and waved lazily out in the failing breeze as a signal.

Bob at once assumed the duties of signal-officer, by once more taking a peep through the glass.

"Commercial code pennant," said he; and then he read out the flags beneath it.

"Run down and fetch up the signal-book," said I.

He did so; we turned up the signal, and read, "Come under my lee; I wish to speak you."

"Thank 'ee!" ejaculated Bob, "not if we can help it, Mister Johnson. I reckon 'twould be about the most onprofitable conversation as ever the crew of this here cutter took a part in. We've got our own wholesome planks to walk, aboard here, when we wants any of that sort of exercise; and though there's not much to boast of in the way of room, I dare say there's more of *that* than we'd find on the plank *you'd*, give us for a parade ground. Seems to me, Hal, as we're bringing him nearer abeam than he was a while ago; ain't it so?"

"You are right, Bob," I replied, glancing at the compass; "he is more than a point farther aft than he was a quarter of an hour ago; but is it not possible that we are giving ourselves needless uneasiness? That craft certainly has a look of the *Albatross*; but we are not sure that it is her after all."

"D'ye notice his main-topmast-staysail, Harry?" returned he; "cut like a trysail, and set on a stay that leads down just clear of his fore-top and into the slings of his fore-yard. How many vessels will ye see with a sail shaped like that? Yet I noticed that *his* was, the other day. And there's the red ribbon round him too; in fact, it's the *Albatross* all over," concluded he, with the glass once more at his eye.

It was but too evident that Bob was right. I had been hoping that the general resemblance of the brig in sight to the *Albatross* was purely accidental; but she was now within less than three miles of us; and, even without the aid of the

telescope, certain features, if I may so term them, were recognisable, which identified her beyond all question as the pirate-brig.

“What shall we do about answering his signal, Bob?” said I.

“Let it fly as it is, unanswered,” he replied composedly. “Look where we’re dropping him to; in another quarter of an hour we shall have him fairly on our lee-beam, and that too out of gun-shot, unless, as is most likely the case, he’s got a long gun; but if he *has*, we’re a small mark to fire at, and we’ll soon slip out of range even of that.”

It was by this time perfectly manifest that whatever he might be able to do in a breeze, he had no chance with us in a light air like the present; and I entertained strong hopes of being able to slip past him unscathed, when I felt sanguine of our ability to get fairly away from him in a chase dead to windward.

But he evidently had no notion of letting us have our own way in this matter, without a pretty vigorous protest on his part; for as we were still watching him, we saw the brig slowly luff into the wind; his fore-sheet was raised for a moment, a flash of flame and a puff of white smoke darted suddenly from his fore-castle, and then we saw the jets spouting up where the shot struck the water, as it came ricocheting towards us. He had aimed apparently so as to throw the shot across our fore-foot; but it fell short by about fifty feet.

“Do that again, you lubber!” exclaimed Bob, contemptuously apostrophising the brig. “Three more such fool’s tricks as that, and we’ll say good-bye t’ye without ever having been within range. See how long it takes him to pay off ag’in, Harry; very near lost his way altogether, when he’d ’a had to box her off with his headyards; and by the time he’d done that we should be well clear of him. Well, I *did* think the man had more sense than to do the like of that.”

Friend Johnson evidently saw his mistake as clearly as we did, for he fired no more until we had crept up fairly ahead of him. Just as we were crossing his bows, however, and had got his masts in tone—by which time he had drawn considerably nearer us—the brig *fell off* a little, not to repeat her former error, and again came the flash, the smoke, and the ringing report.

“Here it comes straight for us this time, and no mistake,” exclaimed Bob, as the water-jets again marked the course of the shot. “Scaldings! out of the road all of us that’s got thin skulls,” continued he, as the shot came skipping across the water in such long bounds as showed we were within range. “Well missed!” added he, as the shot struck the water close to us, and bounded fairly over the boat, passing close beneath the main-boom and the foot of the mainsail, without injuring so much as a ropeyarn.

“That’s his long gun, Bob,” said I; “his broadside guns would never reach so far as this, and though we’re just now in rather warm quarters, we shall be out of range again very soon; and then, I think, we need give ourselves no further trouble concerning him. Any way, you’ve got something very like the fulfilment of the wish you expressed the other day.”

“Ay, ay, that’s true, Hal, I have,” answered he, with a quiet laugh; “and I *do* own it’s a great satisfaction to me that we’re carcumventin’ the chap this a way. I’ll warrant he’s walking the quarter-deck at this minute fit to bite his fingers off wi’ vexation at our slipping past him in this style.”

Here another shot from the brig came bounding after us; but we offered him a much smaller mark than before, inasmuch as he was now nearly dead astern of us, and we consequently presented an *end* instead of a broadside view to him.

The shot shaved us pretty close to windward nevertheless, striking the water for the last time just short of our taffrail, and scurrying along and ploughing up the surface close enough to give us a pretty copious shower-bath of spray ere it finally sank just ahead of us.

The next shot, which quickly followed, passed almost as close to leeward; and the third came straight enough, but fell just short of us.

After this he fired no more.

“Very cleverly managed, I call that, Harry,” said Bob, as soon as we found ourselves once more out of range. “We can now take things quietly; and as it’s your watch below, I’d recommend you to turn in and get a bit of a snooze. It’s your eight hours out to-night, my lad, and if the breeze should happen to freshen about sundown, and that chap comes after us—and, by the piper, he means that same, for I’m blest if he isn’t in stays—you’ll need to keep both eyes open all your watch.”

This was good advice, and I at once proceeded to adopt it, cautioning Bob to be sure to call me without delay in the event of any further complication arising.

I had not been below above two minutes when I heard his voice shouting to me to come on deck again. Wondering what was now in the wind, I sprang up the short companion-ladder, and my eye at once falling upon the brig (which was now dead astern of us, heading in the same direction as ourselves, though not lying so close to the wind), I saw in a moment that our troubles were not yet by any means over.

The wind had by this time fallen so light that we were not making above three knots’ way through the water, whilst the pirate appeared barely to have steerage-way—in fact, his canvas was flapping to the mast with every sluggish roll which the vessel took over the long, scarcely perceptible swell.

Friend Johnson was evidently greatly nettled at our having slipped so handsomely through his fingers as we had, and seemed determined to have a word or two with us yet, whether we would or no; for he had lowered one of his boats,

and she was just leaving the vessel in chase.

I took the glass, and counted six men at the oars, besides one or two (I could not be sure which) in the stern-sheets.

This was serious indeed; for a light boat, propelled by six good oarsmen, would go about two feet to our one at our then rate of sailing, and must necessarily soon overhaul us.

Our case appeared pretty nearly desperate; but a seaman never gives up “whilst there is a shot in the locker,” or a fresh expedient to be tried. So I directed Bob to keep the cutter away about three points, and then lash the tiller, and lend me a hand to get our balloon canvas set.

The topsail was shifted in next to no time, and then we got the spinnaker to the bowsprit-end, leading the sheet aft to the main-boom; after which we took in our jib and stopped it along the bowsprit, ready for setting again at a moment's notice, and hauled down our staysail.

This additional spread of canvas, coupled with the fact that we were running far enough off the wind to permit of its drawing well, made a perceptible difference in our speed—quite a knot, I considered, and Bob agreed with me.

“Now, what's the next thing to be done, Harry?” inquired he, as *soon* as we had completed our task of shifting the sails. “This is all very well as far as it goes, but yon boat is overhauling us at every stroke of the oars, and we've only *postponed* the pleasure of an introduction to the chaps, unless the breeze happens to freshen up a trifle, of which I see no signs just at present.”

“I've made up my mind,” I replied. “We *must not* be taken, Bob. I feel convinced that our lives would not be worth an hour's purchase if we fell into the hands of that villain; but, even supposing he *were* to stop short of murder, his malignity would doubtless prompt him to destroy the little *Lily*; and by such an act all our past efforts would be nullified, and our future success rendered extremely doubtful. We must *fight*, Robert, my man, now that we can no longer run; so let's get our gun up and rigged without further delay. By the time that we have it ready, they will be within range; and I think we may persuade them to turn back yet.”

“So be it,” replied Bob gleefully. “I'd always rather fight than run away, Harry, lad—at least, when it's anything like a fair match; so let's rouse up the pop-gun and have a shy at 'em.”

This gun was, as I think I have mentioned before, a four-pound rifled piece, which was specially made to my order by an eminent firm. It was a most beautiful little weapon, exquisitely finished; was a breech-loader, and threw a solid shot about a mile, and a shell nearly half as far again. It was mounted on a swivel or pivot, which we had the means of firmly fixing to the deck.

We got it out and upon deck, and soon had it mounted and ready for service. Bob took the tiller, desiring me to work the gun, as I was not only a more practised artillerist than he, but knew also how to handle a breech-loader, and I had the knack somehow of shooting straight.

I had it loaded, and was in the act of levelling it, when Bob said, “Suppose we was to let them chaps get a bit nearer, Hal, afore we opens fire. I've a notion that if we gets 'em well away from the brig, and well within range of our little barker there, we might give 'em such a peppering afore they could get clear of us ag'in as would sicken 'em of having any more to do with us. Perhaps it mightn't be quite onpossible to destr'y the boat altogether, and then there's seven or eight good hands wiped off the chap's books. This here ain't like a ordinary enemy, you see, lad—he's a sort of general enemy to all mankind; and the more harm we can do to *him*, the more good we'll be doing the rest of the world.”

It sounded rather like cold-blooded barbarity, this proposal of Bob's to attempt the *destruction* instead of the *repulse* of the boat in pursuit of us, but every word he said in support of his proposition was strictly true; and indeed some such idea had been present in my own mind, so I withheld my fire for a time.

At length, however, they were within half a mile of us, and I thought we might now fairly commence operations. I carefully levelled the piece accordingly, and desiring Bob to sit well out of the line of fire and steer as steadily as possible, I watched the heave of the cutter, and pulled the trigger-line.

The shot sped straight for the boat, but, striking the water just before it reached her, bounded clear over her and into the sea beyond. There was a shout from the people in the boat, and we could see that they stretched to their oars with doubled exertion.

“Straight as it could go, Harry, lad, but *rather* too much elevation; try 'em again, boy, and look smart about it too, for they're giving way as if the devil was behind 'em.”

“Which he probably *is*, if they did but know it, Bob,” returned I. “Keep cool, old man; there's no hurry; you attend to the steering of the craft, I'll undertake to cool their courage for them before they're very much older.”

“Ay, ay,” retorted Bob, “keep cool it is; but it's getting to be rather ticklish work, lad, ain't it?”

I was too busy with the gun to reply just then, and in another moment I fired once more. This time we saw the splinters fly from the bows of the boat, and one of the oarsmen sprang from his seat and fell back into the arms of the man behind him.

There was a moment of confusion with them, and then we saw one of the men in the stern-sheets (there *were* two of them) step along the thwarts and take the injured man's place. This looked like a fixed determination to come alongside at any price, so I this time inserted a shell instead of a solid shot, which I had before been firing.

Once more, after a very careful aim, the little piece rang out, and again the shot reached its mark; this time with terrible effect, for the shell exploded as it passed through the boat's thin planking, and the fragments, continuing their flight forward, told so severely among the crew, that it appeared as if they were *all* more or less hurt. We saw four fall from the thwarts, at all events, and all hands ceased pulling, whilst three of the oars slipped unnoticed overboard.

I unrove the spinnaker-sheet from the main-boom before the astonished Bob knew what I was about, let go the halliards, and let the sail down by the run; and then jumped to the jib halliards and hoisted the sail like lightning.

"Now," shouted I, "luff you may, Bob, and let's heave the craft to, and finish the job for them."

As I said this, Bob put his helm down, whilst I hauled the jib-sheet to windward, and then I sprang aft again to the gun.

By this time they had taken to their oars again, but there were only two of them pulling: a sure indication of the extent to which our last shot had told. They were turning the boat round to pull back to the ship, and seeing this I felt some compunction about firing on them again, and said so.

"Don't be such a soft-hearted donkey, Harry, lad," retorted Bob. "Settle the whole lot if you can, boy; it'll only be so many skulking cut-throats the less in the world. *My* idee is that every one of them chaps as we can finish off is one honest man's life saved; so give 'em another of them shells, my boy. They *do* seem wonderful persuaders, small as they be."

I accordingly loaded again, and fired; but, probably from excitement, fired too high, and the missile flew harmlessly over the boat.

The next time I was more careful, aiming with the utmost deliberation. At length I pulled the trigger-line, and immediately leapt to my feet to watch for the result.

The shell struck the boat's stern fairly amidships, and close to the water-line; there was an explosion, but both the oarsmen appeared to be unhurt. Almost immediately, however, one of them sprang aft and crouched down, doing something that we could not make out.

I took the glass, and then saw that a large gap had been made by the explosion of the shell, through which the water was doubtless pouring rapidly.

There was a movement among the wounded men; and one man jumped upon a thwart and waved his hat to the brig, evidently as a signal of distress. Her captain had of course been watching us all this time, and seemed to have conjectured that his people were getting the worst of it, for we now saw that he had a second boat in the water; and on taking a look at the brig through the glass, we observed that he had a tackle on his main-yard-arm, with which he was hoisting out a gun to put into the boat.

"It is time we were off once more, Bob," I remarked, as soon as I saw this; "so another shot at our friends here, and then we'll fill away."

The boat was very much disabled, and appeared to be sinking gradually, notwithstanding their efforts to keep her afloat, for they were now baling rapidly;—but I thought it best to make sure of her, so once more loaded and fired.

The shell passed through her stern this time also, and exploded; there was a shrill scream from more than one agonised throat, and the baling and pulling ceased altogether; every man in her was wounded, if not killed outright.

Satisfied with our work of destruction, and not particularly caring to expose ourselves to the fire of the gun in the other boat, which was no doubt much heavier than our own toy of a weapon, we filled away; and I once more swayed up the spinnaker forward, desiring Bob to keep just sufficiently away to permit of our balloon canvas fully drawing, but no more.

As soon as I had got the spinnaker set, I took the glass and had a good look at the boat we had beaten off. She was nearly full of water, her gunwale being but an inch or two above the surface.

I saw three or four figures rouse themselves on board her, and recommence baling feebly; but their efforts were useless; she sank lower and lower, and at length rolled heavily bottom upwards, throwing her wounded crew into the water.

Almost immediately there was a furious splashing, and by the aid of the glass I distinctly saw the dorsal fins of several sharks darting here and there among them, whilst over the glassy surface of the water a shriek or two came faintly towards us.

In less than a minute all was over with the miserable wretches; the voracious sharks made short work of it with them, tearing living and dead alike to pieces in their eagerness to obtain a share of the prey.

At the moment that this tragic scene was enacting, the second boat was about half-way between the brig and those to whose assistance she was hastening; and her crew had a nearer and more distinct view of the horrible details of the catastrophe than we had.

They paused for a moment on their oars as though paralysed with horror; and then with a vengeful shout gave way more energetically than before.

But I felt little apprehension on their account; the dying breeze had revived somewhat, and the *Lily* was now stealing

along, though with scarcely a ripple at her sharp bows, about five knots; and the water looked rather darker to windward, as though the wind was inclined to come still stronger.

The pirates tugged at their oars with might and main, passing within oar's length of the wreck of the first boat, when they again raised a furious yell, straining away at their stout ash blades until they made them bend like willow wands.

They gained on us considerably within the first ten minutes or quarter of an hour; and I saw some of the crew preparing to fire the gun which was mounted in the boat's bows. Judging that more powder would have to be burned after all, I once more loaded our little piece, charging with shell as before; and whilst I was doing this our pursuers opened fire upon us.

They miscalculated their distance, however, or the powers of their gun; for the shot fell considerably short of us, much to Bob's delight, to which he gave expression by the utterance of a few remarks of such biting sarcasm and raillery that they would infallibly have still further incensed the individuals to whom they were addressed could they but have heard them.

I too was *very* glad to see the shot fall short, for it placed us on somewhat more equal terms than I had dared to hope. The boat was a large one, probably their launch, and pulled ten oars; and there were three men in the bows working the gun, and the coxswain aft steering, making altogether fourteen hands—very heavy odds.

But then, on the other hand, the boat was heavy, and her crew, after their already long pull, could not maintain the violent exertions they were now putting forth very much longer; and a very trifling abatement in that direction would enable us to slip away from them after all; and, moreover, as they were now within range of our gun (which, being rifled, threw a shot much farther than their smooth-bore), there was a possibility of our being able so far to disable them as to compel them to give up the chase.

I accordingly levelled the breech-loader, and then waited for a favourable opportunity to fire. At length it came. The shell entered the starboard-bow of the pursuing boat, about midway between her gunwale and her water-line; and immediately, to our great surprise, there was a violent explosion on board her.

A vivid flash of flame darted upward and outward; the sides of the boat appeared to be violently wrenched apart at their junction with the stem; the gun and its carriage rose heavily in the air about ten feet, and fell with a tremendous splash into the sea; and oars and men were flung wildly about, many of them being blown fairly overboard, whilst a dense cloud of smoke arose, and for a moment hid everything from our view.

When it cleared away, there floated the wreck of the boat, just awash; and there too, among the struggling crew in the water, darted to and fro the fins of the terrible sharks, very probably the same monsters who had so recently feasted on their shipmates. Our shell had taken most fearful effect, igniting their ammunition, and thus blowing their boat to pieces at our first discharge.

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## Chapter Eleven.

### The Chase Diverted.

There was an awful suddenness about the destruction of this second boat and her crew which almost appalled us, and it was with considerably sobered feelings that, after a dead silence of a few minutes, we proceeded to discuss the character of our next movements.

Our proper course was about north-west, that being the bearing of the point, the latitude and longitude of which had been given us as that of the treasure-island.

Our charts showed no island exactly at that spot, but there were many at very short distances from it; indeed, it was situated almost in the very heart of that extensive group of islets known as the Low Archipelago; and when talking the matter over before, we had decided that it was quite possible we should be obliged to take a somewhat extended cruise among these islands, and to examine several of them before coming upon the one of which we were in search.

Under these circumstances we came to the conclusion that it would be unadvisable to give the pirates any indication of our true destination by steering on our proper course as long as they were in sight, for the destruction of their two boats, with the loss of their crews, would undoubtedly kindle such a desire for vengeance in the breasts of the survivors as, in all likelihood, to prompt them to go a good bit out of their way, if necessary, to get it.

So, after a long debate and a careful examination of the chart, which I brought on deck for the purpose, we decided to bear away on a course as though bound to New Zealand.

This took us about a point farther off the wind than we had been steering for the last few hours; but we did not trouble much about that, as we hoped to give the brig the slip some time during the ensuing night.

Accordingly we bore away upon the course decided on; the sails were trimmed with the utmost nicety, and then, it being about the time for our evening meal, I took the tiller, while Bob went below to look after the kettle.

The brig was by this time about six or seven miles astern of us, and was steering directly after us, with apparently every stitch of canvas set that would draw. I lashed the tiller for a moment, and jumped down below for my sextant, with which I returned to the deck, and carefully set him by it, with the view of ascertaining just before dark whether he had gained anything on us, or we on him, in the interim.

Tea being ready, Bob served it on deck; and whilst we leisurely discussed the meal, we talked over our chances of

dodging our pursuer during the night.

Unfortunately, these now appeared to be rather slender; for there was not a cloud to be seen, and the moon, well advanced in her second quarter, was already visible in the deep sapphire of the eastern sky ere the west had well begun to glow with the rich warm hues of sunset. And to add to our difficulty in this respect, the wind again fell lighter, and ere long died completely away.

The sun went down in calm and cloudless splendour; the golden glories of the west deepened into rich crimson, then faded into purple, and from purple into warm grey; the brief twilight quickly deepened into night, and the moon, "sweet regent of the sky," shed her soft silvery beams abroad, over the tranquil ocean; while the larger stars added their mellow radiance to beautify the scene.

There was not the faintest breath of wind to ruffle the mirror-like surface of the long glassy swells as they undulated sluggishly beneath us; and the flap of our canvas, the pattering of the reef-points, the creaking of the main-boom, and the occasional "*cheep, cheep*" of the rudder upon its pintles, served but to mark and emphasise the deep calm of sleeping Nature.

It was a glorious night—a night of such exquisite loveliness as is perhaps never witnessed except when far away from land; but, situated as we were, greatly as we admired its beauty, we would rather have witnessed a sky traversed by fast-flying clouds, and would gladly have exchanged the tender silence which brooded around us for the singing of the wind through our rigging and the hissing sound of the rapidly following surges.

We walked fore and aft on our short deck, one on each side, smoking our pipes and whistling for a breeze, and pausing occasionally to listen for the roll of oars in their rowlocks, or their splash in the water; for we did not know what new trick our neighbour astern might feel disposed to play us, though we both thought it improbable he would send another boat away—at all events, whilst we maintained our present distance from him.

He was distinctly visible in the bright moonlight, and of course we kept a watchful eye upon him; but we could detect no signs aboard of him to give us any uneasiness.

At length, just about eight bells, as Bob was preparing to go below, I noticed that the shimmer of the moonbeams, which had hitherto played in but a few wavering streaks over the surface of the water close to us, was now revealing itself on the horizon, spreading gradually abroad on each side of the point at which it had first appeared, and slowly advancing over the surface of the ocean towards us.

"Here comes the breeze, Bob!" I exclaimed. "Stay on deck a few minutes longer until we can see what is to be the order of the night. See, there it comes, away out from the eastward; and the brig is already squaring away his yards, as though he felt the first faint puffs. Ay," continued I, as I took a look at him through the glass, "there go his stunsail-booms, and there go his stunsails to boot. Now the rascal will run down to us with the first of the breeze, and perhaps have us under his guns before we can catch a breath of it. Cast loose this spinnaker-boom, old man, and let's get it rigged out and the sail set in readiness for the breeze when it comes. If we can only get it before he comes within range of us, I believe we can walk away from him even in a run to leeward, provided we don't have the breeze *too* strong."

We worked with a will, the reader may be sure, and soon had the huge sail set on the starboard side, whilst the main-boom was guyed out to port.

We then went all round the deck, taking a pull at the halliards where necessary; and then, though a heavy dew was falling, we got up a small hand-pump and some hose we had provided ourselves with, and gave the sails a thorough wetting.

The brig ran down to within about a couple of miles of us before the first faint cat's-paws came stealing over the water towards us; then the balloon-topsail filled, collapsed, and filled again, the spinnaker ceased its rustle, and there was a gentle surge as the light strain first came upon the spars and rigging; the tiller began to vibrate beneath my hand, a long ripple spread itself out from each bow, and the *Water Lily* began once more to slip gaily away.

I got Bob to give a look to our preventers, in case it should become a matter of sheer *carrying on*, and then sent him below, as it had been a day of excitement for him, and, consequently, of fatigue.

The breeze gradually freshened, the water hissed and sparkled away from our sharp bows, and the swirling eddies in our wake told a cheering tale as to the speed with which we were flying over the surface of the now crisply-ruffled ocean; and before my watch was out, I had the satisfaction of seeing that we were certainly drawing away from our persevering enemy, the broad, flat model of the *Lily* being as favourable to her sailing powers before the wind as her deep keel was when close-hauled.

I called Bob at midnight, and strictly cautioned him to give me timely notice if the breeze freshened sufficiently to necessitate a reduction of canvas, or if anything occurred rendering my presence on deck desirable; and then I dived below, flung off my clothes, and tumbled into my hammock, and "in the twinkling of a purser's lantern" was fast asleep.

When I went on deck again at four o'clock I found that the breeze had freshened very considerably during my watch below, and under other circumstances I should most certainly have taken in the spinnaker and shifted topsails; but though we had dropped the brig considerably, he still hung most pertinaciously in our wake, so there was nothing for it but still to carry on.

The craft must have been a splendid sailer, for, though by this time we were going close upon sixteen knots, we had not increased our distance from her much more than four miles during the time I had been below.

Nothing worthy of note occurred during my watch. The wind appeared to have reached the limits of its strength, and now blew steadily, with sufficient force to try our spars and gear to their utmost, but not quite strong enough to carry anything away, and we continued to increase our distance from the brig.

At seven-bells I called Bob, who set about the preparations for breakfast, and great were our mutual congratulations over that meal at the now thoroughly-established fact that, fast as the *Albatross* undoubtedly was, she was no match for the little *Water Lily* in ordinary weather.

As soon as breakfast was over and the things cleared away, I got an observation for the longitude, and then went below to have a nap, desiring Bob to call me at seven-bells, that I might take a meridian altitude.

He did so, and as soon as I came on deck with my sextant, he said, "Look there, Harry, what d'ye think of that? I wouldn't call ye when I first made 'em out, as it only wanted half an hour to seven-bells, and I knowed you'd feel a bit tired after yesterday. But *ain't* it a wonderful sight?"

As he spoke he pointed away to a little on our starboard-bow, and stooping down in order to see under the foot of the spinnaker, I there beheld what was indeed to me a wonderful sight. Away nearly as far as we could see, upon the verge of the horizon, appeared a vast herd or "school" of whales, spouting in all directions and indulging in the most extraordinary gambols, each apparently striving to outvie the others in the feat of leaping entirely out of the water.

I am afraid to make anything like a positive statement as to the heights achieved by some of the monsters, but it really appeared to me that a few of them rose nearly, if not quite, five and twenty feet into the air, descending again with a splash which reminded me of some of the torpedo experiments I had witnessed when staying for a few days at Portsmouth.

I was careful to get my observation, which I rapidly worked out, and entered in the log; after which I relieved Bob at the tiller, whilst he went below to see to the dinner.

As he descended the short companion-ladder he turned round and observed with a comical look, "I say, Harry, I hope there ain't no stray sarpents knocking about in this here neighbourhood; 'twould be uncommon awk'ard for us to have one of they chaps waiting for us ahead and that infarnal brig still in sight astarn."

Just as dinner made its appearance I descried a sail about two points on our starboard-bow. It was a vessel under single-reefed topsails, heading to the southward, and consequently standing across our bows.

She was too far off for us to make out anything but the heads of her sails from the deck, but as soon as I saw her I resigned the tiller to Bob and went up as far as the cross-trees to have a better look at her.

From thence I made her out to be a barque apparently close-hauled on the port tack; but of what nationality she might be we were yet too far distant from her to decide, though I thought from the cut of her sails that she was English.

I was still standing upon the cross-trees, shouting my observations to Bob, when I noticed a commotion amongst the herd of whales, which we were by this time fast nearing, and bringing my glass to bear, I at length made out three boats pulling towards them.

The whales were evidently rather doubtful as to the intentions of these boats, though we were not. We saw at once that the stranger was a whaler, and that these were her boats despatched in chase.

The whales came swimming leisurely to windward with the boats in hot pursuit. What to do was now the question with us. We ought most certainly to advise the whalers of the character of the brig, but it would never do to shorten sail and deviate anything considerable from our course with this object.

We should very probably be taken before we could accomplish our purpose, and in that event we should sacrifice ourselves without doing the others any good. However, as a preliminary, we displayed our ensign, and as the boats were coming almost directly towards us, I sheered sufficiently out of our course to pass within hail of the leader.

We were now running through the very thickest of the herd, and it was rather nervous work, for with a single lash of its mighty tail any one of the monsters might have destroyed us; and with such a cloud of canvas as we were carrying the deviations from our course which we dared to make were very trifling.

Had we luffed, for example, high enough for our spinnaker to jibe, the craft would probably have "turned the turtle" with us; or, if we had proved fortunate enough to escape this, we should most certainly have made a clean sweep of the spars.

We were almost within hail of the leading boat when she fastened to an enormous whale. The creature dived instantly, taking out line at a tremendous rate, but still continuing on its original course.

This brought the boat close past us on our starboard side, the crew sitting with their oars apeak, and the water foaming a good foot above the level of the boat's bows as she was towed furiously along.

I took the trumpet in my hand, and as she dashed past, I hailed, "The brig astern is a pirate; cut adrift and rejoin your ship as soon as possible."

The boat-steerer waved his hand, but they made no attempt to free themselves from the whale, and I feared they had not clearly understood me; though I saw the men turning to each other as though comparing notes on the communication I had made, and the boat-steerer shaded his eyes with his hand as he took a hasty look at the rapidly approaching brig.

The two other boats, meanwhile, were pulling away to the southward in pursuit of a couple of gigantic whales which had separated from the rest of the herd, and which, from the pace at which they were travelling, seemed likely to lead their pursuers a pretty dance. It was quite out of our power to convey any warning to those, and I was most reluctantly compelled to stand on upon our original course, or dead to leeward.

Presently the whale which was struck turned sharp round, and came tearing back over the ground he had just traversed. I felt more than half inclined to take as broad a sheer as I dared out of his way; I did not at all like the look of him as he came foaming down towards us.

But the desire to repeat my warning was stronger even than my fear of the whale; and, watching him narrowly as he came up, I directed Bob how to steer, and the instant he was past us, Bob eased down the helm, and we sheered towards the boat he had in tow.

I stood by with the trumpet as before, but it was unnecessary, for as they came alongside, the boat-steerer sheered our way, whilst the crew rapidly paid out line, by which means the whale-boat's speed was so reduced that we had time to communicate before she passed ahead.

"Cutter ahoy!" hailed the boat-steerer as we rushed along within twenty feet of each other; "what was that you said just now?"

"The brig astern of us is a pirate," I replied; "she fired upon us yesterday at mid-day, and has been in chase ever since. I would advise you to rejoin your ship before she comes up if possible. Your skipper will need all his hands on board if she ranges alongside."

"The devil!" ejaculated he in reply. "You don't seem hit anywhere," glancing aloft at our taper spars and snowy canvas, which showed no wounds or shot-holes to vouch for the truth of my statement.

"No," answered I; "he only had time to fire five shots at us before we slipped past him to windward, and we escaped untouched."

"Hang it!" he exclaimed, in a tone of vexation; "I don't like to lose this fine fish that we're fast to; but we shall have to let him go, no doubt of that; but how the devil am I to recall the other boats?"

"I will fire our gun to attract their attention," I replied, "and you can make any signal you think most likely to effect your object."

"Thank 'ee," returned he; "I shall be obliged if you will."

And then he signalled to the men who had charge of the line, and they gradually reduced the speed at which it ran out, and finally held all fast with an extra turn round the bollard, and away the boat dashed once more.

I charged the gun (which still remained mounted on deck) with a blank cartridge, and duly greasing the muzzle to increase the report, fired. The crew of the whale-boat tossed their oars on end, and kept them so for a few minutes, or until it was seen that the other boats had abandoned the chase, and were pulling back toward them. The crew of the boat which was fast to the whale were knowing enough not to cut themselves adrift so long as their prize towed them in the direction they wished to go; and, as he seemed to have started for a regular long run to leeward, they appeared to stand a very fair chance of being towed almost alongside their ship.

She had been making short stretches to windward ever since we first sighted her, and we were by this time within a couple of miles of her. From her motions we judged that the people left on board to work her had heard the report of our gun, and had witnessed the recall of the other two boats, and perhaps suspected that something was wrong somewhere, for she was now plainly manoeuvring to close with all three of the boats as quickly as possible.

The whale, meanwhile, had been running in such a direction as to cross the barque's bows about a quarter of a mile distant, and he actually ran far enough to enable the crew of the boat which had fastened to him to cut themselves adrift when fairly in their ship's course; so that, in a very few minutes after the stroke of the keen tomahawk had severed their towline, they were alongside, and the boat was run up to the davits.

So smart were the crew of the whaler in picking up their boat, that they must have swung their main-yard the moment the frail craft was hooked on, without waiting until she was actually hoisted up.

The barque had scarcely begun to gather way before the hands were in her rigging, and next moment they were laying out on both topsail-yards and turning out the reefs; although the breeze was so strong that, half-loaded as she was, she was careening almost gunwale to.

We passed close under her stern; and her skipper, as we drew near, walked aft to the taffrail and hailed us.

"Thank you, sir, for your information; please report us and this circumstance; God knows whether we shall escape the rascals or no."

I waved my hand, to signify that I understood and would comply with his request; noting, as I did so, the name and the port of registry of the vessel, which were painted on her stern in white letters: "*The Kingfisher*, of Hull."

Scarcely were we past her, when we saw a small red flag go fluttering up to her main-topgallant-mast-head; a signal, as we supposed, to hurry the other boats back. The poor fellows were awkwardly situated.

Had they been hull-down to the northward or the southward, the pirates might possibly, in the eagerness of their desire for vengeance upon us, have allowed her to pass on unmolested; but now that the barque lay almost directly



within their path, we dared not hope for any such display of forbearance.

There were many stores on board a well-found whaler which would be most useful to men situated like the desperadoes on board the brig; and they would scarcely forego the opportunity of making the acquisition for the sake of continuing to chase a craft which was indubitably walking away from them fast, and which must run them out of sight altogether in a few hours more, unless some accident occurred to place her within their power.

We watched the proceedings of the two vessels with the most absorbing interest, as may well be supposed. The *Lily* was very quickly far enough to leeward of the barque to enable us to see the two boats clear of his bow; and we noticed that their crews were pulling with might and main.

But in about ten minutes' time they were once more shut in by the intervention of their vessel's hull between us and them; and before they could open out astern of her, the barque went in stays, having apparently stood on far enough to fetch her boats on the next tack.

The brig had in the interim run down to within about four miles of the whaler, and was still flying along, dead before the wind, with everything set, up to topgallant stunsails on both sides; and no sign had so far revealed itself on board her by which we could judge of the intention of her crew.

By the time that she had run another mile, we saw the whaler's main-yard once more thrown aback; an indication that she was about to pick up her other two boats; and there now appeared to be a strong probability that she would have time to hoist them in and be off again, before the pirate could approach her within gun-shot.

The situation became eminently exciting; and so anxious was I that the whaler should have every chance of making her escape, that I directed Bob to let go our spinnaker out-haul, and allow the traveller to run in along the boom, in the hope that, by leading the pirates to believe it had become necessary for us to shorten sail, they might be tempted, after all, to keep on in chase of us, instead of interfering with the barque.

It would have afforded us almost unmitigated satisfaction to have seen them continue the chase, for we now felt perfectly satisfied that in moderate weather we had the heels of the *Albatross*, both close-hauled and running free, and could we succeed in decoying them far enough to leeward to permit of the whaler making good his escape, I was willing to trust to the future for the means of ultimately shaking our vindictive pursuer off.

In further prosecution of this project, as soon as Bob had got the spinnaker in, I lashed the tiller for a moment and jumped forward to assist him in getting in our enormous balloon-topsail, which I foresaw would have to be taken off the craft shortly if we wished to save the topmast, the wind being rather on the increase and our rigging already strained to the tension of harp-strings. This done, we found time to take another look at the whaler.

His main-yard was just swinging as we turned our glances in his direction, and then his bows fell off until he headed about north-west; his men springing into the rigging and scurrying away aloft to loose topgallant-sails, one hand meantime laying out on the jib-boom to loosen the flying-jib.

Away went the jolly old craft in magnificent style, heading about north-west, and evidently upon her best point of sailing. She crossed our stern, shutting out the pirate-brig for a moment, and we fully expected that when that craft next appeared we should see her hauled up in chase; but nothing of the kind; on she came, still heading direct for us, and I began to hope that our plan of luring her on to follow us was about to prove; successful.

Two or three minutes, which seemed like ages to us, elapsed; and then, all in a moment, his stunsails (or *studding-sails*, as I ought more correctly to spell the word) collapsed, and fluttered wildly for a few seconds in the breeze, and disappeared; his royal-halliards were let go, and the sails rolled up and furled; and as he hauled up to follow the barque, his foresail lifted and there was a flash, a puff of white smoke, and before the report had time to drive down to us we saw the shot skipping along from wave to wave, as a polite intimation to the barque to heave-to. But the whaling skipper was not the man to give up without a struggle. He had no studding-sails, but he was heading in such a direction that the brig could not use hers while following him, and it seemed that he trusted to his light trim to enable him to get clear.

Gun after gun was now rapidly fired by the pirates, but they were not yet within range, though it was only too evident that they would be before very long, and I greatly feared that the barque's chances of escape were remarkably small.

In about an hour they both disappeared in the north-western board; but, when last seen, the barque was still carrying on, with the pirate banging away at her most perseveringly with his long gun.

"Thank goodness, we're shut of the blackguards at last!" exclaimed Bob, as the sails of the two craft sank below the horizon; "though I'm duberous it's a poor look-out for them whalin' chaps. If the poor beggars gets caught, it's small marcy as they'll have showed 'em, unless there's any on 'em white-livered enough to jine the brig to save their lives. Skipper Johnson won't be partic'lar amiable, I reckon, a'ter the loss of his two boats' crews yesterday—two-and-twenty hands, all told; and I don't suppose as he's the man to mind much *who* he has his revenge upon, so long's he *gets* it. But what's to be our next move, lad, now we're once more all alone by ourselves?"

"I've been thinking about that," I replied. "I do not expect the pirates will trouble their heads about us any more, now that they have lost sight of us; but they *way*, and it will be just as well to provide against any such contingency. If they resume the chase, they will most probably look for us somewhere on the course we were steering when last seen, or else to the northward. There is nothing to take us to the southward, so that is the most improbable direction, in my opinion, in which they are likely to look for us; and that, therefore, is the direction in which I propose to steer. Let us make the craft snug, and stand away to the southward and eastward, full and by, and at eight o'clock to-morrow morning we will go about and make a leg to the northward and eastward for perhaps twenty-four hours. This will place us well to windward, and in about the last spot in the world where he would think of looking for us. What do

you think of the plan, Bob?"

"Fust rate," responded that worthy; "a reg'lar traverse, and about the most in-and-out bit of carcumvention as the ingenuity o' man could invent. Let's set about it at once, my lad; and by the time as we've cleared up a bit, and made things comfortable, it'll be time to see about gettin' tea."

We accordingly set about "making things comfortable" forthwith. The balloon-topsail was carefully rolled up and put away, the spinnaker (which we had only allowed to run in close to the mast, and had hastily secured with a stop or two) ditto, and our topmast housed; the spinnaker-boom was run in, unrigged, and secured, and we then gibed the mainsail over, and stood away, close-hauled, about south-east, the little *Lily* staggering along in regular racing style under whole lower canvas, when by rights, with the amount of wind we had, we ought to have had at least *one* reef down, and the Number 1 jib shifted for Number 2.

However, we were used to carrying on by this time, and had become so thoroughly intimate with the cutter's sail-carrying powers that we knew we might safely give her all the canvas her spars would bear.

By the time that all was done, and our gun (which we did not think it worth while to dismount and stow away again for the present) carefully covered over with its painted canvas coat, the sun was on the verge of the horizon, the weather having a settled appearance, with a promise of the breeze holding good through the night.

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## Chapter Twelve.

### The Wreck of the "Copernicus."

At eight o'clock next morning, nothing having occurred during the night worthy of record, we went about and stood away about north-east on the starboard tack. The wind continued fresh, but steady, and we averaged quite thirteen knots during the whole of the next twenty-four hours.

Having carried out our plan for eluding the brig, and being by this time well to windward of the spot where we parted company with her, I considered we might now with safety bear away upon our course, which we accordingly did directly after breakfast, setting our balloon gaff-topsail once more, and getting the spinnaker to the bowsprit-end again.

This additional canvas had the effect of increasing our speed to fully sixteen knots; and the alteration of our course produced a corresponding and very agreeable change in the motion of the yacht; the quick jerky plunge of a vessel digging into a head-sea being exchanged for a long easy swinging roll, which was far more conducive to comfort, especially as we now enjoyed the added luxury of a dry deck.

Three days passed utterly devoid of incident, except that the wind gradually hauled far enough aft to enable us to shift our spinnaker from the bowsprit-end to the starboard side; and once more we were flying along upon our course with the wind nearly dead fair, and every stitch of canvas spread that we had the means of packing upon the little craft.

With our low hull, we must have presented the appearance of a snow-white pyramid, gliding, unsupported, over the surface of the ocean. On the morning of the fourth day, as I came upon deck at seven-bells to relieve Bob, whilst he looked after breakfast, the old fellow said, "Here, Harry, your eyes are younger than mine; what d'ye make this out to be away here broad upon our starboard-bow?"

I looked in the direction indicated, and saw what appeared to be the stumps of three spars just showing above the horizon. I took the glass, and went aloft as far as the cross-trees, and from that "coign of 'vantage" made out that they were the lower-masts of a full-rigged ship of considerable size; for I could see the three lower yards with long streamers of canvas fluttering from them.

The topmasts were carried away close to the caps and hung over the side, with topgallant-masts, yards, sails, etcetera, still attached, a great tangled mass of wreck. There was no signal of distress flying on board, so far as I could see, so I concluded that the vessel was derelict; but as it would not take us very much out of our way, and as we were in no great hurry, I resolved to haul up and take a nearer look at her.

Accordingly, having advised Bob of what I had seen and of my intention, we took in the spinnaker and gaff-topsail, lowered the topmast, and then hauled up for the stranger.

An hour afterwards we were near enough to make out that she was a most beautiful craft of about eighteen hundred tons register, with very little the matter with her apparently, except that she had been dismasted, doubtless in some sudden squall.

We saw but one boat at her davits, and that was the one at her starboard quarter, which had been smashed completely in two by the wreck of the mizzen-topmast in its fall; we therefore concluded that the crew, seized by an unaccountable panic, had left her.

We were within a quarter of a mile of the vessel, when a solitary figure, that of a female, appeared upon her lofty poop. She no sooner saw us approaching than she waved her handkerchief to us vehemently, to which we responded by waving our hats; when, seeing that her signal had been observed, she sank down upon the lid of the skylight, and seemed to give way to a violent flood of tears.

"Why, — me if it don't look as if the mean cowardly crew have been and desarted the poor thing," exclaimed Bob with unusual vehemence, as we noticed that the figure never moved as though to direct the attention of others to our

approach.

"It looks very like it," I replied; "but we shall soon see. It will be an awkward matter to board, however, with all that wreck dangling about to leeward. Stand by to ease the jib-sheet up, as I put the helm down."

Another minute, and we were hove-to on the ship's lee quarter, as near as we dared approach.

The young girl (for such we now saw her to be) had by this time so far recovered her composure as to rise up once more and approach the lee-side of the deck.

Taking off my hat, and making my best bow, I hailed:

"Are you all alone on board there?"

"Yes, oh yes," she replied, in the sweetest voice I had ever heard; "I have been quite alone for more than a week. Pray, pray do not go away and leave me again, sir. I have been nearly mad, and I shall die if I remain alone here much longer."

"Make your mind quite easy, my dear young lady," I replied; "we certainly will not leave you, come what may. But it will be very difficult for us to get on board, with those spars swaying about; and the attempt to do so may occupy much time. But do not suffer the slightest apprehension; we will get you off the wreck somehow, never fear. After all," I remarked, half to her and half to Bob, "I believe the quickest way out of the difficulty will be for me to jump overboard and swim alongside; there are plenty of ropes-ends hanging over the side to help me on board."

"Oh no, sir!" she exclaimed eagerly; "indeed you must do nothing of the kind. There is an immense shark down there," pointing under the counter; "he has scarcely left the ship a moment since the sailors went away."

This was awkward. There seemed no chance of being able to get on board to leeward, the whole of the ship's starboard side being completely encumbered with wreck; and there was far too much sea to permit of our running alongside to windward.

I took a careful glance at the gear aloft, and then made up my mind what to do.

The ship's fore-yard was lying nearly square, the yard-arms projecting several feet beyond the ship's sides, and I decided to board, by means of the fore-brace, to windward.

I hailed the young girl, telling her what to do to assist me, and then set about making preparations for leaving the *Water Lily* in Bob's sole charge for a while.

We took a double reef in the mainsail, and took the jib in altogether, running in the jib-boom also. This placed the craft under handy canvas for one man to work, and, at the same time, prevented the possibility of the jib-boom being carried away. We also got our cork-fenders upon deck, in case of unavoidably dropping alongside, and were then ready to make the proposed experiment. The young girl had, meantime, made the lee fore-brace fast, and had then gone over to windward and cast off the running part of the weather-brace, which she threw overboard.

I now hailed again, telling her what we were about to do, and then signed to Bob to put the helm up.

The cutter fell off until she was dead before the wind, when we giped her and hauled again to the wind on the starboard tack, so as to cross the ship's stern at a sufficient distance to insure the success of our contemplated manoeuvre.

Bob was a splendid helmsman, or I should have hesitated about attempting the feat we were now going to put in practice, as the slightest nervousness or want of tact on his part would have resulted in very serious damage to the *Lily*, if it did not actually cause her total destruction. But I had full confidence in his skill; and, moreover, was there not a woman to be rescued from a position which might at any moment become one of the most imminent peril, even if it were not so already?

So, as soon as we were far enough to windward, I signed to Bob to put down the helm, and round the little craft came like a top, and away we flew down towards the ship's weather-side, going well free, but with the sheets flattened in, all ready to luff and claw off to windward the moment I had got hold of the brace.

Down we swept direct for the ship's weather-quarter, the fair girl standing again upon the poop and watching our motions with the most overwhelming anxiety.

At exactly the right instant, Bob eased his helm gently down, and the cutter shot along the ship's lofty side within ten feet of it. I stood just forward of the rigging, ready to seize the brace the moment it came within reach, and in another instant I had it. Shouting to Bob to luff, I swung myself off into the air, and made the best of my way aloft hand over hand.

It had been my original intention to ascend to the yard-arm, and, laying in from thence, descend the fore-rigging to the deck; but, pausing for a moment, in my anxiety to see whether Bob would scrape clear—which he very cleverly did, having kept good way on the boat—I found that, aided by the roll of the vessel, I might easily swing myself in upon her rail.

This I soon managed, landing upon the deck to find myself confronted by the most lovely little creature you can imagine, who extended both her hands impulsively to me as she exclaimed:

"Oh, welcome, sir, welcome! and a thousand thousand thanks for coming to my help! and at such danger too! How

can I ever repay you?"

"I am more than repaid already," replied I, "for the very slight trouble I have taken, by the happiness of finding it in my power to rescue you from your present situation. The first thing to be done," I continued, "is to provide for the safety of my little craft, after which we shall have ample time, I hope, to make suitable arrangements for transferring you on board her. Ah! a lucky thought," continued I, as I saw the sounding-rod and line attached to the five-rail, "let us see what water the craft has in her."

I sounded, and found there was barely two feet of water in the hold, so it was evident that the vessel was perfectly tight and seaworthy, except as to the damage aloft Bob had by this time passed ahead and to leeward, and was now approaching on our lee quarter once more. I waited until he was within hail, and then told him to heave-to well clear of the ship, as I proposed to cut adrift all the wreck, a task which I thought I could manage without very much difficulty, and which, when done, would enable the *Water Lily* to come alongside to leeward.

He waved his hand in reply, and the fore-sheet being already to windward, he left the cutter to take care of herself, while he seated himself composedly in a deck-chair to smoke his pipe and watch my proceedings.

I soon found a tomahawk, and, armed with this, I went up the mizzen-rigging, intending to work my way forward. It was hard work single-handed; but by noon I had succeeded in clearing the whole mass away, and the ship soon drifted free of it, leaving her upper spars a confused floating mass upon the water.

As soon as this was done, I got an eight-inch hawser off the top of the house forward, and managed with considerable labour to get it coiled down afresh upon the poop. I then bent on a heaving-line to one end of the hawser, which, by this means, I got to the cutter, when we moored her securely astern of the ship.

Bob then came on board up a rope which I had lashed to the mizzen boom-end for his accommodation; and we found time to look around us.

As soon as our fair hostess saw me fairly at work upon the wreck aloft, she had betaken herself to the galley; and I saw her from time to time, during the intervals of my labour, busying herself in sundry culinary operations; and she now came upon the poop where Bob and I were standing, and announced that dinner was ready, adding, "And I am sure you must stand in need of it after your hard morning's work."

I thanked her and said, "But before we go below, permit me to introduce myself. My name," raising my hat and bowing, "is Harry Collingwood, and I am the owner of the small craft now hanging on astern. This," indicating Bob, who took off his hat and made a most elaborate "scrape," "is my friend and well-trying shipmate, Robert Trunnion, who, with myself, will do all we can to make you comfortable on board the cutter, and will stand by you to the death if need be, until we have placed you in perfect safety."

The fair girl seemed much affected by my speech, but bowing most gracefully in return, she said, "And my name is Ella Brand. I have been left alone in this ship by what I cannot but believe was a dreadful mistake, and I accept your hospitality and help as frankly as you have offered it. And now, gentlemen, that we are properly introduced," with a gay laugh, "permit me to conduct you to the cabin. Come, pussy."

This last invitation was bestowed upon a pretty little playful kitten which had been following the girl about the ship all the morning.

When we entered the cabin, which, as is the case in most large ships, was on deck, we found a most sumptuous meal prepared. Whatever other dangers the little fairy might have been exposed to, it was quite evident that Miss Brand had been in no immediate danger of starving.

Like a sensible girl, she had obtained access to the ship's stores, and was evidently well acquainted with the most approved methods of preparing food for human consumption. The meal was a thoroughly pleasant one, for we were all happy; she, that assistance had come to her, and we, that it had been our good fortune to bestow it.

Whilst sitting at table the sweet little creature gave us her history, and recounted the circumstances which had placed her in her present position; but as there was nothing very remarkable in either, I shall give both in a condensed form, as I have a most wholesome dread of wearying my readers.

She told us that she was an only child, and that for the last ten years she had been a resident in Canton, whither her father had proceeded to take possession of a lucrative appointment. After a residence of five years there, her mother died; and her father, who was passionately attached to his wife, seemed never to have recovered from the blow.

Five years more passed away, and the husband followed his fondly-loved companion, dying (so Ella asserted sobbingly) of no disease in particular, but of a gradual wasting away, the result, as she believed, of a slowly breaking heart. She thus found herself left alone and almost friendless in a strange land, and, after taking counsel with such friends as her father had made, *she* had, with their assistance, disposed of everything, and had taken passage in the *Copernicus* to London, in the faint hope of being able to find some friends of her mother's of whom she had heard, but had never seen, her mother having contracted what is termed a *mesalliance*—in other words, a love-match with one whom her friends chose to consider infinitely beneath her in social position.

The ship was bound home by way of Cape Horn, having to call at the Sandwich Islands and Buenos Ayres on her way; and all had gone well until eight days before, when, it appeared, the ship was struck by a sudden squall some time during the night, thrown on her beam-ends, and dismasted; and as Ella had remained, during the whole time, cowering and terrified in her berth, she supposed the crew had gone away in the boats, forgetting her in their hurry and panic.

As soon as the squall was over, the ship had gradually righted again; and when she went on deck next morning, she found everything in a state of wreck and confusion.

Dinner ended, Bob and I adjourned to the deck to make preparations for transferring our fair young guest to the *Water Lily*, so as to be fairly away from the wreck again before nightfall.

As soon as we were out of the cabin, Bob observed:

"I call the falling in with this here *wrack*," (so he pronounced the word) "downright providential, Harry. Here we has, fust of all, the very great pleasure of being of sarvice to a most charming young 'oman; and next, we has a chance of filling up our stores and water—and not afore 'twas time, too, for I bethought me this morning of seeing how our tank stood, and I'm blest if we ain't a'most at our last drop. It's lucky there's plenty of it aboard here. I sees more water-casks about the deck than will supply all as we wants; and I think our first job had better be to get the hose and pump under weigh, and fill up our water; a'ter which we can soon strike a few odds and ends into the cutter such as'll be useful, and then the sooner we're off the better."

We set to work with a will; and Ella coming on deck at the moment, I requested her to pack her boxes in readiness for sending them over the side, asking her, at the same time, whether it would take her long.

She replied briskly, Oh, no; she had brought hardly anything with her—only three large boxes and one small one.

Only! A chest apiece held Bob's and my own stock of clothing, and we considered ourselves opulently supplied; and here was a young girl who had brought hardly anything with her—only such few trifles as she could stow away in three large boxes and one small one. The three large boxes, by the way, turned out to be considerably larger than either of our sea-chests, and the small one would have sufficed for a seaman on a three years' voyage.

We did not hesitate about helping ourselves freely to the best the ship afforded, judging that it was highly improbable she would ever reach a port, unless fallen in with and taken possession of by an exceptionally strong-handed vessel (and even then our petty appropriations would never be missed); and we laid in a liberal stock of dainties of various kinds, for the especial benefit of our lady passenger, which we should never have dreamed of taking on our own account. We also transferred one coop, with as many fowls as it would conveniently accommodate, to the cutter; and I made free with a very handsome swinging-cot which I found in the captain's cabin, also for our passenger's use, together with a good stock of bedding.

All these we collected together on the lee-side of the deck; and when everything was ready, we got the cutter alongside, and, with considerable difficulty, got them over the side and down on her deck.

Bob went on board the *Water Lily* to receive them and stow them away as I lowered them down, and at length all was ready, and it only remained to get Ella herself on board and shove off.

We had less difficulty with her than I expected. She was rather nervous; but, nevertheless, she seated herself courageously with her beloved kitten in her lap, in the bo'sun's chair I had rigged for her accommodation, and held on tight, shutting her eyes as she swung off the ship's bulwarks, until she felt Bob's brawny arms receive her on the deck of the cutter.

I then quickly followed; the fasts were cast off, and we wore round and stood away once more upon our course, just as the sun dipped below the horizon.

Our first task was to crowd all the canvas we could muster upon the yacht, to make up for the day's delay; and when Ella came up from the cabin, whither she had gone upon an exploring expedition, she expressed the greatest surprise and a little alarm at the change we had wrought in the *Water Lily's* appearance.

She could not understand, she said, how so small a vessel could support such a towering spread of canvas as she now saw courting the fresh evening breeze.

The presence of our fair guest on board made certain alterations necessary in the internal arrangements of the cutter, and I left Bob at the helm in animated conversation with Ella, whilst I went below to effect them. Our cooking-stove was shifted aft, and the whole of the fore-compartment was thus left free for the accommodation of the young lady; and I at once converted it into a sleeping apartment for her by swinging her cot there.

I selected this part of the vessel for this purpose, as it was the only one in which she would be entirely uninterrupted by our passage to and fro; and it was a nice light and *roomy* apartment, in proportion to the size of the vessel, there being nothing in it, and having a large circular plate of very thick roughened plate-glass let into the deck above.

Having made the place as comfortable as our resources permitted, I returned to the deck and relieved Bob at the tiller, desiring him to look, after the arrangements for tea.

Our guest was sitting close by in one of our deck-chairs, which Bob had gallantly offered her, and hearing me speak of tea, and understanding that friend Robert was about to turn cook, she started up with child-like impetuosity and said, "That is my work now; come along, Mr Trunnion, and show me your pantry, and where you keep all your things, and I will soon have your tea ready for you."

I protested against this, as did Bob, both of us declaring that we could not possibly consent to her being troubled with the cooking or anything else; but she drew herself up in a pretty wilful way and said, "Not let me do the cooking? Indeed, but you must; I insist on it. Why, it is woman's peculiar province to attend to the cooking always. Men never understand how to cook properly; they have neither tact nor patience for it. They dress food, but women cook it; and I will soon prove to you how great a difference there is between the two. Now you must let me have my own way just

this once, please," turning coaxingly to me, as she saw that I was about to make a further protest, and then, when I had reluctantly consented, she turned to Bob, and said, "Come along, Bob—Mr Trunnion, I mean; I really beg your pardon—you shall help me this time, and afterwards I shall know exactly where to find everything," and the strangely-contrasted pair dived below, Bob grinning from ear to ear with delight at his novel situation.

"Reminds me of little 'sauce-box'" (my sister), "this do," he murmured gleefully, as he followed his fair companion below.

In rather over half an hour I was invited into the cabin to the evening meal, Bob taking my place at the tiller meanwhile; and when I descended I found that a change had indeed taken place in the aspect of culinary affairs.

A snow-white table-cloth was spread, having been routed out from the deepest recesses of my chest, where it, in company with others, had lain in undisturbed repose since the commencement of the voyage, and upon it was spread a variety of dainties of various kinds, the produce of our raid upon the *Copernicus's* provision lockers; and, of all things in the world, a plentiful supply of delicious little cakes, smoking hot, which Miss Ella's own dainty hands had prepared.

The tea, too, instead of being boiled in the kettle, as was our usual practice, had been prepared in accordance with the most approved rules, and was certainly a very different beverage from what we had been in the habit of drinking; and, altogether, the meal was a perfect Epicurean feast compared with what we were accustomed to.

Ella presided, doing the honours of the small table with the grace of a princess, and I began to feel as though I had suddenly become an inhabitant of fairy-land.

As soon as my meal was over I relieved Bob, and he went below for his share of the good things; and though Miss Ella had been very demure with me, I soon discovered, by the peals of musical laughter which, mingled with Bob's gruffer cachinnations, floated up through the companion, that the two had completely broken the ice between them.

As soon as the remains of the meal had been cleared away, and the wants of her pet kitten attended to, the little lady came on deck and commenced an animated conversation with Bob and me, as we smoked the pipe of peace (Ella declaring that she quite liked the odour of tobacco), asking a thousand questions, and full of wonder that such a "dear little tiny yacht" had come all the way from England.

She was most anxious to try her hand at steering, which she thought she could do quite well; and I promised I would instruct her at a more favourable opportunity, explaining that we were just then so circumstanced that none but *experienced* helmsmen could be trusted with the tiller, it being more difficult to steer properly when running before the wind than at any other time.

"But it *looks* quite easy," she persisted, "to hold that handle. *You* do not move it much, and surely I could do the little you are doing. I used to steer the *Copernicus* sometimes, but she never *would* go straight with *me*; and it was *so* tiring to keep turning that great wheel round."

Bob laughed joyously at this quaint speech, and proceeded laboriously to hold forth on the science of the helmsman, interlarding his lecture copiously with nautical illustrations and sea phrases, which were so much Greek to his pupil, who listened with an open-eyed earnestness which was most entertaining.

She heard Bob with the utmost patience and attention until he had utterly exhausted his entire stock of precepts, when she thanked him as courteously and sweetly as though she had understood every word of it; and then electrified us both, and set me off into a fit of perfectly uncontrollable laughter, by asking him, in the same breath, to sing her a song.

Whatever Bob's accomplishments might be, singing was certainly not one of them. He could hail the fore-royal-yard from the taffrail in a gale of wind, and make himself pretty plainly heard too; but when it came to trolling forth a ditty, he had no more voice than a raven; and my sister had often thrown him into a state of the most comical distress by proffering a similar request to that now made by his new friend.

As soon as she found that Bob really could not sing, she tried me; and, as I was considered to have a very tolerable voice, I immediately complied, giving her "Tom Bowling" and a few more of Dibdin's fine old sea-songs, as well as one or two more frequently heard in a drawing-room, which I had learnt under my sister's able tuition.

She then sang us a few favourites of her own in a sweet clear soprano, and with a depth of feeling for the sentiment of the song which is but too seldom heard in the performances of amateurs.

About ten o'clock she wished us "good-night," and retired to her cot; and Bob then also went below and turned in, it being his "eight hours in" that night, and I was left to perform the rest of my watch alone.

The next morning, Bob turned out of his own accord, and made a surreptitious attempt to resume the duties of the *cuisine*; but at the first rattle of the cups and saucers he was hailed from the fore-compartment and ordered to desist at his peril, and in a very short time the little fairy appeared, blooming and fresh as the morning, and Master Bob received such a lecture that he was fain from that time forward to leave the cookery department entirely in her hands, and he retired discomfited to the deck, and began forthwith to wash down.

A permanent improvement now occurred in our style of living, and we began to enjoy many little comforts which, it is true, we never had missed, but which were singularly welcome nevertheless; and altogether we found ourselves vastly gainers by the presence of the sweet little creature on board.

She quickly learned to take the chronometer time for my observations, and that, too, with a precision which Bob

himself could not surpass; and in a very short time she could steer as well as either of us, which was an immense advantage when shortening or making sail. Add to all this the amusement we derived from her incessant lively prattle, and the additional cheerfulness thus infused into our daily life, and the reader will agree with me, I think, that it was a lucky day for us when we first fell in with little Ella Brand.

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## Chapter Thirteen.

### A Mirage.

By the time that our fair guest had been on board a week or ten days, she had put me in possession of probably every circumstance of importance which had occurred in her past history, and had also touched lightly upon her future, which, notwithstanding the natural buoyancy of her temperament, she seemed to regard with considerable apprehension.

It appeared that, in the first place, she had but a very imperfect idea as to the whereabouts of her relatives in England. She knew that her grandfather had a place somewhere down in Leicestershire, and she thought he also had a house in town; but, as her mother had never heard from him since her marriage, Ella had been utterly unable to find any clue to the old gentleman's address, after a most thorough search through such papers belonging to her parents as had fallen into her hands after her father's death.

Then, bearing in mind many conversations between her parents which had occurred in her presence, she felt the gravest doubt as to whether any of her relatives, when found, would even condescend so far as to acknowledge her as a relative, much less assist her in any way. She inclined to the opinion that they would not, and there were many circumstances to justify this sentiment, notably one which had occurred a short time previous to the departure of her parents from England.

Her father was at the time suffering from nervous debility and severe mental depression, the result of over-work and incessant anxiety; and to such a deplorable condition was he reduced that, for a considerable time, he was completely incapacitated for work of any kind.

The family resources dwindled to a low ebb, the process being materially hastened by heavy doctors' bills and other expenses connected with Mr Brand's condition, and the wife and mother found herself almost at her wit's-end to provide necessaries for her husband and child, utterly forgetful of herself all the time. At last, in sheer desperation, she wrote to her father describing her position, and entreating that assistance which he could so bountifully bestow—and her letter remained unanswered. She then wrote to her mother, and this time the letter was returned unopened.

She then tried her two brothers in succession, and finally her sister, and all her attempts to communicate with these unnatural relatives were treated with the same cold-blooded silence. Matters would soon have gone hard indeed with the Brand family had not a former suitor of Mrs Brand's (who had been rejected in favour of the man she afterwards took for her husband) chivalrously come forward at this juncture, not only relieving their immediate necessities, but also using all his influence, which was potent, to obtain for Mr Brand the appointment which the poor fellow held until his death.

"And supposing," said I, after listening to this disheartening recital—"supposing that your relatives will *not* help you, have you any plans laid to meet such a contingency? 'Hope for the best and provide for the worst' is a favourite motto of your friend Bob; and I really think it is singularly applicable in your case."

"No," she replied rather despondently: "no very definite plan, that is. I am fairly well educated, I believe. Dear mamma was most accomplished, I have often heard papa say, and she taught me everything she knew. I speak French, German, and Italian, and seem to have a natural aptitude for music; and I sketch a little in water-colours. I have all my materials with me, and a few sketches which I may perhaps be able to sell when I reach home—I will let you see them some day—and I think I may perhaps be able to get a situation as governess, or maintain myself respectably by teaching music and drawing. And then, you know, I am not absolutely destitute. I have about twenty pounds with me, and I sent home three hundred, the proceeds of the sale of our furniture, to England; and some friends of poor papa's in Canton say they are sure he must have some money invested somewhere, and they have promised to find out if it really is so, and to realise it for me; and I have given them the necessary powers to do so; so you see I shall not land in England actually a beggar."

"God forbid!" I earnestly ejaculated. "With regard to your landing in England, I ought perhaps to tell you that you must not hope to do so very soon. We are now in a part of the world quite out of the usual track of ships, and I fear it may be some time before we shall fall in with any, and when we do, it is questionable whether they will be quite the class of vessel you would like to make the voyage home in. My great hope is that we may soon fall in with a sandalwood trader, in which case you would have an opportunity of returning to China, and re-shipping from thence home."

"I hope we shall," she responded; rather dolefully, I thought. "You have been very good to me, and,"—her eyes welling up with tears—"I shall never forget you; but I know my presence must be a great inconvenience and embarrassment to you."

"Pray stop!" I interrupted. "You are under the greatest misapprehension if you suppose your presence on board the *Water Lily* is any other than a source of the most unqualified gratification to her crew. You are evidently quite ignorant of the beneficent influences of your presence here, or you would never have spoken of it as an inconvenience. Your departure will occasion us the keenest regret whenever it takes place, and were it not that our cramped accommodations must occasion you very considerable discomfort, I should rejoice at almost any circumstance which would necessitate your remaining with us for the rest of the voyage."

"Do you really mean it?" she exclaimed, her sweet face brightening up at once. "Oh, I am *so* glad! Do you know I have thought your anxiety to meet with a ship arose from my being in your way, and troublesome. And you are really willing to let me remain, and go home with you? How very kind it is of you! I will be quite good, and do whatever you tell me; and, indeed, I will not cause you the least bit of trouble. And,"—her face clouding over again for a moment—"I *so* dread arriving in England an utter stranger, and having to search, quite unassisted, for grandpapa; and it would be *so* dreadful if he were to turn me away from his doors. And I should feel, oh! miserably friendless and lonely if I had really to go about from place to place seeking for a situation, or trying to get pupils. But if you will let me stay here and go home with you, I shall not feel it so much, for I am sure you will help me in my search for my friends; and it is so delightful,"—brightening up again—"to be dancing over this bright, sparkling sea day after day, in this dear little yacht, and to see the kind faces of that darling old original Bob and—and—and—the kitten."

"And the fowls," I suggested demurely. "But, in electing to remain on board the *Water Lily*, you must bear in mind, my dear Miss Brand, that it is not always with us as it is at present. Just now we are fortunate in the enjoyment of a fair wind and smooth sea, but we have been exposed to many dangers since we left England, and it is only reasonable to suppose we shall have to encounter many more before we return; and if you went home in a larger vessel, if you did not escape them altogether, they would probably bring less discomfort in their train than they will here."

"What would you advise me to do?" she asked, looking ruefully up into my face.

"Well," I replied, "since you ask me, my advice is this. If we fall in with a comfortable ship, bound to England, or to any port whence you can trans-ship for England, go in her; if the ship is *not* comfortable, and it comes to a choice of inconveniences, you can be guided by your own judgment, but do not leave us until you are sure of gaining some advantage by the change."

So it was settled. That same afternoon, as I was lying down on the lockers in our little cabin aft, I overheard the following conversation on deck, between Bob and Ella.

"Bob," said Ella (she soon dropped the Mr in his case, but it was still "Mr Collingwood" to me)—"Bob, are we likely to meet any ships very soon, do you think?"

"Ships!" echoed Bob, in consternation; "no, missie, I hopes not. You surely ain't tired of the little *Lily* yet, are ye?"

"No, indeed," replied Ella; "and I hope you are not tired of *me*. Tell me, Bob, am I very much trouble here, or very much in the way?"

"*Trouble! in the way!!*" repeated Bob; "Well, I'm—"—then a strong inspiration between the teeth, as though to draw back the forcible expression quivering on his lips—"but there, it's because you don't know what you're sayin' of, that you talks that a-way. What put that notion into your pretty little head?"

"Harry—Mr Collingwood, I mean—seems anxious that I should go home in some other vessel," Ella replied, dolefully.

"Well, now, that's news, that is," answered Bob. "Since when has he taken that idee into his head?"

"We were talking about it this morning," said Ella; "and he said it would be more dangerous for me to go home in the *Water Lily* than in a large ship. *Is the Water Lily* dangerous, Bob?"

"Dangerous!" exclaimed Bob, in a tone of angry scorn. "Was she dangerous in that blow off the Horn, when a big ship capsized and went down with all hands, close alongside of us? Was she dangerous when we had that bit of a brush with the pirates? If she hadn't been the little beauty that she is, she'd ha' gone down in the gale and a'terwards ha' been made a prize of by the cut-throats." (Bob, in his angry vindication of the cutter's character, was wholly oblivious of the "bull" he had perpetrated, and Ella seemed too much interested to notice it.) "Dangerous! why, what's the boy thinking about, to take away the little barkie's character that a-way?"

"I wish, Bob, you would not keep calling Ha—, Mr Collingwood, a *boy*; he is quite as much a man as you are, though of course not so old. I don't like—I don't think it sounds respectful," exclaimed Ella rather petulantly.

"Not call him a boy?" echoed Bob; "why, what *should* I call him then, missie? In course, now you comes to mention it, I knows as he *is* a man, and an uncommon fine speciment too; but, Lord, when I knowed him fust he was quite a dapper young sprig; and it comes nat'ral-like to speak of him as a boy. Hows'ever," continued he apologetically, "in course, since you don't like it, I won't call him a boy no more. What *shall* I call him, so please your ladyship?"

"Now you are laughing at me, you horrid old creature," said Ella, with a little stamp of passion upon the deck; "and I never said I did not like it; I merely said that it did not sound respectful. Why do you not call him captain?"

"Why not, indeed?" answered Bob. "He's got as good a right to be called 'skipper' as e'er a man as ever walked a deck; and dash my old wig if I ain't a good mind to do it, too; my eyes! how he would stare. 'Twould be as good as a pantomime to see him;" and the worthy old fellow chuckled gleefully as his fancy conjured up the look of surprise which he knew such a title on his lips would evoke from me.

"I declare," exclaimed Ella, in a tone of great vexation, "you are the most provoking— But there, never mind, Bob dear, I do not mean it; you are very kind to me, and must not take any notice of my foolish speeches. And so you really think the *Water Lily* is *not* dangerous? Why then should Mr Collingwood wish me to leave her? He told me this morning that he should be sorry if I did so, and yet he seems unwilling to let me stay."

"Don't you believe it, little one," I heard Bob answer. "He don't want ye to go; it's some kind of conscientious scruple as he's got into his head that makes him talk that a-way. Between you and me,"—here his voice sank to a kind of



confidential growl, but I distinctly heard every word, nevertheless—"it's my idee that he's got some sort of a notion as we may yet fall in with that infarnal *Albatross* ag'in; but, if we do, we've got chances of getting away from the chap that large ships haven't; and for my part, if I must be in their blackguard neighbourhood, I'd a deal rather be in the *Lily* than in a large ship. Their best chance of getting the weather-gauge of *us* is by surprise; but in a little barkie like this here we larns the knack of sleeping with one eye open, and they'll have to be oncommon 'cute that surprises us."

"Oh!" exclaimed Ella, "I hope and pray that we may not see those wretches; it would be dreadful beyond description to fall into their hands. Do you think Mr Collingwood would send me away if I said I did not want to go?"

"Not he, dearie," answered Bob; "why, can't ye see that he— But there, I mustn't tell tales out of school. If we gets a *good* chance, perhaps it *might* be as well for ye to take advantage of it; but we ain't going to get it, so I lives in hopes of having your sweet face to brighten us up for the rest of this here v'yage. But it's eight bells, and time to rouse the 'skipper,' so just step down, dearie, will ye, and give him a call."

Why he should send Ella to call me when he had a voice capable of making the little craft's whole interior ring again, I could not imagine; but as her light step touched the ladder I closed my eyes, feeling somehow that I would rather the sweet little thing should not know I had overheard the conversation just past.

I had scarcely composed my features when she stood beside me. I had the feeling that she was stooping over me, and I certainly felt her warm breath upon my face for an instant; then she seemed to draw back again, and I heard a soft whisper of "Harry." Then there came a light touch upon my arm, and she said, much louder, "Mr Collingwood, it is eight bells."

"Ay, ay," I answered, rubbing my eyes. Then I started to my feet, but the little fairy had gone fluttering away forward, so I took my sextant and went on deck. In a minute or two she reappeared, and, seeing me with the sextant in my hand, opened the chronometer and got the slate, in readiness for taking the time.

I obtained three most excellent sights, and from them worked up my longitude. I had obtained an accurate observation for my latitude at noon, and, on going below and laying off our position on the chart, I had the satisfaction of seeing that we were drawing well in with the islands, and that, if the breeze lasted, we should be fairly within the group by evening next day.

When I announced this intelligence to my companions, they were both delighted, Ella especially, she having seen no land since leaving the Sandwich Islands, which, she declared, was "*ages* ago." The last land we had seen was Staten Island, though we caught the *loom* of land, or thought we did, when about abreast of the western end of Magellan Straits.

We were all longing for a run ashore; and, as I had resolved to thoroughly search the group, from end to end if need be, for traces of my father, I decided that we would commence with the eastern end, examining every island which in the slightest degree answered to the description given us of the spot on which the *Amazon* had been cast away.

Our little lady guest spent much of her time on deck—sitting in a deck-chair, within easy conversational range of whichever had the tiller; and she favoured me with her company during the whole of the first watch (it being my eight hours out that night); but she was unusually silent gazing in an absent, dreamy manner for the most of the time, far away over the tranquil starlit sea, and softly humming a bar or two of some of her favourite songs occasionally. I made one or two attempts to draw her into conversation, fearing she was in low spirits, but she answered at random and in monosyllables; and, seeing after a while that I had no chance, I gave it up.

The next morning, when Bob came on deck to wash down, I said:

"Bob, what is the matter with Miss Brand? have you any idea?"

He looked curiously at me for a moment, and then said:

"Matter? Nothing, as I knows on. What *should* be the matter with the little dearie?"

"Nothing *should* be the matter with her," I answered, rather tartly perhaps; "but she seemed unusually silent and unlike herself last night: and, as you seem pretty deep in her confidence, I thought you might know the cause."

"Ay, ay," he returned; "she *do* speak pretty free to me, I'll allow; which I accounts for by my being an old man—at least, *she* seems to think me so, if I may judge by what she said yesterday; and as to knowing the cause of her being out of sorts like, perhaps I do, and perhaps I don't. I has my suspicions, and pretty strong ones they be, too; but it ain't for the likes of me to say a word. Axe no questions, Harry, my lad, but just leave things to work theirselves out; she'll be all right again shortly, you take my word for it."

"Is she ill, do you think, Bob?" I inquired in some anxiety.

"Ill? do she look like it?" queried he with a loud laugh. "No, no, she's well enough; but women's most oncommon difficult to understand, boy; and the only way is to let 'em alone and take no notice when they seems queer. Now, don't axe me no questions, for I don't know anything about it, and what I *guess* I ain't going to tell."

What the old fellow surmised it was quits impossible for me to imagine, and equally impossible to extract from him, for he was as stubborn as a mule, and if he made up his mind to a certain course, nothing earthly had the power of turning him from it; so, with the unpleasant sensation that there was a mystery somewhere, I was obliged to hold my tongue and console myself with the reflection that, at all events, it could be nothing which concerned me personally.

Shortly after the conversation Ella made her appearance at the head of the companion-ladder, and, bidding us both a

cheery "Good-morning," summoned me to breakfast.

As soon as the coffee was poured out, and we had fairly commenced the meal, she said:

"If you ever have any secrets to discuss, Mr Collingwood, I would advise you to seek some other place than the deck of the *Water Lily*. You sailors appear to have the habit of talking loudly in the open air, and I was awakened by your voices this morning, and quite unintentionally heard much, if not all, of your conversation. I am sorry that my quiet mood of last night should have given you any uneasiness, but I hope you will be relieved when I assure you that there was nothing whatever the matter with me. I am singularly susceptible to surrounding influences; and the solemn beauty of the night excited within me a feeling of—not sadness altogether, but of gravity almost amounting to it, which has now entirely passed away. Your best plan will be to follow Bob's advice, and take no notice of my varying moods, for they really have no significance. I have not the least idea what it is that the worthy fellow suspects as being the matter with me; but, whatever it is, he is quite mistaken, for I am happy to say I am perfectly well both in body and mind."

I felt greatly relieved at this explanation, and said so; and Ella, as though to make up for her silence of the previous night, was rattling away in a more lively strain than ever, when Bob shouted from the deck, "Land ho!"

"Where away?" queried I, springing to my feet and leaving my breakfast unfinished.

"Right ahead, and up among the clouds, by all that's wonderful!" answered Bob.

I put my head above the companion, and there, sure enough, directly ahead, and about ten or twelve degrees above the horizon, appeared an island apparently floating in the air. It was low and, judging from a small grove of trees which distinctly appeared, of no great extent. I took the glass, but through it everything presented a wavering appearance, as though the island and all upon it consisted of an infinite number of separate and distinct particles, each revolving in a spiral direction upwards. I called Ella on deck to see the singular phenomenon, for it was a more perfect example of mirage than I had ever before witnessed or could have believed possible. As we continued to gaze upon the curious spectacle, a faint foamy appearance revealed itself between us and the island, but still in the sky; and about half an hour afterwards this distinctly took the form of flying spray from breakers beating upon a reef. The mirage lasted rather more than an hour, and then faded gradually away.

"How far d'ye reckon that island is away, Harry, lad?" queried Bob, when we had finished breakfast and were all mustered on deck once more.

"Really," said I, "it is a very difficult matter to decide. By my reckoning we ought not to see it until about three this afternoon, with the wind as it is; and I hope we *shall* see it by that time, so as to get inside the reef to-night. If it looks very enticing, we will stay there a few days, and give the little craft an overhaul in hull, spars, and rigging; and Miss Brand will have an opportunity of getting a few runs on shore meanwhile, and perhaps a little fruit as a change of diet."

My reckoning proved correct, for about three o'clock that afternoon, as I was sitting aft with the tiller-ropes in my hand, I saw the tops of the cocoa-nut trees appearing above the horizon. As I did not wish to disturb Bob (not feeling sure of our being able to lie at anchor all night without a watch), I requested Ella—who, as usual, was *assisting* to keep the watch on deck—to take the tiller whilst I shortened sail. The spinnaker and gaff-topsail were got in and rolled up, the spinnaker-boom run in and topped up, and by the time that eight bells had struck, and Bob had come on deck, we were near enough to render it necessary to haul up and look out for a passage through the reef.

At first sight it seemed as though we were not to be permitted to approach the island, for an unbroken line of heavy surf extended north and south to a distance of fully nine miles, completely barring our passing through the eastern side of the reef; and I began to believe that if a channel existed at all (and I felt sure there must be one somewhere), it must lie on the western side. However, I did not want to run to leeward if I could help it, for though the *Lily*, being fore-and-aft rigged, was better suited to turning to windward in a narrow passage than any other class of vessel, I did not wish to risk the boat by the performance of such a hazardous operation, for I had heard that the channels through these reefs were, some of them, so contracted that there was positively *no* room for even a small vessel to tack in many of the reaches. *So* I made a bowline in the end of the gaff-topsail halliards, and went aloft in it, with the intention of remaining there, if need be, to con the craft in.

We had hauled to the wind on the starboard tack, with our head to the northward, and the *Water Lily* was now, with her fore-sheet to windward, jogging quietly along towards the northern extremity of the island. I kept a careful watch on the reef close to leeward, but we traversed its whole extent to the northward without any sign of a channel revealing itself, so I shouted to Bob to go round and stand to the southward again.

From my elevated position I was enabled to make a tolerably complete examination of the island, which exhibited no traces whatever, as far as I could see, of being inhabited. It appeared to be about six miles in length by about three in width at the widest part, though its coast-line was very irregular, and, in some places, I estimated that it was not much more than half that width.

It trended about north-north-east and south-south-west, and was very low, no part rising apparently much higher than forty or fifty feet above the level of the sea; whilst for the most part it did not appear to be higher than perhaps ten or twelve feet. Vegetation was extremely luxuriant, a small grove of cocoanuts occupying a very nearly central position, but on the western side of the island; whilst the remaining portion was pretty thickly covered with less lofty trees, the ground being clothed with deliciously fresh green turf, and an endless variety of shrubs.

A narrow strip of clean white sand bordered the whole island, and outside of this again extended the placid waters of the lagoon, barely ruffled by the evening breeze. This lagoon was, as my readers will probably know, the belt of water which surrounded the island, intervening between it and the encircling coral reef, on which the heavy swell expended

all its force, without being able to reach and disturb the still water inside.

We were within a mile and a half of the southern extremity of the island, when I detected a thin line of unbroken water tortuously threading its way across the reef, and extending clear into the lagoon. Its mouth would never have been observed from our deck, or indeed from the deck of a ship, for the channel entered the reef at an acute angle; and the surf broke so heavily upon the outside and overlapping ledge that the foam and spray were carried quite across the narrow opening, and mingled with the broken water on the opposite side.

But from my elevation I could see that there the channel was, and having satisfied myself, as we drew down towards it, that it was unbroken, I decided to run in through it.

Had the *Lily* been a moderately large vessel or square-rigged, she could not have been taken through, for there was one point about midway across the reef where I believed the passage could not exceed thirty feet in width, and it was at a very awkward bend; and there were so many sharp *turnings* (to use a shore phrase) that a square-rigged vessel's yards could not have been handled rapidly enough to meet her frequent and quickly succeeding changes of direction. But it was very different with us.

I directed Bob to haul aft his weather-jib-sheet and lee-fore-sheet, thus providing for the keeping of one of the head-sails always full, and to trim his mainsail with a moderately flowing sheet; after which he might leave the canvas to take care of itself, whilst he gave his undivided attention to the helm.

This was soon done, and we bore away in the direction I indicated. The look-out ahead from the deck must have been alarming enough, for great as was Bob's confidence in my judgment, and steady as were his nerves, he could not forbear hailing me.

"I hope, Harry," shouted he, "that you're quite sartain about that there passage. I sees nothing ahead, or anywheres else for that matter, on either bow but surf; and mind ye, lad, if we but touches *once*, the little barkie 'll be knocked into match-wood. We may still claw off if there's any doubt."

"Port, hard!" answered I, too intent on the channel to enter into any explanation just then. "Steady!"

"Steady!" responded Bob. "You stay close to me, dearie, so's to be within reach if anything happens, and mind you don't get knocked overboard with the boom. Ah! all right; I sees the opening."

The *Water Lily* shot in past the overlapping ledge; and my companions on deck were treated to a copious shower-bath of spray for a few seconds, and then we began to feel the shelter of the reef.

We shot along the first reach, and soon approached a sharp elbow.

"Look out on deck!" I shouted; "we are about to jibe; and you, Bob, stand by to give her the helm smartly. Steady starboard! now starboard hard! ram the helm down! so, steady! Now port a little! steady again! luff you may, handsomely; not too close! And now stand by for a half-board! Luff! let her come up! luff and shake her! so! Now hard up!"

And so on, and so on. Luff, and keep her away; then jibing; now on one tack, now on another; until, after about ten minutes of most ticklish navigation, the cutter shot clear of the reef, and glided rapidly over the smooth water of the lagoon.

Bob let draw his jib-sheet, and we stood away towards the southern extremity of the island, which we soon rounded; I remaining still aloft to look out for any sunken rocks that might chance to be lying about. But the bottom was quite clear, the sand being distinctly visible from my post at the mast-head.

We were now on the western side of the island, and I observed that the grove of cocoa-nut trees before referred to stood upon the border of a pretty little bay, or cove rather, for it was very small; and as this spot promised very snug anchorage close to the shore, I directed Bob to steer for it, and then descended to the deck and got the anchor over the bows in readiness for letting go.

As we drew closer to the land, our sails became partially becalmed under the lee of the trees and shrubs which densely covered the southern end of the island, whilst the water was undisturbed by the faintest ripple save that which streamed away on each side of our sharp bow.

As I stood forward, looking down into the clear transparency of the cool green depths, I could discern here and there a few large branches of splendid coral projecting through the sand, with multitudes of strangely-formed fishes darting round and about them; and in one spot I observed what appeared to be a small bed of oysters of which I instantly took the bearings, resolving to pay it a visit and try for a few.

At length we slid gently into our little cove. Bob put his helm down; the cutter luffed into the wind, and, as soon as her way was deadened sufficiently, I let run the anchor; after which, with one accord, Bob and I took off our hats and gave three joyous cheers. It was the first time we had brought up since leaving Madeira.

We soon had our canvas furled, and, whilst Ella busied herself with the preparations for tea, Bob and I got our "boat" on deck, and set about putting her together.

Whilst thus engaged, my companion remarked, "Well, Harry, I must say I didn't like the looks of things, for a minute or two, whilst we was running down upon the reef outside; but you piloted us in in capital style. Did ye happen to think, however, how we're going to get out ag'in, now that we're here?"

"Certainly I did," replied I. "You surely do not imagine that I would run in here, without being satisfied beforehand

that we could get out again all right. There was no time for explanation whilst I was aloft; but, just before I caught sight of the channel through which we entered, I distinctly saw one on *this* side of the island, through which we could have beaten the little craft without much difficulty. It appeared to have only two reaches, and I think we might have laid up one of them on the port tack, and the other on the starboard tack; and as to getting out, it will be a run with the wind free all the way. But what do you think of our berth?"

"Snug and comfortable as heart could wish," responded he, with an accent of keen enjoyment; "and I *do* hope as you'll give us all, and the little craft, a holiday of a day or two, now we're here. 'Twon't do any of us any harm; and I really feels as though I could go ashore and lie down under the shade of them trees all day, and do nothing but just enj'y the rest and the coolness, and ease my old eyes by looking up at the beautiful green leaves, with the clear blue sky peeping between 'em here and there."

I had a very similar feeling; for, though the island had nothing very specially attractive about it, to us who had looked on nothing but sky and sea for so long, it appeared but little short of a paradise. So I very readily acquiesced in his proposal, the more so as I felt that our health would be very greatly benefited by the change.

By the time that we had our boat put together and hanging astern by her painter, tea was ready; so, after a comfortable ablution, by way of bringing the day's work to a close, we all seated ourselves at the small cabin-table, and discussed our meal with a luxurious enjoyment of the perfect steadiness of the cutter, and of the absence of all anxiety of every kind, which was quite a novelty. We finished the meal by lamplight, and then adjourned to the deck, where, as was our regular custom, Bob and I smoked our evening pipes.

Those only who have endured the monotony of a long sea-voyage can understand the pleasure with which we regarded our surroundings, and compared them with those of many an evening past. The night had completely closed in, and the deep, unclouded purple vault above was thickly studded with stars, which, unlike those in the northern hemisphere, instead of *glittering* spark-like and cold, beamed with the deep, mellow lustre of the softest lamps, each being clearly reflected in the mirror-like surface of the unruffled lagoon.

We were, as I believe I have said before, on the western or lee-side of the island, so completely sheltered from the wind by the thick-clustering trees and shrubs which covered its surface, that only the faintest zephyr could approach us, though it swept briskly through the topmost branches of the cocoa-nuts, gently agitating their leaves, and producing a soft rustling sound, above which the loud roar of the surf beating on the reef to windward could be distinctly heard. Mingling with this, there issued from the shore a continuous chirping and singing from innumerable multitudes of insects, which, swelling shrill and high, merged into one vast wave of sound, which completely filled the air. Tens of thousands of fire-flies flitted to and fro, their tiny sparks gleaming brilliantly against the dark background of dense foliage; and, if we looked over the side for a moment, we saw the deep obscurity of the tranquil ocean constantly flashing into sudden brightness, as a long trail of pale phosphorescent sparks, or a momentary halo, betrayed the movement of some finny denizen of the deep.

We remained on deck until nearly midnight, when, having observed nothing whatever to excite the slightest apprehension as to our absolute safety, we resolved to dispense with the formality of a watch; and therefore all retired below, with an understanding that the morrow was to be observed as a strict holiday by all hands.

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## Chapter Fourteen.

### At Close Quarters with a Shark.

I awoke soon after sunrise the next morning, and, calling Bob, in accordance with an arrangement made overnight, we both jumped on board the boat, and, pulling to the opposite side of a tiny headland about a mile away, stripped and plunged overboard, where we swam and dived, and wallowed about in the deliciously cool element for a good half-hour, enjoying our bath as thoroughly as though we were a couple of school-boys playing truant. We were strongly tempted to make a small preliminary exploring excursion inland after this, but Miss Ella had solemnly bound us both down not to do so without her; so we returned to the *Water Lily* instead, wonderfully refreshed and invigorated by our dip, and quite ready for the early breakfast which was to form the first regular feature in the programme for the day.

As we rowed back to the cutter, I embraced the opportunity to pass once more over the spot where I thought I had observed the oyster-bed; and, on reaching it, and peering down in the shadow of the boat, I found I was right: there lay beneath us a bed of several yards extent of what I felt sure were oysters.

We described a short circuit round our little craft before stepping on board again; and I felt so ashamed of her dingy, weather-beaten appearance, that I resolved she should have a fresh coat of paint before she went outside again. This we decided she should receive next day, I undertaking to wield the paint-brush whilst Bob employed himself in overhauling the rigging and examining the spars.

Breakfast was soon disposed of, as we were all equally eager to stand once more on mother earth; and then, Bob providing himself with a few biscuits, whilst I did the same, adding a few knick-knacks for my fair companion, we jumped into the boat, and in a very few minutes reached the shore.

The painter was made fast to the stem of a stout shrub which grew close to the water's edge; and then Bob went straight towards the widest patch of shade, and the softest turf he could find, and flung himself forthwith upon the ground, asserting that it was his fixed intention to remain there for the rest of the day, and enjoy his holiday in accordance with his own peculiar notions.

After a few vain attempts to persuade him that he would find it much more pleasant to accompany us in a ramble

over the island, we gave him up to his own devices; and, Ella accepting the support of my arm, we strolled slowly away.

Our steps were directed, in the first instance, towards the northern end of the island; our path being sometimes over the short tender grass with which the ground was thickly clad, and at others along the sandy beach, to which we were occasionally compelled to diverge in consequence of the dense undergrowth, through which it would have been impossible for my companion to force her way.

We picked up several very beautiful shells on the beach, and Ella promised herself a long ramble before leaving the island, expressly for the purpose of collecting a few of the choicest varieties.

I was rather disappointed to find such a scarcity of fruit, there being none, as far as we could discover, beyond the cocoa-nuts and a few wild figs: the latter rather insipid to the taste, though still a welcome change after the food we had all been accustomed to.

Ella very thoughtfully collected a little of this fruit for Bob, when we chanced to meet with a tree bearing figs of a superior flavour to the average, and I promised her that on our return I would secure a few cocoa-nuts, and treat her to a draught of the delightfully refreshing cool new milk. We found walking to be far more fatiguing than we had expected, after being pent up so long on shipboard, and I think I found it even more so than my companion, she having had until recently the comparatively wide range of a ship's deck upon which to take exercise; whilst we of the *Water Lily* could only boast of "a fisherman's walk, two steps, and overboard."

I kept a sharp look-out for fresh water, intending to entirely refill our tank and casks; and Ella was equally anxious for such a discovery, as she gave me notice that she intended to hold a grand wash. We strolled slowly along, chatting gaily together, until we had completed the circuit of the island; but, unfortunately, failed to discover any sign whatever of fresh water.

The boat still remained moored to the shrub, as we had left her, so I concluded that Bob had grown tired of inactivity and had gone off, in the opposite direction to ourselves, for a stroll. I therefore proposed to Ella that she should rest awhile upon the soft, velvety turf, whilst I returned to the cutter for a piece of rope, to aid me in my ascent after the cocoa-nuts.

The rope was soon obtained; and, returning to the shore, I passed it in a loose band round the trunk of one of the trees, leaving room in the band for the introduction of my own body.

By bearing against this whilst I raised my feet and then slipping the band up the tree, I was easily and quickly enabled to reach the fruit, from which I selected an abundant supply.

Whilst thus engaged, Bob hove in sight, and when I reached the ground again he reported that, having soon grown tired of doing nothing, he had started away on a walk to the southward, about half an hour after we left him, and had gone to the extreme end of the island; that he had enjoyed his walk amazingly, was excessively tired, and, like ourselves, had failed to find any fresh water.

Under these circumstances poor little Ella was compelled to postpone her washing-day, I promising that she should have the necessary time allowed her at the first suitable island we might reach.

By this time the dinner-hour was approaching, and Ella desired to be put on board the cutter to make the few slight preparations for the meal which were necessary.

As soon as we had put her on board, and whilst she was thus engaged, I took Bob away with me in the boat to try for a few oysters. We had no means of trawling for them; but I estimated that they lay in not more than about two and a half fathoms of water, and I considered myself quite diver enough to reach that distance.

As soon as we arrived at the spot, I stripped and plunged in, taking down with me an old canvas clothes-bag, which I slung round my neck.

I soon found that I had been deceived, by the crystal transparency of the water, into under-estimating the depth. It was fully four fathoms to the bottom; and this, together with the difficulty I experienced in keeping the mouth of the bag open, necessitated four plunges before I had obtained half the bag full. There was not time to do more just then, so I dressed, the bag was hauled up, and we returned with our prize to the cutter.

We resolved to commence dinner with a course of oysters, and I forthwith proceeded to open some, a task which gave me a very considerable amount of difficulty.

Imagine, if you can, my surprise and delight when on opening the second oyster I found that it contained several small pearls; the third was opened, and it also contained several; the fourth had none, but the fifth on being opened revealed three beauties, each as large as the top of my middle finger. To be brief, I was soon satisfied that I had stumbled upon a bed of pearl-oysters, about half of the bivalves yielding when opened more or less pearls, the greater quantity being small, such as are set in rings; but several good-sized pearls were also found, and one magnificent fellow, as large as a cherry.

As may easily be imagined, we were all excitement after this; and I proposed that, as soon as dinner was over, we should move the cutter down and anchor her upon the bed, and devote the remainder of the afternoon to systematic pearl-fishing. The proposition was rapturously received, Ella declaring that she had often read of pearl-fishing, and should very much like to witness the operation.

Accordingly, dinner was no sooner over than we weighed and stood down to the spot under our jib, and having

reached it, the cutter was anchored as nearly as possible over the centre of the bed. I had hit upon a plan by which, I thought, some of my difficulties of the morning might be got over; and, as soon as we were brought up, Bob and I got our floating-anchor on deck, stretched the canvas upon it, and rigging out our spinnaker-boom, a rope was passed through the sheave in the outer end of it, and bent to the crowfoot of the floating-anchor, which thus hung suspended, like a large tray, over the water. It was then lowered to the bottom; a small pig of ballast was got on deck and slung to another rope's-end, and I then went below and changed my dress for an old white shirt and duck trousers, buckling a belt round my waist, to which, as it happened, a strong sharp sheath-knife was attached.

Being now ready to descend, I looked over the side, and satisfied myself that our floating-anchor lay all right at the bottom, and in such a manner as properly to perform its new functions as a tray. I then slipped over the side into the water, grasping firmly the rope to which the piece of ballast was attached; and, having well filled my lungs with air, I waved my disengaged hand. Bob let go the rope, and the ballast dragged me swiftly to the bottom.

Still retaining my hold upon the sinker with one hand, I now rapidly shovelled the oysters into my "tray" with the other, as long as I could hold my breath; and I was satisfied, at the first experiment, that my expedient was a complete success, thrice as many oysters being deposited in the tray at one dive as I had obtained altogether in the morning.

I soon had to rise to get a fresh inhalation; but by hauling up the sinker every time, so as to have the benefit of its assistance in taking me to the bottom, I was enabled to reserve all my breath and energy for my work at the oysters; and so successful was I, that, in three descents, I managed to place upon the tray as many oysters as it would hold. It was now hauled up, its contents carefully transferred to the cutter's deck, and the anchor or tray again lowered to the bottom.

This operation had been repeated five times, with the result that a goodly pile of bivalves now graced the deck; and I had gone down a second time on the sixth *round* (if I may so express myself), when suddenly a dark shadow fell upon the spot on which I was at work. I glanced upward, and, to my unspeakable horror, saw an enormous shark floating motionless within a fathom of and directly above me.

Why he did not attack me at once I could not imagine; but I conjecture that it was because, lying flat upon the ground as I was, he had not room to turn, as sharks invariably do when seizing their prey. My blood seemed fairly to congeal in my veins as I realised my appalling position.

I *must* rise to the surface in a very few seconds, or drown where I was; and I felt convinced that the moment I was far enough from the bottom to permit of the monster making his rush, he would do so.

Suddenly, the remembrance of my sheath-knife flashed across my brain. There was no time to hesitate; my powers of endurance were almost utterly exhausted, and I felt that I could hold my breath but a second or two longer;



I PLUNGED MY WEAPON TO THE HILT.

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so I quickly drew the knife, and darting suddenly upwards, succeeded in grasping the shark with my left hand by his starboard fin, whilst with my right I plunged my weapon to the hilt in his gleaming white belly, extending my arm to its full length as I did so, and thus inflicting a wound nearly *or* quite two feet in length.

Remembering the wonderful vitality of the shark, I did not content myself with this; but thrusting my armed hand into the gaping wound, I drew the knife two or three times rapidly across his interior arrangements, inflicting such severe injuries that in less than a minute after I rose to the surface blood-stained from head to foot, and speechless with exhaustion, the shark also appeared, floating dead within a dozen yards of the cutter.

Bob's strong and ready hand was promptly extended to assist me in over the cutter's low gunwale; but so thoroughly exhausted was I, that I felt utterly unable to make the slightest effort in aid of my shipmate's exertions, and he was obliged to drag me bodily inboard, where, after an unavailing effort to stand, I sank upon the deck, gasping for breath, and utterly unable to utter a word.

Ella's eager face blanched deadly white at the horrifying spectacle I presented as I lay prone at her feet, but her evident alarm quickly vanished upon my assurance that I was absolutely unhurt.

"Now, lad," said Bob, "give an old friend a shake of your flipper. I'm right down glad to see ye well and hearty, my dear boy," he continued, with strong emotion. "We both saw that doubly and everlastingly cursed brute range up and take a berth close above ye; and, to own the plain, honest truth, I put ye down as good as done for. There warn't no time to do anything by way of warning ye, or lending ye a hand anyways; for, afore I could collect my scattered wits, we saw ye let go the sinker, and next minute the water alongside was like a biling pot; and then we seed the blood, and bust me if I didn't turn that sick and queer I couldn't see a thing, just for a moment; and when I hauled ye aboard, I couldn't for the life of me tell whether you was dead or alive. Now let's get up them few h'isters that was like to have cost us all so dear, and get away from the spot as soon as we can."

We were not very long in getting the remainder of the oysters on board, and soon afterwards we had the cutter back at her old berth. Our first task, as soon as the craft was at anchor again, was to transfer our booty to the shore, where we spread them out on a large tarpaulin on the sand to die. The method pursued by the regular pearl-fishers, I believe, is to allow the fish to remain until they are in an advanced stage of decay, when the pearls are sought for amongst the putrid mass. I felt no inclination, however, for such a task, and, moreover, did not care to expend so much time as this process involved. I conjectured that, the fish once dead, they might be opened with comparatively little difficulty; and I thought that by the time our overhaul and painting was completed, the oysters would be in a fit state for operating upon.

After tea was over, I took occasion to inform Ella that I had somewhat to say to her, and requested her to accompany me on shore and take a short walk on the beach, that I might speak without being embarrassed by Bob's presence.

She stepped silently into the boat, and in a few minutes more we stood together on the strand. Taking the arm which I offered her, she said:

"Now, Harry, what is it you wish to say to me?"

"It is a question of the utmost importance to *me* that I have to ask you," I replied. "Tell me, Ella, tell me, my darling, may I dare to hope that at some time in the distant future, when you shall have had opportunities of becoming better acquainted with me—"

"Cease, Harry," the dear girl interrupted, with deep emotion, "cease, I pray you, to agitate yourself with causeless fears. Why should I hesitate to avow a feeling that I fear I have already permitted to appear all too plainly. If you are *quite sure* that you really wish it, I will be your wife; and *never* was there a truer or more devoted wife than I will be to you, if it please God to permit us to become united."

And saying this, my little darling turned, and with unaffected confiding simplicity, wound her soft arms about my neck, and raised her sweet lips to mine.

The conversation which followed, deeply interesting as it was to the parties engaged, need not be reproduced here: I will leave the reader to imagine it all, and push on with my story.

There are some women in whom a fresh trait of character is always revealing itself, so that, just when you think you have at last succeeded in thoroughly understanding them, you discover that you are just as far off any reliable knowledge of their character as ever.

But with Ella it was very different. There was a child-like openness and ingenuousness of manner about her which quickly revealed to the observer not only the salient points, but also the finer gradations, of her character and temperament; and I believe that I had a clearer insight into both at the time that I thus hastily offered myself, than many men who do the same thing after an acquaintance of a "season."

At length we returned to the cutter, where we found Bob, with his pipe still between his teeth, sitting aft fast asleep. I wished Ella "good-night," and then roused Master Bob up; and whilst we smoked a final pipe together, communicated my good fortune to him.

"Ay, ay!" said he, as soon as I had told him, "you may thank 'Jack Shark' for having it come upon ye so soon, lad; it was *bound* to come sooner or later. I've seed it clearer and clearer every day, but it warn't for me to say a word one way or t'other; but the narrer squeak you had for it this a'ternoon just took the little lady flat aback, and afore she could pay off, you see, she let run a whole string of lovin' words that there warn't no way of hauling aboard and coiling down out of sight ag'in; and so she hadn't no ch'ice but just to haul down her colours as soon as you opened fire. Well, you've made a pretty prize, Harry, and I congratulate ye with all my heart. A trimmer model, or *one* better ballasted with the right sort of feelin's and ideas, no man need wish to sail the v'y'ge of life in company with, and as to her being fond of ye, why, she couldn't help showing of it, try all she would. She couldn't talk of nothing else from morning to night but you. It don't matter what the conversation started with, whether 'twas ships, or flyin'-fish, or hurricanes, waterspouts—*anything* in heaven or airth, she'd bring it all round in a sort of great-circle-sailing fashion to you. And now that you've got her, lad, I hope as you'll be able to sail her properly. Women is very ticklish craft to handle, you must bear in mind; as tender in a squall as a racin' cutter with all her flyin'-kites aloft; and you'll have to keep a sharp look-out to win'ard, and have the halliards and sheets all ready for lettin' run at a moment's notice, or you'll maybe get something ser'ous carried away, or have a reg'lar downright wrack altogether afore you knows where you are."

I could not help smiling at this characteristic speech of congratulation and caution of Bob's, to which I of course made a suitable reply; and then, shaking hands, we went below and tumbled into our respective hammocks.

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## Chapter Fifteen.

### The "Lily" among Breakers.

The next morning we were up betimes, and, that Ella might be removed from the scene of dirt and confusion which the cutter would present during the day, our first act was to convey on shore the necessary gear and materials for the preparation and consumption of our meals there, it being anticipated that one day would suffice for all we intended to do just then.

By the time that we had done so and had returned to the cutter, Ella made her appearance on deck, greeting me affectionately, and then turning to thank Bob for the congratulations the honest and warm-hearted fellow saw fit to offer on the occasion. These over, I pulled the dear girl ashore, and she forthwith set about seeking for a favourable spot in which to spread the table-cloth upon the sward, and to arrange her equipage, a fire having already been lighted and the kettle suspended over it, gipsy-fashion, from three crossed sticks.

Whilst she was thus engaged I returned on board, and routed out our small stock of paints, and set to work mixing them, whilst Bob, having already washed down inboard, busied himself in casting off and easing up the rigging preparatory to a regular overhaul, the first thing after breakfast.

As soon as the meal was ready, Ella came down to the beach and waved her pocket-handkerchief, the signal agreed upon; and we pulled ashore and took a hasty meal, it being understood that the day would be a busy one, I being desirous of finishing all before sunset, so as to make a start again next day, there being nothing to detain us or to make it worth our while to prolong our stay where we then were.

Breakfast over, Bob and I pulled back to the cutter, where we at once commenced work in earnest, leaving Ella to amuse herself by strolling along the shore and making her proposed collection of shells. By dinner-time I succeeded in finishing the painting, giving the craft not only a coat of black from her rail down to the copper, with a white stripe or ribbon round the ornamental groove cut for that purpose in the covering-board, but also a coat of pale stone-colour all round the inside of her low bulwarks, as well as a touch of varnish on the teak and mahogany-fittings of the deck.

This left me free to assist Bob in the afternoon, and such good progress did we make that by sunset the rigging had been overhauled and lifted, the mast-head examined in the eyes of the rigging, new service put on where required, and everything got back into its place again, the lanyards all set up, and the mainsail re-bent, which it badly required.

We then had a good wash and adjourned to the shore, where we found our fair companion awaiting us with tea all ready, and a collection of most beautiful shells to exhibit, the fruits of her day's gathering. As soon as the meal was over, everything was transported on board again, and put in its place; and I then rejoined Ella, who remained on shore, and we had a very enjoyable ramble, enlivened with such conversation as lovers delight in.

The next morning, as soon as breakfast was over, we all adjourned to the shore once more; and whilst Ella, at my recommendation, took another stroll about the island, Bob and I set to work upon the oysters. They were all dead by this time, of course, and not only so, but in such a condition that it taxed our resolution to the utmost to go through with the task about which we had set ourselves.

But what will man not do for the sake of wealth? It is true, we both felt sanguine about finding our treasure-island; and if the account we had received of it was true, there was more wealth there than we had the means of taking away with us; still, we could not resist the temptation to secure this, comparatively speaking, small windfall that had come in our way, so we persevered; and we certainly had no reason to be dissatisfied with our reward.

When all was over we found that our acquisition amounted to about a quart-measure full of seed-pearls, and a similar measure full of pearls, of a large size, ranging from the size of peas to, in one instance, a splendid fellow fully as large as a pigeon's egg, many others being nearly as fine.

This task occupied us all the morning, and when it was finished we returned to the cutter, and at once set about taking our boat to pieces and stowing her away below.

This done, we took dinner, immediately after which Bob and I got the canvas set, hove up our anchor, and stood away for the western passage through the reef.

This passage was much wider than the one by which we had entered, and not nearly so crooked; and as we were just within the influence of the trade-winds, and it trended generally in a westerly direction, we had a fair wind through, so we had no difficulty whatever in passing out between the reefs, which we did under easy sail; getting the gaff-topsail and spinnaker upon the craft, however, as soon as we were fairly outside.

The wind was blowing fresh, but steady, from about south-east, and as our course was west-north-west, we flew merrily away very nearly dead before the wind, with our spinnaker boomed out to port.

Bob took the afternoon watch, and I retired below and lay down, as it was my eight hours out that night.

Ella remained on deck chatting gaily with Bob, and busying herself with some mysterious bit of sewing, and I soon dropped off into a doze.



Nothing of importance occurred for the remainder of that day, nor during the next.

Ella now regularly kept the first night-watch with me, whenever it was my eight hours out, and many a pleasant chat did we have together; and more and more reason did I see for congratulating myself upon my choice of a bride, hasty as that choice had been.

Now that we had had an explanation, and there no longer existed any reason for the fair girl's concealing her ardent attachment to me, many little puzzling peculiarities and contradictions, which I had before observed in her conduct, disappeared; and I found her society more charming and her conversation more frank and enjoyable every day.

There was not a particle of coquettishness, or nonsense of any kind, about her, and she made no hesitation whatever about acknowledging, frankly yet modestly, the warmth of her affection.

She questioned me eagerly, and with the utmost interest, about my father; and I saw with delight that there was already springing up within her breast a feeling of regard for him, simply *because* he happened to be my father, which promised, with but a little encouragement, to blossom into deep affection.

In the prospect of finding the treasure she also exhibited an interest, but it was nothing in comparison with the other. On one occasion, for example, when in speaking of it, I endeavoured to explain to her that there was no absolute *certainty* of our being able to find it, and that if we failed I should be compelled of necessity to return to my own profession as a means of support, she replied, "Well, Harry, dear, I really *do* hope you *will* find it, for it would be very hard to have you away from me for many months at a time, or indeed at all; but I could reconcile myself to that if we only happen to be fortunate enough to find your dear father, so that I might have the satisfaction of knowing that when my darling was absent from me, he would be with a beloved parent."

She was not at all insensible to the advantages of wealth; but I could see, in many little ways, that she was quite sincere in the statement she often made, that she would willingly sacrifice our chances of securing the gold for the certainty of discovering my father.

When I went on deck at seven-bells, in answer to Bob's call, on the morning but one succeeding the day of our departure from the island, I found that the wind had dropped almost to a dead calm, the *Lily* making no more than about three knots, and that there was a heavy sultry feeling in the air, quite different from the usual freshness of the sea breeze. A thin and almost impalpable vapour was spread over the entire firmament, like a curtain, and away to the eastward a heavy bank of dark menacing cloud was slowly rising above the horizon.

A glance at the aneroid, which was fixed in the companion-way, so as to be visible to the helmsman, revealed the fact that the pointer of the instrument had gone considerably back; and this, together with the threatening aspect of the heavens, made me fear that we were about to have a very unpleasant break in the fine weather we had been favoured with since entering the Pacific.

"I don't like the looks of things, Harry," said Bob, as I glanced round at the aspect of our surroundings; "that glass there has gone back a good inch within the hour, and this light-flying stuff overhead has sprung from Lord knows where within the last ten minutes; and that bank down yonder seems to me to be working about in a way that's altogether onaccountable, and looks very much as though 'twas breeding mischief. I'd ha' called ye before, lad, but it's only within these ten minutes that there's been anything out of the way about the look of the weather."

"It has a threatening look about it, certainly," I replied, "and we will not waste a moment in getting the canvas off the craft, and in making her snug for whatever may befall. Leave the tiller to take care of itself, Bob, and in with the gaff-topsail, whilst I hand the spinnaker. Never mind about rolling them up; we can do that by-and-bye, if we have time. So; that's well. Now settle away the peak-halliards, or—here, let me have them, and I will lower away both peak and throat, whilst you gather in the sail. Now roll it snugly up, and stow it securely, and put the cover on, whilst I get in the jib and lower the topmast. Be as lively as you like, Bob; we shall have none too much time, by the look of things astern. Now we may yet roll up these sails and get them out of the way below, if we are smart. You do that, whilst I close-reef the foresail. I hope that whatever is coming will not last long; for we are in rather an ugly berth here among so many islands, and it may not be an easy matter to avoid them if we are obliged to scud, as I expect we shall be."

We worked with a will, and in a quarter of an hour had the craft stripped, with the exception of a close-reefed foresail, and her topmast lowered. All the time that we were working, the heavy bank astern had been rising and spreading itself over the heavens like a dark canopy, the vast mass of vapour of which it was composed writhing and twisting like the contortions of a wounded snake; and by the time that our preparations were complete, the entire sky was overspread, with the exception of a low strip away on the western horizon, which was rapidly lessening, even as we looked upon it.

The interposition of this vast curtain of vapour between us and the sky caused an awful semi-darkness to fall upon the scene, and this was still further increased by the presence of a kind of smoky mist, which now filled the air, rendering everything so obscure that it was difficult to see further than a mile on either side.

Ella now came upon deck to announce that breakfast was ready, but we had something else to occupy our attention just then; and the fair girl placed her arm in mine, and gazed with us in silence at the awe-inspiring scene.

The wind had died away altogether, but the inky sea exhibited a singular and alarming appearance, leaping into low waves which had no run in any direction, and which presented more the appearance of what we see on the surface of a simmering caldron than anything else to which I can compare it.

Suddenly a blinding flash of lightning rent the canopy overhead, and simultaneously came the cracking, rattling crash of the thunder. I directed Ella to retire below, and not to attempt returning to the deck unless I called her, advising

her also to get her breakfast at once, and clear everything away, if she wished to save the crockery, as I expected we should soon have more of both wind and sea than we wanted.

I then closed the cabin doors and drew over the slide, and well it was that I did so; for at that moment there came another flash, another deafening, stunning peal, and then the floodgates of heaven were opened, and the rain descended in such blinding sheets that our deck was in less than a minute full to the low rail, notwithstanding that there was an inch of clear space all round the craft, between bulwarks and covering-board, to enable her to free herself rapidly of water.

This lasted perhaps five minutes, and then the rain ceased as suddenly as it had come on. It was, to compare great things with small, like the emptying of a bucket of water. It was a deluge whilst it lasted, and it ceased as suddenly as would the shower from a bucket when its contents had all fallen to the ground.

Another minute or two of suspense succeeded, and then a pale, primrose-coloured streak appeared on the horizon to the eastward, rapidly increasing in size, and a hollow moaning sound gradually became audible in the air. I did not like it at all. I was sure something out of the common was about to happen, and I desired Bob to go forward and haul down the foresail, and stow it. He had just done this, and was coming aft again, when he sung out, "Here it comes at last, Harry; stand by the tiller." I looked, and away astern, right and left, far as the eye could reach, was a rapidly advancing and widening streak of white foam. On it came, outstripping in speed the fastest express train, the sea in front of it inky black, whilst behind it was all as white as milk. I sat down on deck, bracing my feet against the companion, and desired Bob to do the same; and it was well we did so, or I verily believe we should have been blown overboard.

The hurricane struck us fairly astern, and I fully expected to see the mast go clean out of the cutter, whilst the foam boiled up over the taffrail and surged inboard, filling our decks, and piling over us in a truly alarming manner. However, our rigging was all first-rate, and stood the tremendous strain bravely; and, the laws of nature asserting their supremacy even in this wild scene, the little *Lily* rose and shook herself clear of the water which had swept in over her, and then away she flew, at a perfectly frightful speed, dead before it.

Had she been of the usual model, her bows would have been forced under by the enormous pressure of the wind behind, and she would have gone down head foremost; but, sharp as were her water-lines, her bows curved boldly out above water, and thus afforded her a support forward, which now proved her salvation.

The first fierceness of the gust lasted perhaps five minutes, possibly not so much, but it is difficult to measure time on such occasions as these, and then we got the strength of the gale proper. I thought it blew pretty hard off Cape Horn, but it was a trifle compared with this.

The sea remained perfectly smooth, for the simple reason that it *could not* get up. The tops of the surges, as they rose, were taken by the wind and swept off as neatly as you would cut a flower from its stalk with a riding-switch and the air was filled completely with this scud-water, rendering it so thick that it was impossible to see a cable's length ahead.

As all immediate danger was for the present over, I now desired Bob to push back the companion slide, leaving the doors still closed however, and go below and get a mouthful of something to eat, as I did not know what call might yet be made upon our energies; and it was desirable that we should not allow ourselves to become exhausted from want of food.

As soon as he had snatched a hasty meal, he relieved me, and I went below in my turn, when I found that Ella had contrived to keep some coffee hot for us, as well as a supply of the cakes or rolls which she was so fond of making; and the dear girl, pale and terrified as she was, took her place at the table, attending to my wants with true womanly assiduity and self-forgetfulness.

She earnestly entreated to be allowed to accompany me on deck, and share whatever danger there might be, but this of course I would not allow, asserting, a little ungallantly, I fear, that she could do no good there, and would only be in the way. I gave her permission, however, to stand in the companion-way and look abroad upon the strange scene, providing that she wrapped herself well up, and put on my macintosh to prevent becoming wet through, and this concession she gratefully accepted.

Hour after hour we flew before the fury of the gale, my anxiety increasing with every mile that we travelled, for my chart told me that a group of islands lay directly ahead as we were then steering; and I knew, by my reckoning, that we must be drawing fearfully close to them, if indeed we were not already actually among them.

The wind had moderated, to a certain extent, from its first terrific violence; but it was still blowing far too hard to permit of our rounding-to, and making use of our floating-anchor; any attempt to do so must inevitably have resulted in the craft "turning the turtle" with us, and I had, therefore, no choice but to keep scudding.

The sea began to get up, too, now, and followed us in a very menacing manner, the huge foaming crests rearing high above our taffrail, and threatening every moment to fall on board. So great did this danger at last become, that I reluctantly directed Bob to go forward and get the foresail (which I had close-reefed before it was stowed) upon the craft.

This, in such weather, and with only one hand to do the work, promised to be a task of no ordinary difficulty; but Bob was the man to do it if any one could, and he set about the work with all the care and skill of which he was master.

I sheered the cutter about one point to port to keep the sail steadily drawing; and, the sheets being carefully trimmed, the old fellow took the halliards in one hand, knelt down upon the sail, and cast off the stops by which it was secured. He then steadied the halliards taut, sprang to the weather-side of the deck, and swayed away, catching

a turn under a belaying-pin the moment the sail was up.

It almost set itself, and by Bob's careful management it was filled and drawing without a single flap, which would at that moment have insured its destruction.

The effect of the exhibition of this mere shred of canvas was such a material acceleration of speed that we were no longer in any great danger of being "pooped;" but, on the other hand, we were now rushing with the greater impetuosity down upon the dangers which, I had too much reason to fear, awaited us ahead.

Indeed, I had abundant confirmation of these fears within the next half-hour, for we soon afterwards dashed past an extensive reef—over which the sea boiled and seethed with terrific violence—at so short a distance that, but for our slight alteration of course when the foresail was set, we must have plunged headlong upon it. To add to my anxiety, it still continued thick as ever, rendering it utterly impossible to see above a cable's length, or two at the utmost, on any side of us.

So anxious did I at last become, that I was on the point of resigning the helm to Bob, that I might go below to consult the chart, and ascertain as nearly as I could our exact position, when suddenly, directly ahead, appeared a wild waste of boiling foaming surf, swirling, seething, and leaping high in the air, where it became instantly dissipated, in the form of a dense driving mist.

I glanced wildly to port and to starboard, vainly hoping I should see clear unbroken water on one side or the other, though we were already too near the breakers to escape them. But far as the eye could penetrate the dense atmosphere on either side, stretched the remorseless breakers, and in another minute we were among them.

On first catching sight of the broken water, I had pointed to the companion in which Ella still stood; and Bob, seeing the action, caught my meaning in a moment, and with rather scant ceremony, thrust the poor little girl's head below and drew the slide close over.

At the same instant I thought I detected a spot where the sea was breaking somewhat less madly than elsewhere, and I gave the cutter a strong sheer to starboard, that we might enter the surf at that point, it being my opinion that there lay the deepest water.

I had no hope of escaping, but the instinct of self-preservation asserted itself, as it always will, and prompted me to avail myself of even the slenderest and most doubtful chance in our favour.

The cutter heeled violently down, burying her lee gunwale half-deck high in the seething water, and I thought for a moment that she was going over altogether with us; the foresail jibed with a loud flap, and blew clear and clean out of the bolt-rope, and at the same instant the *Water Lily* plunged wildly into the boiling surf.

I braced myself for the shock which I expected would instantly follow, accompanied by the crashing in of the poor little craft's timbers, but she did not touch.

The water tumbled on board forward, aft, everywhere, and Bob and I were frequently standing waist deep; and still the cutter rushed furiously on, all my efforts and energies now being directed to keeping as much as possible in those parts where the sea broke with least violence.

After the first half-minute or so, finding that we did not strike, hope faintly revived within me, especially as the cutter suddenly shot into a belt of unbroken water.

Down this channel we rushed, sheering now to port, now to starboard, as we followed its windings, the water becoming smoother with every fathom we proceeded.

I began to hope that our troubles were coming to an end, when suddenly the channel took a quick bend to windward, and without sail upon the boat it became impossible to follow it.

Selecting, as before, that part where the surf broke least heavily, I was fain therefore once again to let the little *Lily* drive into the white water, and the next moment we touched, though but lightly.

Another perilous quarter of a mile was run, and then, the air being rather clearer, I saw, some distance ahead, beyond the now much reduced surf, clear water again; but there was an unbroken barrier of foam between us and it, and from its appearance I greatly feared that the reef rose everywhere in that direction dangerously near to the surface.

There was not much to choose in the way of a course just then, so I steered for the nearest point of the new channel, and was just congratulating myself that we should reach it without touching again, when we plunged into the thickest of the foam, struck heavily, and sheered broadside-to, heeling over so violently that Bob lost his footing and his hold together, and fell into the sea to leeward.

The main-sheet was lying coiled upon the deck under my hand, and I threw it over to him bodily. He fortunately caught it, and, exerting his utmost strength, succeeded in clambering on board again.

As he did so, a huge roller came foaming and tumbling towards us, striking our upturned side so violently that it hove us fairly over on our beam-ends, whilst it lifted us clear of the ledge to which we had hung, and launched us into the unbroken water to leeward.

Once clear of the ledge, the little craft instantly righted, and I put the helm hard up. We soon paid off, and swept away to leeward once more; but we were now in a good broad channel, with comparatively smooth water, and I saw, with satisfaction, that the surf on each side of us was becoming less and less heavy every minute.

Five minutes might have elapsed perhaps after we last struck, when I saw land looming through the haze ahead, and soon afterwards we found ourselves clear of the reefs altogether—inside of them, that is—and floating on the comparatively smooth surface of an extensive lagoon.

High land now distinctly appeared ahead of us, and we shortly discovered that it formed a portion of an island of considerable size, the northern end of which lay about three points on our starboard-bow.

Towards this point I at once directed the head of the cutter, with the object of getting under a lee as quickly as possible, and, if practicable, into a berth which would permit of our careening our poor little craft and examining into the extent of her damage. I directed Bob to open the companion now, as I was fearful that Ella might have received some injury when the cutter was hove on her beam-ends; but, to my great joy, as soon as the doors were thrown back, there she was, clinging desperately to the ladder, terribly frightened, but unhurt, as she assured me, beyond a few unimportant bruises.

As we neared the northern extremity of the island, towards which I was steering, we found that it terminated in an almost perpendicular cliff of some fifty or sixty feet in height, constituting the northern part of the base of a high hill, rising almost to the dignity of a mountain, which was thickly-wooded almost to its summit, and to the very verge of the cliffs, close under which we were now gliding swiftly along.

As my eye ranged over the northern face of these cliffs, which we had by this time opened, I detected a rather singular break in them at a particular point; and, curiosity prompting me, I sheered the cutter a little closer to get a nearer view of it.

Approaching still nearer, it seemed to me that this break extended quite to the water's edge; but it was not until we were almost past it that I felt convinced not only that this was the case, but that there actually was a bay or cove of some sort inside it.

This discovery was made barely in time to enable me to jam my helm hard-a-starboard and just fetch the opening, through which in about five minutes afterwards we gently slid, finding ourselves in the midst of a deep basin of almost perfect circular form, so completely landlocked and with such a narrow and artfully-concealed entrance that it was not until we were within a biscuit-throw of the rocks that I felt absolutely certain there really existed a passage at all.

The basin, as I have already said, was of circular form, and I judged it to be about a mile in diameter. The entrance was at the most northerly point in its circumference; at which spot, as I afterwards ascertained by sounding, there was nearly forty fathoms of water, though the horns or cusps of the encircling cliffs approached each other so closely that it would have been impossible to take even a small square-rigged vessel through without bracing her yard sharp fore and aft, and a craft of say a couple of hundred tons could not have been carried through at all.

At the entrance the cliffs rose almost perpendicularly out of the water, both outside and inside, terminating in a wedge on either side.

From this point, however, they gradually widened away in the form of a gently-rising plateau, out of which two spurs of the mountain sprang, one on each side of the basin.

Between these spurs or shoulders lay a ravine, which sloped evenly down from the level of the plateau on each side until it terminated, at the southern extremity of the basin, in a beach of fine sand. This ravine lay, of course, directly ahead of us as we entered; and its smooth, lawn-like surface, swelling gradually upwards towards the mountain in the rear and the plateaus on each side, formed a truly lovely picture under any circumstances, and especially to us who had, within the last hour, been battling with a stormy sea.

Its central portion, for perhaps a mile in length and a quarter of that width, was luxuriantly clothed with the freshest verdure, but was quite destitute of trees.

Beyond these limits, however, the whole face of the country was thickly-wooded, cocoa-nuts and bananas being conspicuously abundant. The beach ran about three-fourths round the basin, being broadest immediately in front of the ravine, and gradually narrowing away to nothing at about a mile's distance on either side.

At the western extremity of the beach a beautiful cascade tumbled over the edge of the cliff upon a low rocky platform below, from whence it dispersed itself into the sea.

I took the glass, and carefully swept the entire ravine with it to ascertain whether there were any indications that the island was inhabited, for I felt convinced that were it so this lovely spot would be the first selected as a place of abode. But for all that I could see no human foot had ever pressed the soil, and I felt encouraged to go close in and anchor; though, before doing anything else, I determined to make a voyage of discovery inland, and settle the question as to the existence or non-existence of inhabitants.

If it should really prove that we had this lovely island all to ourselves, nothing could possibly be better suited to our purpose of careening the cutter: for I found, by repeated casts of the lead, that the water shoaled with almost mathematical regularity as we approached the beach.

On shooting through the narrow entrance we had found ourselves almost becalmed under the lofty cliffs, though the gale still howled overhead: so, having made up my mind as to the berth in which I would place the cutter, I desired Bob to get the jib on her, and under this short canvas we slid quietly across the basin to our anchorage, bringing up in three fathoms.

We immediately got our boat out and put her together; and, as soon as she was ready, I took a double-barrelled shot-

gun, and got Bob to put me ashore, leaving him to take care of Ella and the cutter, and telling him that in the event of anything transpiring to render his assistance necessary I would fire both barrels quickly one after the other, and not otherwise.

If a distant view of the country was attractive, it was, upon a closer inspection, perfectly enchanting, everything having the appearance rather of the happiest effects of landscape-gardening than of an unaided effort of nature. The ground, which from a distance appeared almost too regular for perfect beauty, I found to be finely broken; and on each side, as I walked up the ravine, were constantly recurring elevations and declivities, ornamented with fine clumps of tropical trees.

Besides the cocoa-nuts and bananas, I found plantains, figs, bread-fruit, pine-apples, superior in size and flavour to any that I had ever before met with, and a large variety of other fruits with the names and qualities of which I was unacquainted.

Innumerable birds of the most beautiful plumage sported among the trees, and a few of them sang very sweetly, but for the most part the sounds which they emitted were quite unlike any that I had heard before.

I saw no traces of animals or reptiles, great or small; and none whatever of man.

I walked quite to the head of the ravine, and then turned off to the right, with the object of passing round the base of the mountain; but, after an hour's walk, I found that I had my labour for my pains, for I came out upon the edge of the cliff on the north-western side of the island, and now discovered that at that spot it not only extended for some distance to the southward, but swept round the northern base of the mountain inland, rising sheer like a wall for quite a hundred feet. After searching unavailingly for some time for a point at which it might be possible for me to pass, I was obliged to give it up and retrace my steps.

Reaching the head of the ravine once more, I now struck off to the left with the intention of passing round to the eastward. Another walk of about an hour, during which my progress was much impeded, as it had been on the opposite side, by the dense undergrowth, and I came out upon a small platform on the extreme eastern side of the mountain. This platform terminated on my left at the edge of the cliff, and ahead it gradually narrowed until there was barely room for a man to pass, and not then unless he had remarkably steady nerves: for on the right rose a perpendicular precipice, and on the left was the cliff-edge, with the lagoon nearly two hundred feet below. From my present position I was now able to see that this ledge was the only available point of passage from the northern to the southern side of the island unless one chose fairly to scale the mountain, which I was convinced would be a work of considerable difficulty, on account of the thickness of the bush or undergrowth.

Along this narrow ledge, then, I proceeded to take my way; and, after a perilous journey of half a mile, came out upon safe ground once more. Half an hour afterwards I reached the southern side of the island, and clambering with considerable difficulty to the top of a precipitous knoll, I obtained an uninterrupted view of the whole southern side of the island. It extended from the point upon which I stood a distance of quite twelve miles, running nearly due north and south, and was divided pretty evenly by a ridge or spur of the mountain, which passed down its entire length.

The island varied considerably in width, being irregularly shaped somewhat like a diamond or lozenge, with numerous bays and creeks on its western side, but none whatever on the east. It was well wooded throughout, and presented a magnificent park-like appearance.

I had brought my most powerful glass with me, and from the commanding elevation upon which I stood, I now carefully swept the entire island as far as the range of my glass permitted, but without detecting the slightest trace of inhabitants.

Greatly gratified at the perfect security which this promised, I now retraced my steps, as the sun, which had burst through the clouds, was by this time approaching the horizon; and in about a couple of hours I found myself once more on board the cutter, where I was joyously welcomed by my companions, who had both begun to feel very uneasy at my prolonged absence.

Of course I did not fail to take back with me a plentiful supply of fruit, upon which we regaled ourselves luxuriously after a late dinner, during which I gave a detailed report of my explorations.

So satisfactory was this, that my companions were both delighted when I announced my intention of remaining there for a sufficient length of time to careen and examine the cutter; and as this would of course necessitate the taking of everything movable out of her, it was arranged that we should commence our work next morning by rigging up a couple of tents on shore, in which to take up our quarters until the cutter was once more ready to receive us.

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## **Chapter Sixteen.**

### **Attacked by Savages.**

When I awoke next morning the sun was just appearing above the cliffs which bounded our basin on its eastern side, the sky was cloudless, and the trade-wind had once more resumed its supremacy, sweeping in a gentle breeze over the tree-crowned summits of the cliffs, though down in the basin we only felt the mildest zephyr. Calling Bob, who was still sound asleep, I proceeded to the deck to enjoy the balmy freshness of the morning and await his appearance; and as soon as he joined me we both jumped into the boat, armed with soap and towel, and directed our steps to the cascade, which was hidden from our present berth by a slight projection of the face of the intervening cliff.

When we arrived at the spot we found that instead of falling sheer from the top of the cliff to the bottom, as it appeared from the basin to do, it was arrested at several points in its fall, by which the force of the descending water was so much broken that I thought we might safely venture to place ourselves beneath it, and thus obtain a most magnificent shower-bath.

The rock upon which it fell had gradually been hollowed away by the action of the descending water, and presented the appearance of a gigantic shallow bowl, of nearly thirty feet in diameter, brim-full of the purest crystal water, which gushed away over the western or lower edge into the sea. The depth varied regularly from a few inches round the edge to about three feet immediately under the cascade, and the whole formed a most princely bath.

We lost no time in stripping and plunging in, when, after indulging in a thorough ablution, I ventured upon the shower experiment. The shock was tremendous, and as much as ever I could bear; but its after effects were delicious. I felt braced and strengthened, refreshed, and ready for anything; but more especially for a good breakfast, which of course we found awaiting us in due course when we returned to the cutter.

As soon as the meal was over Ella packed up the washing she was so anxious about, and I put her and Bob ashore, the latter trudging happily along by the side of his light-hearted companion, and bearing her bundle on his shoulder. I then returned to the cutter, hove up the anchor, and ran her in under her jib, until she gently took the ground, when I set about mooring her stem and stern to the beach with warps made fast to stakes firmly driven into the sand.

Bob soon returned, and we then unbent the mainsail, struck the topmast, cast adrift the boom and gaff, and ran in the bowsprit and unrigged it; and, then, transporting these spars and all our sails to the beach, we rigged up a couple of small but comfortable enough tents, into which we transferred our several belongings, and such necessaries as we expected we should require during our short experiment in camp life. We at the same time availed ourselves of so fine an opportunity as was now afforded us, to thoroughly air our spare suit of sails.

It took up the entire day to clear the cutter of everything, ballast included; and, even then, we were compelled to leave our large water-tank on board, from sheer inability to get it out of the craft without breaking up her deck, which, of course, we could not think of doing.

We succeeded, however, after a great deal of difficulty and trouble, in shoring it firmly up close to the deck beams (having first of all, of course, pumped all the water out); and this left us sufficient room to get at the ballast, though with none to spare.

With everything out of her, the cutter floated a good three feet lighter, and we at once hauled her in as close to the shore as she would come, so as to work at her, if need be, without the boat, simply standing in the water.

The next morning we ran our anchor the necessary distance away out to seaward, broad upon our starboard beam, brought the cable on board, and hooked it to the throat halyards, taking a good look, first of all, to our shore fasts.

It was easy work heaving her down for the first half-hour; but as soon as we got her fairly down upon her bilge, we obtained an idea of how stiff the little craft was, even without an ounce of ballast in her.

We hove and hove until everything cracked again; and I really was afraid at one time that we should either spring the mast or carry its head away altogether, but we succeeded at last in getting her past the point of greatest resistance, without meeting with any casualty, and after that she came down pretty easily.

An hour and a half of hard work saw us, at length, with the cutter keel out, and an anxious scrutiny of her bottom immediately followed.

To our intense satisfaction, we now saw that she had struck, on both occasions, on that portion of her keel which was loaded with lead, two dints in the metal being distinctly visible. One was very trifling; the other was a jagged notch of some five inches in depth, the lead being bent upwards and outwards to starboard in a kind of lip.

Beyond these there were no other injuries even of the slightest kind visible, at least on the port side, and the copper was as unwrinkled as the day it was put on.

Half-an-hour's work with the hammer put the keel completely to rights again; and whilst I busied myself about this, Bob employed himself in diligently scouring the copper, and would not be satisfied until he had made it almost as bright as gold.

I had very great hopes that we should find the starboard side in an equally undamaged condition; but we determined, whilst we were about it, to make our overhaul complete, so, as soon as dinner was over, we swung the craft, and hove her down again, and soon had the gratification of finding our hopes confirmed.

The copper on the starboard side, of course, received its due share of scouring, for the sake of uniformity; and about an hour before sunset, the tackles were eased up, and the little craft floated on an even keel once more, with her slight damages made good, and everything in as perfect condition (the ordinary wear and tear excepted) as when she came out of the builders hands.

The next day was devoted to a thorough cleansing of the little, craft's interior, fore and aft, so favourable an opportunity not being likely to offer again until after our return to England, unless, indeed, we really should prove fortunate enough to find our treasure; but she required it even now, so we gave it her, finishing off with a coat of paint.

Before leaving her for the night, we unscrewed all the dead-lights in the deck, took off the skylight-top, and left the companion wide open, so as to ensure a thorough draught through her, this answering the double purpose of drying

the paint and removing its objectionable odour.

The following day saw us as busy as ever, getting things back into their places, filling up our water, etcetera; but we did not strike our tents that day, a stronger smell than was quite agreeable still remaining from the new paint.

To fill up our time, therefore, we turned to upon our fire-arms, and gave them a thorough cleaning up, so that they might be in perfect order, and ready for service at a moment's notice.

We were up betimes next morning; and, after our matutinal bath and a good breakfast, doused the tents, got our spars on board and in their places, bent the sails, and put the few finishing touches which were necessary to make the cutter all ready for sea once more.

This done, it was time to see about finding a way out from among the numerous reefs which girt the island, as we believed, entirely round.

We had come through, or, rather, over them once, it is true, but it was in a fashion that I should have been very sorry to see repeated; and on that occasion we had no choice; but as I had no fancy for the little craft's again *scraping* such rude acquaintance with the rocks, I resolved to take the boat and make a trip in her along the western side of the island, in search of a safe channel to sea.

Accordingly, Bob and I got the light spars and sails of the boat out, rigged and stepped the former, bent the latter, and then we all sat down to an early dinner.

It was my original intention to have gone away alone, but Ella begged so hard to be allowed to come with me that I had not the heart to refuse her, especially as there was no sufficient reason for so doing. So I consented, promising her that after our exploration was over, if time permitted, she should have a ramble *on* shore on the southern side of the mountain, when we would lay in a sea-stock of fruit at the same time.

Bob said he would accompany us, and try his luck with the fishing-lines, whilst Ella and I took our proposed stroll; and to this also there seemed no objection, as the cutter was in a berth where the hardest gale that ever blew could not have endangered her safety in the slightest degree.

Accordingly, as soon as the meal was over, we shoved off, some instinct prompting me, at the last moment, to take one of our revolving rifles and a small supply of cartridges with me. We soon slid out of the cove, and shortly afterwards rounded the north-western extremity of the island.

This was the first trial of our *sliding-gunter* mainsail upon our singularly-constructed boat; and Bob and I were thrown into perfect raptures at the truly marvellous speed with which it propelled the craft along. The *Water Lily* was wonderfully fast; but in smooth water and light winds, her boat would have sailed round and round her.

We skimmed rapidly along the edge of the western reef, and when we had run about four miles to the southward, found a good wide break, which looked as though it led out to sea. I put up the helm at once, and away we darted almost dead before the wind, down through it.

It was rather a circumbendibus sort of affair, and somewhat narrow in places, though everywhere there was sufficient room to work the *Lily* in; and after a run of about half an hour, we shot out between two overhanging ledges, the extremities of which showed about, six feet above water, and found ourselves rising and falling on the long swell of the open ocean.

So far, so good, and we now have about to retrace our steps, I noticing, as we passed in between the two ledges I have mentioned, that the rock, instead of being of coral formation, appeared to be composed of a lava-like substance; and I then became confirmed in an impression, which had crossed my mind once or twice before, that this island was certainly of volcanic origin, and that the mountain had once been the crater of an active volcano.

And the conformation of the summit seemed also to suggest this, for it did not taper away to a cone, but appeared to form a flat tableland of some extent; this, however, might perhaps have proved on inspection to be hollow, the flat appearance of the top resulting merely from regularity in the height of the crater walls.

In about an hour after re-entering the passage through the reef, our boat grounded gently on the beach, on the western side of the island. I leaped ashore, and assisted Ella to land, desiring Bob, as I shoved the boat off into deep water again, to meet us in the bay which I expected he would find behind a low headland which lay about three miles to the southward of us.

Ella took possession of my arm now, quite as a matter of course, without waiting for me to offer its support, and together we sauntered leisurely along in the grateful shade of the trees and giant plants with which we were surrounded.

For the first half-hour or so, we had eyes for nothing but the varied beauties of nature which lay spread before us in such luxuriant prodigality.

The forms of the trees and plants were, for the most part, new to us, but all were beautiful; and the occasional glimpses of scenery which presented themselves through unexpected avenues, made glorious by the adornment of all these varied forms and colours in foliage and flowers, and enlivened by the presence of thousands of birds of brilliant plumage, darting through the air like living gems, seemed like an absolute realisation of fairy-land or Eden.

Time passed swiftly away with us in the enjoyment of so much loveliness, especially as we made frequent pauses to admire at our leisure some more than usually bewitching scene; and I was in the act of remarking to my companion that Bob would certainly think we were lost in the woods, when she exclaimed in a startled voice:

"Oh, Harry! there is an animal of some sort following us. I have noticed the bushes moving rather strangely behind us once or twice already, but I did not like to say anything, fearing you would think me foolish and nervous; but this instant I distinctly saw a dark object glide swiftly behind that large aloe-like shrub with the beautiful purple blossoms that we stood admiring so long."

"An animal?" I exclaimed. "Impossible, darling; you must surely be mistaken. No animals are likely to be on an island like this. How could they ever have come here, unless provided with wings?"

"That I cannot say," she replied; "but I am convinced I was not mistaken."

"Stay here a moment then," said I; "I will go back and see whether any creature really *is* lurking there, as you seem to think."

"Oh no, Harry, dear! please do not," she exclaimed; "I feel so dreadfully nervous, though I know it is very foolish. But it has startled me, and I shall not feel at ease again until we are in the boat. Let us hasten forward as rapidly as possible, please, for I cannot enjoy the walk any longer."

"Come, then," said I, "we will go on at once; and since this animal is behind us, you had better walk on a pace or two ahead of me."

We now stepped briskly forward, my companion evidently suffering from a violent attack of nervous agitation.

I did not believe she had seen anything, and imputed her feeling to the rather depressing sense of solitude which one is sometimes apt to experience when wandering in a thickly-wooded locality. Nevertheless, I took the precaution to glance at my rifle, and satisfy myself that all its chambers were loaded, and also to verify the locality of my cartridges.

We had proceeded in this way perhaps five minutes, and had just emerged from among the trees upon an open lawn-like level of green sward which sloped gently to the beach, there about half a mile distant, when something hissed close past me; and the next moment I saw an arrow quivering in the earth, a few yards beyond.

"Savages!" I exclaimed, and I felt my blood curdle and my heart sink like lead for a moment, as I realised the dreadful nature of the danger to which my poor little darling was thus suddenly exposed.

I turned abruptly, but could see no sign of a living creature near; and, with such cheering words as I could find for the moment, I urged Ella to hasten her steps towards the open, where I should be upon more even terms with the enemy.

Poor child! she needed no urging; she, would have taken to headlong flight had I not restrained her: for I felt certain that such an action would immediately be followed by a perfect shower of arrows were the savages in force.

We had not advanced half a dozen yards before I felt a sharp stinging sensation in my left arm; it was pierced by an arrow. I looked round again, but the foe remained invisible, and there was nothing for it but to push on. The next instant three or four more long slender shafts hissed past us, confirming my fears and increasing my apprehensions for my companion's safety.

She saw that I was wounded, and would have stopped to render me assistance, but time was valuable now, and moments as precious as years would be under other circumstances: so I only urged her to press forward as fast as she could without actually running.

On we sped, and again came another flight of arrows, one of which pierced me in the fleshy part of the thigh, whilst two passed through Ella's flowing skirts, but happily without doing the dear girl any injury.

I suffered a few moments to elapse, and then suddenly faced about, bringing my rifle to my shoulder as I did so; and there, in the centre of the path between the trees which we had just quitted, knelt a savage upon one knee, in the act of drawing his bow.

I was always very fond of shooting, and had acquired the reputation of being a good snap-shot among the rabbits, and my skill now stood me in good stead.

The kneeling figure was instantly covered; I pulled the trigger, and he leapt convulsively to his feet, staggered forward, and fell upon his face. I had no sooner fired than some twenty natives sprang from their cover, and ran towards us. They seemed, I thought, to have seen fire-arms before, for their advance was made with the confidence of those who know that their enemy has just emptied his piece; but they were about to make the acquaintance of a new and terrible weapon, of the properties of which they were doubtless hitherto ignorant.

Levelling again, I fired at the foremost, and then quickly turned my piece upon one close beside him. The reports rang out sharp and clear, one close upon the other, and both the savages fell. Their companions paused an instant in evident surprise; and that pause proved a serious, if not fatal, matter to a fourth, whom I immediately afterwards brought down.

This was too much for them. They saw that to stand exposed to view was to court death, and with a yell of disappointed rage, they sprang back into cover.

I instantly profited by this retrograde movement on the part of the enemy to make a push for the beach, hoping that Bob would hear the rifle-shots (especially the double report, which I had arranged with him on a former occasion should be a signal of warning or a call for assistance), and hasten to the rendezvous which was now clearly within sight, or would be as soon as uncovered by an extensive screen of bush which lay a couple of hundred yards on our



right.

I also reloaded with all despatch the emptied chambers of my rifle, with which I hoped to be able to keep the savages at bay until we were fairly afloat once more.

But the fight was by no means over yet, for we had not gone far when a shower of at least thirty arrows flew about us from a point on our left, showing that the savages were following us up under cover, evidently with the intention of heading us, if possible.

I was wounded thrice by this discharge: one arrow sticking in the back of my neck, and causing me the greatest uneasiness, a second lodging in my left shoulder, and a third completely piercing the calf of my leg. I succeeded in removing some of these annoyances by thrusting them right through the flesh, breaking off the heads, and drawing out the broken shafts; but those in my neck and shoulder were firmly imbedded in the muscles, and I found I could not remove them without some sort of surgical assistance.

Ella had fortunately escaped again, and as soon as I had rid myself as far as I could of the arrows, we pressed on once more, I keeping as much between my companion and the cover of the foe as was possible. The poor girl was nearly fainting with terror, but she made a brave effort to keep up her spirits, and really behaved wonderfully well.

There was now a pause of a minute or two in the attack, and this enabled us to reach a point where we were not only nearly out of range of the arrows, but where we were also enabled to get a clear view of our goal.

We passed beyond the cover of the intervening bush, and there lay the beach, with no less than fifteen canoes drawn up on it. They were of various sizes, some large enough to carry perhaps thirty men, others not capable of accommodating more than four or six.

The headland I had indicated to Bob lay about a mile on our right; but the boat was nowhere to be seen. Fortunately there seemed to be no one left in charge of the canoes, and I at once made up my mind to take the smallest (if I could succeed in gaining the beach), and push off *in it*, and finish the fight afloat, trusting that Bob would yet arrive in time to lend us his aid in effecting our escape.

I told Ella, in a few hasty words, what I intended, directing her to get into the smallest canoe the moment we reached the beach, and then lie down flat in the bottom of it. We hurried forward, for increasing weakness and an occasional swimming of objects before my sight, warned me that my strength was rapidly failing with the blood which was trickling from my wounds.

I had just communicated my intentions to Ella, when I saw something passing swiftly along beyond the low point which formed the northern extremity of the bay, which I knew at once to be the head of the boat's mainsail, and presently she shot clear of the land, and headed well up for the very spot where the canoes lay.

The savages no doubt saw her too, for a shower of arrows was immediately let fly at us; but by this time we were out of their range. A second shower followed, but with no greater success; and then, with a savage yell, at least a hundred blacks sprang forth into the open, apparently *determined* to prevent our escape.

I at once faced round, for, though we were beyond the reach of their arrows, they were by no means beyond the reach of my bullets; and, quickly levelling my rifle, I took deliberate aim, calling on Ella to make the best of her way to the canoes as I did so, covered the nearest savage and fired. Without lowering the rifle from my shoulder, I quickly selected another mark, which, in my haste and eagerness, I missed, hitting a man close behind him however, so that my shot was not thrown away; then another, and another, and a fifth.

This checked their rush, and a sixth shot stopped them altogether. My rifle was now empty. I glanced over my shoulder, and saw that Ella was within a few yards of the canoe I had indicated, and that Bob was coming up at a rattling pace; so I suddenly dropped the rifle from my shoulder, and turned and ran for the beach as fast as my now rapidly failing strength would permit, reloading as I ran.

This, as I expected, proved the signal for a general chase, the savages rushing after me two feet to my one, uttering the most terrific cries and yells, brandishing their clubs and spears, and sending an occasional arrow after me.

I was soon unpleasantly informed that I was once more within reach of their missiles, one of the arrows entering my left shoulder and piercing the shoulder-bone, a second sticking in my left arm, close to the former wound, and three entering my right leg almost simultaneously, taking effect about six inches above the knee. I still staggered on, however, and, in about two minutes more, which spread themselves out to the length of ages in that exhausting and agonising race, I reached the canoe in which Ella had already placed herself as I had directed.

I had succeeded in reloading all six chambers of my rifle, and I now turned to open fire upon my pursuers once more, in the hope of checking them long enough to let the craft afloat. As I did so, the whole earth appeared to rock and heave about me; my eyes became dizzy and my sight failed, so that I could see nothing but a vast dark crowd of savage faces scowling upon me, and surging to and fro before my reeling vision.

Into this heaving crowd I discharged the contents of my rifle rapidly, but without any attempt at aim, and then turning and flinging the now useless weapon into the canoe, I concentrated all my fast fleeting energies into one supreme effort to launch her.

I faintly heard Bob's shout of encouragement, and earnestly prayed that he might succeed in saving my darling. I felt that I was lost, and, as the cheering cry rang across the water, I threw myself with all my weight against the light craft, which was already half afloat, braced myself against the stem, and felt her move. A spear at this instant pierced me in the back; but its effect for the moment was but to stimulate me further, and with another violent effort

I succeeded in getting her fairly afloat.

I saw, or fancied I saw, the boat within a few yards' distance, and Bob in her, with a rope in his hand ready to heave; and, plunging heavily into the clear cool sparkling water, I gave the canoe one final desperate outward impulse, and at the same moment felt a crashing, stunning blow at the back of my head—a million stars seemed to dance before my darkening eyes—a momentary feeling of the intensest agony surged through my brain—and I sank insensible into the ankle-deep wavelets which came rippling merrily up to the shore, Ella's despairing shriek ringing in my ears as the last faint glimmering spark of consciousness faded away.

When consciousness at length returned, it was accompanied by a sensation of almost unendurable agony from my numerous smarting, inflamed, and stiffening wounds; and to this was added the torture of a burning thirst.

I was lying, completely naked, upon the scorching sand, a few yards distant from the water's edge, whither I had been dragged, apparently for the purpose of being stripped of the poor spoil of my clothing.

The sun, now nearing the horizon, poured his fiery beams full upon me, still further increasing the tortures from which I was suffering; but I believe that to this circumstance alone am I indebted for my preservation from death, for the glowing rays dried and hardened the blood as it oozed from my wounds, and thus prevented my bleeding to death.

To my great surprise, I was entirely alone. The sand around me was impressed with numerous footprints from unshod feet; and, on looking more intently about me, I saw that they had all left me in the direction of the beach, and the canoes were gone.

This circumstance excited within me anew the direst apprehensions; for I had not the slightest doubt that the savages were away in pursuit of the boat, and I every moment dreaded to see her reappear, and to hear the triumphant shouts proclaiming our enemies' success.

But the moments, laden with excruciating mental and bodily torture, wore slowly away, and nothing appeared to disturb or break in upon the solitude which surrounded me; and now, urged by the desire for a cooler spot, I sought to drag my agonised frame from the burning sand to the cool, fresh, verdant greensward, which was but a few yards distant.

Slowly, and writhing at every movement with the keenest anguish, I crawled foot by foot upwards along the beach, and at length, after half an hour of intense torment, sank utterly exhausted upon the utmost verge of the grass-covered plain.

My exertions caused all my wounds to burst open afresh, and I now became aware that I had received several in addition to those inflicted in the fight; these last being doubtless the result of wanton cruelty and savage delight on the part of my enemies at finding me in their power.

But I was still as far as ever from the means of slaking my burning thirst, for there was not a drop of fresh water within miles of me, as far as I knew; and had there been, my strength was by this time so completely gone that I could not have crawled another half-dozen yards to save my life, or even to quench that thirst which was now to me almost worse than death.

Stern, stubborn endurance was therefore my only resource, and I sank back upon the cool grass to await, in bitter helplessness, the death which I felt must soon come to my relief.

I now relapsed into a state of semi-consciousness, my thoughts wandering away from my present condition and fixing themselves, with strange pertinacity, upon subjects of the most trifling import; now plunging into vague speculations, and anon indulging in all sorts of fantastic fancies, as fever began to assume its burning sway over my tortured frame.

From this state I was aroused by hearing a joyous shout in the tones of Bob's well-remembered voice; and, raising myself with difficulty, only to sink back in utter feebleness, I caught a momentary glimpse of the boat in the act of grounding on the beach.

In a few brief seconds more Ella and Bob were beside me, the former raising my head upon her knee, and gazing into my face with an expression of the fondest pity and concern, as her fingers swept the hair gently off my forehead, wet with the clammy dew of suffering.

Bob, too, knelt at my side, uttering expressions of sympathy and encouragement, expressed, as usual, with true nautical figurativeness of speech. Seeing that I was conscious, however, he speedily changed his discourse, and informed me that it was necessary I should be immediately removed; for, though he had succeeded in decoying the whole of the savages away in pursuit of the boat, and had led them to such a distance as to admit of his evading them and returning in search of me, they were still in chase, and no time must be lost in getting away from the present spot, and returning to the cutter, or we should again be brought into dangerous proximity with them.

Having explained thus far, therefore, he at once proceeded to raise me in his powerful arms; and though he did so with the utmost gentleness, the agony attending the movement was so intense that I swooned away.

When I recovered, we were afloat and under way, standing off, with flowing sheets, for the headland I have mentioned as forming the northern extremity of the bay.

Ella was seated on the boat's platform or deck, with my head in her lap, and was bathing my face and neck with her pocket-handkerchief, wetted from a pannikin of water which stood by her side, and which was supplied from a small

breaker we had brought with us.

As soon as I opened my eyes the dear girl bent over me, and asked, with the tenderest solicitude, whether I felt any better.

“Yes, darling,” I answered; “but, for the love of mercy, pray give me some water. I am dying for want of it.”

She handed the pannikin to Bob, who immediately filled it, my eyes drinking in, in eager anticipation, every cool, sparkling drop of the precious liquid, as it gurgled crystal-clear out of the bung-hole of the breaker; the next moment the pannikin was drained to the bottom, and I was craving for more. Oh, what a delicious draught was that to my parched and burning lips and throat!

We were by this time rounding the point, and the savages had been visible some five minutes about three miles to the southward, paddling away most furiously, so Bob said, in the vain hope of overtaking the swift boat.

It was not a very long journey from this point back to the cove in which the *Water Lily* was lying, and in about three-quarters of an hour we were alongside.

To transfer me on board and below was a most painful operation, and I again swooned away; soon recovering, however, under Ella’s gentle ministrations. To my surprise I found she had caused me to be placed in her own cot forward, a proceeding against which I at once protested as strenuously as my feeble powers would allow.

“Not another word, Harry,” she interrupted.

I had heard Bob’s heavy tread bustling about on the deck above for a short time, but I now missed it, and endeavoured to inquire where he was gone; this, however, my nurse would not permit, assuring me that I should learn all that it was necessary to know in due time, and when I was stronger and better able to listen.

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## Chapter Seventeen.

### Important News.

The next day I was in a raging delirium, and for nearly a week did I remain utterly unconscious of all that surrounded me, entirely engrossing the attention of my companions, and taxing their energies and ingenuity to the utmost to prevent my leaping out of the cot or doing myself some injury, in the unnatural strength and violence of the fever which burned within me.

At length their unremitting care and watchfulness were rewarded by seeing me fall into a deep sleep, in which I remained all night and until the next morning was far advanced; and when I awoke, reason had resumed her sway. I knew them both, and could answer their affectionate inquiries by a faint pressure of the hand or a feeble whisper, but beyond this I had no power to go.

Ella, poor child! looked terribly pale and careworn, as well she might, for I afterwards learned that during the whole of that fearful time she had never once lain down to rest; such sleep as she had been able to obtain being snatched at uncertain intervals in a chair by the side of my cot. Bob had, of course, insisted sturdily and stubbornly on performing his full share of the watching; but, even so, poor Ella’s strength must have been terribly taxed.

For nine days did I thus lie hovering between life and death; at length, however, the assiduous care and ceaseless attention which were bestowed upon me had their effect, and I began to rally; and, the turning-point once passed, I soon mended rapidly.

The moment that my recovery seemed at all probable, Bob got the tents rigged up ashore again; and one fine morning when I appeared a little stronger than usual, and seemed able to bear the removal, I was transferred to the boat and thence to the shore, where my own hammock, carefully slung and provided with clean linen, awaited me. The change from the confinement of the small cabin to the tent, the fresh and balmy air, scent-laden from the adjacent groves, and, above all, the view from the open end of the tent of the clear sparkling water, gently ruffled by the passing breeze, with the tree-crowned, sun-lighted cliffs on either side, did more for me than the most skilful doctor or the most potent drugs could have effected, and I felt that I was drawing in new life with every inhalation.

Bob, too, was indefatigable in his exertions in my behalf; now ranging the woods with his airgun, in search of a species of pigeon which he had discovered; anon going away in the canoe (in which Ella had escaped, and which he had contrived to retain) to the rocks, and bringing in sundry delicately-flavoured fish; and then off to the woods again for fruit, of which the island afforded any quantity of various kinds.

At length the day arrived when I was considered strong enough to listen to Bob’s story, and be made acquainted with all that had occurred since the disastrous afternoon of our walk on the south side of the island.

“You must know,” he began, “that as soon as I left you and your precious little dearie here ashore, I went straight away back to the channel, and anchored the craft in a bit of a nook in the first reach, where I thought as I should find some sport. Well, I didn’t get so much as a nibble, and, at last—whether ’twas the heat of the sun, or what ’twas, I can’t tell ye—I dropped clean off to sleep. How long I slept I can’t say, but I was woke up by the tug-tugging of the line, which I’d made fast with two or three turns round my finger. I started to haul in, and had got my fish very nigh out of water, when he broke away, and I lost him. I was just baiting my hook afresh, when I thought I heard your rifle; and I fancied I’d overstayed my time, and that you was firing a signal to jine company. So I rouses up my killick, and makes sail; and whilst I was doing it, I hears two reports, one close upon t’other. I guessed at once’t that something was amiss; so I crowds all sail upon the craft, and steers as straight as she would go for the p’int. Whilst I was running

down towards it I fancied I heard a shout, though I couldn't be sure, but you may depend upon it I was now pretty anxious to get round the p'int, and see where you was and what was going on. As soon as I cleared it, I sees you and dearie hurryin' towards the beach, as though somethin' was amiss, but what it was I couldn't at first make out, until I see'd the blackies jump out of the bushes, and then I knowed at once what a reg'lar fix you was in. I see'd ye fire at 'em, lad, and bring 'em up with a round turn, and my fingers was just all of a itch to be alongside of ye with one of them same revolvin' rifles in my fist, though I'm, a'ter all, no great matter of a shot. Well, I see'd ye run, and I see'd the little lady here step into the canoe and lie down; and then in course I knowed what you was after, so I shapes a course accordin'. You knows what foller'd, lad, but you don't know, and I can't tell ye, what I felt when I saw ye struck down almost within reach of my arm, and dragged away by them incarnate devils. It seemed to me as though every mother's son of 'em was fighting for the first blow at ye, and I gave ye fairly up for lost, sartain. But there warn't much time for thinkin', for some of 'em started to launch their canoes at once't in chase of dearie here, and I only had jist time to sheer alongside and take the craft in tow, when they was afloat and a'ter us. I stood away to the south'ard, hardly knowing what I was doin', and soon ran away from 'em hand over hand. I was getting little miss here out of the canoe into the boat the best way I could, for she'd fainted, when the idee comes into my old head that if I could but entice the whole lot of 'em to chase me, I might lead 'em far enough away to give 'em the slip and run back and get your body—for I never doubted but what you was dead. So I goes for'ard and lets run the main-halliards, and down comes the sail, accidental like. The niggers gives a shout as soon as they sees this, and I hauls my wind as though I couldn't go no further to leeward without my mainsail; and, sure enough, the trick answered to perfection, for the whole posse of 'em comes scurryin' down to the beach, launches their canoes, and shoves off, paddling like mad to the south'ard, to cut me off. 'All right, my hearties, go it,' says I; 'but,' says I, 'you haven't the pleasure of knowin' a sartain Robert Trunnion,' says I, 'if you supposes as you're going to carcumvent him that a-way.' So I lets 'em come well up with me, and the nearer they got, the louder they yells, and the harder they paddles; and you might ha' thought by the row that all hell had broke loose, as perhaps it had, or them devils wouldn't ha' been there. Well, I'd got the main-halliards led aft to where I was sittin', and as they closed, I gently sways the sail up, a few inches at a time, and keeps grad'llly away, until we was all spinnin' away dead to the south'ard, they paddlin' like fury, and I just keepin' far enough ahead to be out of range of their harrers. We'd run, I s'pose, a matter of four knots, when I sees that the reef sinks lower and lower below the water; and by the time that we had gone another couple of miles, there was unbroken water all over it. So I edges easily away to the west'ard, they following, till we'd got an offing of about four miles from the shore, and there was a tidyish jump of a sea for 'em to paddle ag'in, though I know'd 'twould make no matter of difference to the boat; and then I gives the tiller to the little lady, who'd come round ag'in, goes for'ard and h'ists the sail full up, and then hauls sharp up and goes about, keeping as straight away for the bay ag'in as I dared for the reef. The devils set up another yell at this, and round they goes like tops, heading about east, to cut me off; but I soon see'd as they was pretty well done up—for I'd kept 'em paddlin' all they knowed, in the hopes of coming up with me—and I felt satisfied as I'd be able to get back in time to get your body and be off ag'in afore they could overhaul me. Well, you knows that part of the story too; so it needs no telling. Directly you was in your cot, I rouses the gun out of the cutter into the boat, takes a goodish lot of cartridges, shot and shell with me, and out I goes ag'in, fallin' in with the rascals just off the nor'-western end of the cliffs. They was hugging the shore pretty close, and I was dreadful afraid as they knowed the cove, and was bound in there. So as I'd loaded the gun afore starting, I just gives 'em a shell, right into the thick of 'em, and that seemed to sicken 'em all at once; for they ups helm, and away they goes faster even than they'd come, and I a'ter 'em. The first thing I did was to get between them and the land; and as soon as they see'd that there warn't no chance of gettin' ashore and takin' to their cursed woods ag'in, away they all goes helter-skelter for our passage, and directly they was fairly in it, I heaves the boat to, loads the gun ag'in, and a'ter 'em once more, for I was detarmined that I'd drive 'em fairly out to sea, and then blow 'em all to hell, where they come from; and—to make a long story short—that's just what I did, lad: bearing down upon a canoe until I *couldn't* miss her, and then plumping a shell into her at one end and out at t'other. I tarred the whole lot with the same brush, except one little craft with only four hands in her, and she I chased clean out to sea altogether, givin' 'em a shot close past 'em, as a freshener of their energies, just as I hauled my wind; and if ever they gets back to their own country—wherever 'tis—I'll bet my life they'll never be for coming to *this here* island ag'in."

Such was Bob's story, and such the end of the adventure, for though we remained at the island nearly seven weeks, we never saw any further signs of savages.

In about a month from the date of the adventure, I had so far recovered as to be able to hobble about a little, a few yards only at a time; and then I began to regain strength rapidly. By the end of the following week I was able, with the assistance of Bob's strong arm, to get as far as the cascade every morning, and take a bath; and this, too, helped me on wonderfully towards entire convalescence. My wounds had closed, and were by this time so far scarred over that I was able to dispense with all dressing and bandages, and we began to talk about making another start, finally arranging to do so as soon as the new moon attained her first quarter, which would be in another fortnight.

It was, I believe, on the Sunday following this arrangement that Bob set off the first thing after breakfast to attempt an ascent of the mountain, he having discovered, as he believed, a spot at which an active man with good nerves might surmount the natural impediments which existed near the base.

I cautioned him to be very careful for our sakes as well as his own, for I was still too weak to afford him any very effectual assistance in the event of a mishap: and a broken limb half-way up the mountain-side would have been death to him just at that time.

Ella and I were, of course, society for each other, and we wandered about the lawn-like ravine and reposed at frequent intervals beneath the grateful shade of the trees, in blissful oblivion of the passage of time, waiting quite contentedly until Master Bob chose to rejoin us, which he faithfully promised he would in time for dinner.

At length, however, the position of the sun in the western heavens warned us that the hour named was long past, and I proposed a walk as far as the head of the ravine, hoping to meet the truant returning. We walked slowly, my strength not yet being sufficient to permit of very active exertion, and by the time that we reached the point aimed at, the entire landscape was flooded in the lovely pinky-purplish haze which immediately precedes sunset. Still no

Bob made his appearance, and I began to grow seriously alarmed. We waited another half-hour, and then, just as the sun was about to disappear in the purple western wave, and we had made up our minds to return to the cutter, thinking he might possibly have passed down the ravine on its opposite side, he made his appearance.

To my surprise, he seemed singularly uncommunicative, and we could get but little out of him beyond the fact that he had, with very great difficulty, reached the summit, and found my conjecture as to its being an extinct crater correct. He thawed a little during dinner, and volunteered the information that he had seen land far away on the southern board—nearly or quite a hundred miles distant, he supposed—and had seen the loom of land to the westward, or about west-north-west, and also to the northward. He was of opinion, he said, that our late enemies had come from the land seen to the southward and were bound north, touching at our island on their way, on some marauding excursion, as he had been able completely to sweep the island in every direction from the commanding elevation of the mountain-top, and had detected no sign whatever of “niggers” in any direction. With this he dropped the subject and adverted to my condition, questioning me solicitously—unusually so, I fancied—as to how I felt, the extent of my strength, where we had been, and what we had seen. He was particularly curious on this latter point, and asked the same question so repeatedly that Ella made some laughing remark, I forget what, upon it, and he carefully avoided any further repetition of it for the remainder of the evening, at least as long as Ella was with us.

When at length she retired to her own tent for the night, however, he became more communicative. I was already undressed and in my hammock, and he was sitting smoking beside me, and after a silence of some ten minutes or a quarter of an hour, during which he seemed to be ruminating deeply, he began.

“I’ve something to tell ye, lad,” said he, knocking the ashes contemplatively out of his pipe as he spoke, “but dash my ugly old wig if I’m at all sartain that I ought to say anything about it to-night, seeing as it can’t do much good, and might only be upsetting of ye for the night; but your head’s better nor mine in matters of this sort, and I confess I should like to have your idees upon the subject afore I sleep. Maybe they’ll in a way mark out a course upon which my idees can travel a good bit of a way betwixt this and morning, and even that much’ll be an advantage gained. The fact is, that I’ve see’d something as I didn’t expect to see whilst I was away up aloft there,”—pointing with the stem of his pipe backwards over his shoulder toward the mountain—“and the sight has disturbed me a little and set me thinkin’ a good deal.”

“Indeed,” said I, “what have you seen, Bob? You must perforce tell me all about it now, for you have excited both my curiosity and my apprehensions.”

“Not much need for the last, boy, I hope and believe,” answered he, “but it’s best perhaps as you should know at once—so, without any further palaver, the *Albatross*, the pirate-brig, is inside the reef, and is lying at anchor at this very moment in the bay where you was so near losing the number of your mess.”

“The *Albatross*!” exclaimed I; “nonsense, Bob; surely you must be mistaken! Is it not some whaler, think you, come in to water!”

“No, no,” said he; “it’s no whaler, Harry. Whalers wouldn’t come so far within the group as this here island. And when did ye ever know me mistaken about a vessel as has given us such good reason to remember her as this here brig? I knowed her the minute I set eyes on her: firstly, by a patch in her foresail, as you might ha’ noticed the last time we see her; nextly, by the shape of her main-topmast-staysail; and, thirdly and lastly, by the whull look of her, which enables a seaman to recognise a ship in the same way as one of your ’long-shore folks recognises an acquaintance in the street when they see him, though he may be dressed exactly like a score of other people within hail. And what’s more, I can make a pretty near guess as to what’s become of that whaler that he went a’ter when he found we wasn’t to be had, for I see he’s got three of the chap’s whale-boats, to replace the two as was expended in our little trifle of a brush, no doubt.”

“This is important news, indeed,” said I; “and news that provides matter for very serious reflection. What do you suppose has brought them in here, Bob? Did you see anything by which you could form an opinion?”

“Yes,” replied he, “I did. Want of water may be one thing; but it’s my idee that they’ve come in here to give their craft an overhaul, for they’d no sooner let go their anchor than they outs boats, and one watch pulls ashore and turns to building huts on the green, whilst t’other watch sends down t’gallan’ yards and masts, and unbends the sails and sends ’em all down on deck.”

“Then they are likely to make a pretty long stay,” said I; “and, in that case, we may be discovered at any moment.”

“That they’re likely to stay here some time I’ll not deny,” returned Bob; “but I don’t feel partic’lar oneasy about bein’ discovered. It’s like enough as some on ’em may take the fancy in their heads to scale this here bit of a mountain; but I’ve made it my business to give the place a reg’lar overhaul this a’ternoon, and the thing *can’t* be done from the south’ard—not without ladders, that is, and good long uns at that; and I’ve found out, too, that though you may get round to t’other side of the mountain from here, you can’t get down to the level ground beyond. I never see such a place, it’s nothing but precipices one atop of t’other; and there’s one place I come to which one man might defend ag’in just as many as ever like to come a’ter him, by just standin’ behind a sort of wall in the cliff and shoving of ’em over the edge as they tried to get round it. No, no; you make your mind easy *on* that p’int, lad; we ain’t to be got at except ’tis by water, and I reckon they’ll be all too busy to spare a boat’s crew to come the length of this; and if they did, it’s a thousand chances to one that they’d never find the openin’ into this here cove. Why, I run past it myself the day as we brought you in here wounded, and I’d never have found it if I hadn’t knowed just where to look for it. *So* it’s my opinion as we may stay here quiet and comfortable enough so long as we’ve a mind to; and then, when we’re tired of waitin’, we can slip out quietly in the night, and nobody be any the wiser. So much for that. Now for an idee that’s come into my head, and that I can’t get rid of noways. Wouldn’t it be a pretty trick to sarve these chaps, if we was to take the brig and carry her out to sea under their noses, leavin’ of ’em here to amuse themselves the best way they could?”

"It *would* be a pretty trick indeed," I replied, "if it were possible; but at this moment I cannot see how it is to be done. The difficulties in the way of its accomplishment are too many for only a couple of men to overcome. Were we half-a-dozen, or even four, we might perhaps do it; but we could never get her out clear of the reefs by our two selves. Besides, before we could get the canvas on her, they would be alongside of us in their boats, even if the watch, which they will of course leave on board, were overpowered."

"I don't reckon as they'll keep much of a watch aboard her where she's lying," returned Bob. "She's as safe as if she was in harbour, not more'n a mile from the beach, and on the lee-side of the island; and as to gettin' her out, you've only to stand to the south'ard under fore-and-aft canvas, and it's my belief as she'd fetch out clear of the reef from where she's lyin' in one tack. You recollect as I told ye that the reef dipped as it went to the south'ard? Well, it's my opinion as there'd be water for her over it by the time she was far enough south to make it worth while to think about heaving of her about. That's the road as she came in by."

"If that is the case, perhaps it *might* be done, then, if we could contrive to gain possession of their boats first of all," said I; "but what is to become of the cutter in the meantime? I've no fancy for leaving her here to fall into their hands; and, to speak the truth, now that she has brought us so well thus far, I should like to finish the voyage in her. No, if such a thing were attempted at all, it would be attended with the utmost risk, and could only be successful in the event of our being able to *steal* on board; and the cutter is not suitable for such service. But I'll tell you what has just occurred to me. There is just a bare possibility of our being able to steal on board in the canoe some dark night, and set fire to the brig; and then come back here, get the cutter under weigh, and be off at once. But this even can only be done in the event of there being no one left on board at night, and this I consider very unlikely."

"That's the plan!" exclaimed Bob, with enthusiasm. "Burn the craft afore their eyes, and leave 'em to get off in their boats, if they like."

"Not so," said I. "If this scheme is undertaken at all, I should certainly do it effectually. Take their boats away, and burn the brig, and here they must remain prisoners for a considerable time at least; for this island is quite out of the route of all honest craft, ourselves perhaps excepted."

"Better and better still!" exclaimed Bob, in high glee. "Now, I never should ha' thought of that, because, somehow, it seems cruel and unnat'ral like to burn sich a beauty of a craft as that there brig; but it's the proper plan, Hal—there's no doubt of that. We two *couldn't* take care of both the brig and the cutter in anything but the very finest of weather; and it's better to burn the craft, beauty as she is, than that them villains should misuse her to rob and murder honest seamen, and do worse to their wives and darters. Curse 'em! I shan't forget in a hurry that poor young thing as we see lying dead in the cabin of that American ship; and I'd burn the finest craft as ever was launched, afore they should have the chance to commit another sich a piece of devilish villainy. Now, Harry, lad, mind me, we *do* this here little piece of work. You've got hold of the eend of the right coil of idees, and I can see as your heart's set upon it; and I, Robert Truncheon, am the man as'll back ye up in it through thick and thin, and there's my hand upon it. You get well and strong as fast as you knows how, and I'll go aloft there every day, and keep my eye upon 'em all day long, and see what 'tis they intends doing; and the first chance we has, mark me, the job's *done*. Now, let's blow the light out, and get a good night's sleep upon it."

Bob suited the action to the word, and in less than ten minutes I had auricular evidence that, as far as the sleep was concerned, he was carrying his precept most thoroughly into practice.

On the following morning, as soon as breakfast was over, Bob and I set off up the ravine, my companion providing himself with our best telescope, a few biscuits, and a flask of weak grog, as it was his intention to remain on the summit of the mountain the entire day, watching the motions of the pirates, unless he happened to see anything rendering an earlier return advisable.

I did not feel quite so easy in my mind as Bob did with regard to the chances of a boat being detached to examine the island, and, in such an event, of our cove escaping detection; so I arranged with him that, if he observed anything of the kind, he was to fly his handkerchief from the branch of an isolated tree which grew on a small projecting platform near the summit, and which was quite visible both from the cutter and the ravine, but was hidden by the mountain-top itself from the pirates; and I decided that, if the signal were displayed, I would convey Ella to the spot he had spoken of on the previous evening as capable of being so easily defended, and would then return to the cutter, try the effect of a shell or two upon the boat if she appeared within the cove, and afterwards, if need be, retire to the place of Ella's concealment, and make a stand there.

In furtherance of this arrangement I got Bob to show me the spot, which I found, on personal inspection, to be fully as impregnable as he had declared it to be; and I also ascertained, as he had done, that it was quite impossible to get round the mountain by land.

We then separated, Bob making the best of his way up the mountain-side, and I returning to the shore, loading myself, as I went, with the finest and choicest fruit I could find.

I was met, about half-way up the ravine, by Ella, and we both strolled quietly back to the beach together, my fair companion following my example, and loading herself with fruit.

When we reached the beach, I set about striking the tents, and got the sails, spars, and lighter articles back on board the cutter, as there was now no knowing at what moment it might be necessary for us to be off; and this task, in my then weak condition, occupied me the greater part of the day—getting them on board, that is, and putting the spars in their places, rigging them, and bending the sails.

By the time that I had finished, everything was back into its old berth, with the exception of about a couple of canoe-loads of heavy articles, which might be run on board in twenty minutes or half an hour, and then we should be ready to start at a moment's notice.

I even contrived to take our tube-boat to pieces and stow her away below, though the tubes gave me some trouble in getting them inboard; but I managed this at last by parbuckling them up over the side with the aid of the throat-halliards.

Of course I kept a strict watch on the tree near the summit all this time; but no signal fluttered from it, so I assumed that they were all too busy on board the brig to make explorations, relying on their numbers for safety in case of an attack; or else, that whatever explorations might be afoot were being conducted by land.

At length everything was done that my unaided efforts could effect; and then, taking Ella on shore with me in the canoe, I set out for another walk up the ravine in quest of a little more fruit, to complete our sea-stock. I was rather anxious to take as much of this as possible to sea with me, for I have always held the belief that the fruit which flourishes best in any particular climate, if partaken of in moderation, is beneficial to the health whilst breathing the air of that climate.

Ella expressed her surprise once or twice during the day, both at the somewhat abrupt manner in which our encampment on shore was broken up, and at Bob's sudden predilection for so unsailorlike an amusement as mountain-climbing; but I answered her carelessly, anxious not to alarm the dear little girl by acquainting her with the fact that we had unexpectedly acquired such very undesirable neighbours.

Near the head of the ravine, I was fortunate enough to come upon a banana-tree laden with exceptionally fine fruit, and I succeeded in possessing myself of two noble bunches of bananas which had arrived at exactly the right condition for cutting. Each bunch was as heavy as I could well lift, and, having got them to the ground without bruising any of the fruit, I cut a strong stake, and placed it, with a bunch at each end, fair in the pathway which I knew Bob would take on his way to the beach, feeling certain he would know why it was placed there, and would bring it down with him.

We then returned, cutting a few splendid pines and gathering a little bread-fruit and a few figs as we went, and paddled back to the cutter, where Ella and I remained, fully occupied with each other, until it was quite dark, when, just as the little fairy was on the point of going below to see to the tea, I heard Bob's hail, and, jumping into the canoe, I soon joined him on the beach.

"Well, Harry," said he, as I drew the light canoe up a foot or two on the beach, "it seems that you haven't been nowadays idle whilst I've been aloft there spying into the inimy's movements. I hardly knowed what to make of it when I first found the tents struck and 'most everything gone. But I'm glad in one sense that matters is so far for'ard, though I'm sorry in another; for I'm greatly afeared you've been working hard and have tired yourself, and there's just a chance of our havin' our hands full of work to-night. I stumbled over these here bananas as I was coming down the ravine, and brought 'em along, as I s'pose it was intended I should."

"Just so," I answered. "Now let me hear the result of your day's observations. I have amused myself, as you see, in getting as many of our things as I could back into the cutter; for I felt that, in the present condition of affairs, it may be imperatively necessary for us to be off at a moment's notice. But I do not feel very much fatigued; I am picking up strength rapidly, and my experience of to-day has shown me that I am stronger than I really thought I was. There are a few things still lying about here which were rather too heavy for me single-handed; but when these are on board and stowed away, we can be off at any moment."

"So much the better," returned Bob. "Let's get a few on 'em into the canoe at once't, and whilst we're working I can be telling ye what I've see'd from my perch up aloft there. It won't take very long in the telling. In the first place, two boats has been right to the south eend of the island. They went away full o' men, and landed all hands, excepting a couple of men in each boat; and while the shore party was reg'lar beating the woods, the boats paddled slowly back, keepin' close in shore, to take their shipmates off in case of anything going wrong—at least, that was my *idee*. Then I soon made out that another party was working their way to the nor'ard from their camp, giving this eend of the island a overhaul. I see'd 'em often, crossing the open country between the different clumps of trees, and was able once or twice to hear faintly their shouts to one another. This lot would ha' made me very oneasy, hadn't I give the place such a complete overhaul myself no later 'n yesterday, for they seemed to be bent on getting up the bit of a mountain, and stood off and on, this way and that, as though they *wouldn't* be beat; but they had to give it up at last and go back, though I make no manner of doubt as they've pretty well decided to come this way with a boat to-morrer, and finish their survey of the island. So much for the shore gang. They're all back in their camp by this time, and if they don't sleep without rocking it won't be for want of walking, and shouting, and hollering; and let me tell ye, lad, it's no joke to be fighting your way through thick bush for hours at a time, as most of them chaps have been doing this blessed hot day.

"Now, as to the brig, it's my opinion as they means to careen her, just as we've done with our little barkie. They've been working like galley-slaves aboard there all day, and have stripped her to her lower-masts. The sails are all gone ashore, for I saw 'em lowered over the side into the boats with these same two good-looking eyes of mine, but the spars is still aboard. They've been striking out cargo wholesale, and, to my mind, in a most lubberly, un-seamanlike fashion. If it had been me, now, I should ha' built a raft with all the spars, and rafted the things ashore, but they've done everything with their boats; maybe, hows'ever it's valyable stuff, and they didn't care to trust it to a raft. It was a'most all boxes and bales, of all sorts and sizes, the pickings of many a good ship's cargo, I'll warrant. Now I reckon that a'ter the work as this lot has got through to-day *they'll* sleep pretty sound too, so it's my idee that we ain't likely to have a much better chance for playin' our little trick upon 'em than we shall have to-night. They're all as tired as tired can be, you may take your oath upon that; and they'll sleep without any fear of savages, for the reason that they've give the island a pretty thorough overhaul without findin' any. And to-morrow it may be too late; for if so be as they comes this way in a boat, it won't do for us to be found here, and the chances is that we shall have to cut and run for it, without doing 'em a farthing's-worth of harm a'ter all. The sails all being took ashore knocks my little plan for carryin' the brig off clean on the head, even if her spars was aloft to set 'em on, which they're not. So I s'pose we shall have to burn the pretty little craft, if we're to do anything at all. Now what say ye, lad?"

"Simply, that whatever is to be attempted must be attempted to-night," I replied. "The reasons for doing so are too obvious to need enumeration; so we will get our few traps on board, have tea, and then snatch what rest we can between this and midnight, when we must be stirring again. I would give a great deal to see this brilliantly starlit sky overcast, but we must take things as we find them, and only use the greater precautions. Now I think we have as much in the canoe as she will safely carry, so let's shove off; we can come back for the remainder after tea. And mind, Bob, not a word of this before Ella."

"Trust me for that," returned Bob. "Let the little dearie turn in and get her night's rest undisturbed by any anxiety on your account. We can slip off quietly at the right time, without her bein' a bit the wiser; and it'll be soon enough to talk about this here job when we've done it."

We were by this time close alongside, and no more was said. Everything was got out of the canoe and stowed in its proper place, and we then went to tea, getting the remainder of the goods on board and stowing them away immediately that the meal was over; after which Bob stretched himself out on the lockers below, and went to sleep, whilst Ella and I remained on deck until about ten o'clock. I was glad when the dear girl wished me good-night and left me; for I could not but feel that, praiseworthy and righteous as was our proposed adventure, it was one which most seriously involved her safety and well-being, closely knit with ours as her fortunes were, and I could not conceal from myself, either, that we were about to run a tremendous risk, ignorant as we were of what the camp arrangements of the pirates were; and I wished to have time to reflect calmly upon all the risks we ran, and the best possible means of avoiding them, before setting out. Everything would depend upon whether a watch were set on board the brig or not. Bob was strongly of opinion that they left her to take care of herself at night, but I thought otherwise.

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## Chapter Eighteen.

### Destruction of the "Albatross."

I remained on deck until midnight, in anxious self-communion; and then, slipping off my light canvas shoes, went below and quietly aroused Bob. He instantly arose, and accompanied me, noiselessly and bare-footed, to the deck. We had no tools or implements of any kind to hamper us, my sole provision for the expedition consisting of a couple of boxes of matches, which, with our sharp knives and a bottle of grog, I considered was all that we needed.

I confess that my heart throbbed a little more rapidly than usual as our paddles dipped in the water, and the light canoe shot away from the cutter's side, but it was from a feeling that I was at that moment leaving, perhaps for ever, and to a terrible fate, one whom I loved more dearly than my own life, and that, too, without one word of farewell; rather than from personal apprehension I left a hastily-scrawled note in pencil on the cabin-table, to the effect that we had occasion to go away for a short time, but hoped to be back in time for breakfast, in case we should be delayed longer than we anticipated; but this was all.

As soon as we were fairly out of the cove, I communicated my plans to Bob, impressing upon him all my arrangements, in case of contingencies requiring an alteration in my original plan; for, as soon as we were fairly at work, everything would have to be done, as far as possible, in absolute silence, and I did not wish to leave any explanations for a moment when, perhaps, a single word incautiously uttered might lead to our betrayal.

We paddled on close under the cliffs, and in about half an hour reached the spot where the sandy beach on the western side of the island commenced. Here we gently grounded the canoe, laid our paddles cautiously and noiselessly in, lifted the craft far enough up on the beach to prevent her floating away, and then, keeping as much within the shadow of the trees as we could, made the best of our way along the beach to the low point already mentioned as forming the northern extremity of the bay which had witnessed the fight with the savages, and in which the pirate-brig now lay at anchor.

There was no moon at this time, the young crescent having set some hours before; but the night was brilliantly starlit, and, though the light thus afforded was an assistance in one way, it was very much against us in another, materially increasing our chances of detection.

Half an hour of rapid walking brought us to a point where I thought that, by striking inland, we might contrive to cut short across the neck of land forming the junction of the headland with the main, so to speak; and now the utmost caution became necessary.

I warned Bob to avoid everything which had the remotest likeness to a branch or twig of any kind, the sudden sharp snapping of which would be sure to attract attention, I thought, though the air was filled with the chirping of millions of night insects of all kinds.

At length we caught sight of the pirates' bivouac, and, almost at the same instant, saw a figure rise from the ground, stretch itself wearily, and throw a pile of branches upon the dying embers of the fire.

This showed that, hard as their work of the previous day might have been, here was one wakeful individual, at all events, among them; and upon him we kept our anxious gaze intently riveted, watching his every motion with the closest scrutiny.

We saw him walk to the outside of the circle, beyond the limits of the feeble light from the nearly extinguished fire, and peer earnestly into the darkness on every side, going all round the circle, and making the same careful inspection outwards in every direction; and, lastly, he walked down towards the beach far enough to satisfy himself that the boats (which we could just discern) were all right; when he returned, flung more wood on the fire, and then sat down close to windward of it, out of the way of the smoke, filled his pipe, and lighted it. Of course we took very



good care to conceal ourselves effectually whilst this patrol of the camp was being made, and I embraced the opportunity to point out to Bob that all the boats seemed to be anchored at a few yards' distance from the beach, excepting a small punt, and she was drawn a foot or two up on the sand.

The fire now began to blaze up brightly, and I thought this a favourable moment to proceed; for, whilst it afforded us a sufficiency of light to enable us to avoid such obstacles as roots of trees and twigs and branches of shrubs, it would dazzle the eyes of the lonely watcher, and effectually prevent his seeing anything beyond a few yards distant.

I accordingly pulled Bob's sleeve to attract his attention, and, pointing to the punt, intimated to him that she must be our first object of attack.

We now both rose to our feet once more, and, stealing as rapidly forward as we could, taking advantage of every little bit of cover that offered to pause and reconnoitre for a moment, reached, after about twenty minutes of breathless suspense, the half-stranded punt. To our infinite chagrin, there were no oars in her, and without these we could do nothing.

We now commenced a hurried consultation in cautious whispers as to what had better be done, keeping a wary eye upon the sleeping camp and its solitary watcher all the while. Whilst we were doing this, I suddenly caught sight of a pair of short oars, which I knew in a moment must belong to the punt, reared against a tree in the very midst of the bivouac, and in the full light of the now brilliant fire, and within view of the watching seaman.

I saw it was absolutely necessary that we should have those oars, so I pointed them out to Bob, and directed him to remain *perdu*, whilst I made an attempt to secure them.

I then set off down the beach until I was far enough away to be able to walk across the open and into the shadow of the bush without being seen, which I succeeded in doing. Once there, I commenced a stealthy approach, putting each foot carefully and noiselessly to the ground, and not venturing to raise one until the other was firmly planted. In this manner I contrived to make my way onward unobserved, and at last gained a cover behind the trunk of the tree against which the oars were standing.

I now took as complete a survey of the bivouac as I could without exposing myself, and, counting heads, I found that there were no fewer than eighty-three sleeping pirates within a few yards of me, in addition to the man on watch. He appeared to be, just at the moment, either in a fit of deep abstraction or a doze; so, without waiting for a better opportunity, I cautiously reached my arm round the tree-trunk, grasped one of the oars, and brought it round to my own side, without so much as the rustle of a leaf. Emboldened by my success, I now tried for the second, which I also succeeded in securing.

Taking an oar in each hand, I at once proceeded to retrace my steps, and, for the first stage, aimed at getting behind a tree which stood only about three yards distant. I soon reached this spot, and on slipping behind the trunk, and taking a hasty glance backward, I was greatly alarmed at seeing the pirate on watch on his feet, looking intently in my direction, and shading his eyes with his hand. I at once concluded that I had been seen, and waited in breathless expectancy for the shout which was to raise the entire crew upon me; but, instead of this, I heard, after a short pause, the voice of the man in soliloquy close to the tree against which the oars had been placed.

"It's d—d odd," I heard him mutter; "but I could have sworn that them paddles was standin' up ag'in this here tree, half-an-hour ago; what the h—I's become of 'em? *Surety* none of the chaps is slipped off to have a yarn with old Steve; he won't thank 'em for disturbing of him at this time o' night, and rousing him out from between the guns, where I'll lay anything the old dormouse is snugly coiled away, instead of looking a'ter the brig, as is his dooty. I'll just slip down to the beach, and see if the boats is all right."

I crouched down behind the tree, and peeped cautiously round the bole; and there, sure enough, was my watchful gentleman sauntering down towards the boats. I allowed him to get far enough away to prevent his seeing me if he suddenly turned round, and then quickly made my way along the edge of the sward, keeping within the shadow of the bush until I thought I was far enough away from the fire to permit of my cutting straight across to the punt as soon as the man was once more out of the way.

I achieved this before the pirate reached the beach, and then stood anxiously watching for what might befall. I did not fear for Bob; I knew that his eyes had been taking in everything which happened from the moment I left him, and I felt quite satisfied that he would not spoil our game by running any risk of discovery. The pirate walked quietly on, and at length reached the punt, looked into her, probably for the missing oars, and then turned round and walked back again. He had not advanced half-a-dozen paces before I saw him waving his arms violently; I thought I heard a stifled cry, and then he fell heavily to the ground; and I saw another figure—Bob's—kneeling over him. I at once started off as fast as I could run, taking the oars with me, and in about five minutes I stood by my companion's side. He had got the man down on his face, and was busy lashing his arms firmly behind his back. I forthwith assisted, and, between us, the unfortunate pirate was soon so securely bound, hand and foot, that it was impossible for him to move.

"He can't sing out," whispered Bob, "for I've stuffed my han'kercher as far down his throat as I could get it, and have made all fast with a turn of his own necktie through his jaws with a reef-knot at the back of his head. He's safe enough till morning."

So it appeared, and we therefore left him, with perfect unconcern, to his fate; lifted the light boat and carried her into the water until she was afloat, and then stepped noiselessly into her—Bob taking both oars, whilst I sat in the stern-sheets ready to take possession of the other boats. They were moored at but a very short distance from the beach, one of them being anchored, and the rest hanging by their painters in a string, astern of her. Bob backed the punt gently off until I had got hold of the painter of the anchored boat, which I easily raised, there being only a small boat-anchor attached to its end; this I carefully placed in the stern of the punt in such a position as to afford a secure hold,

and then, taking an oar apiece, we pulled noiselessly and as quickly as we dared direct off shore, with the whole fleet of boats in tow astern of us.

I considered that we were safe when we had attained an offing of half-a-mile, for I thought it very unlikely that the pirates would then attempt to overtake us by swimming—the only means of pursuit they now had—even if an alarm were given; but everything still remained perfectly tranquil, and continued so until we had rounded the low point so often mentioned: after which, of course, we *were* unable to see anything which transpired in the bivouac.

We decided to take the boats, five in number besides the punt, over to the mouth of the channel, and anchor them there until we could pick them up again on our way out in the cutter, and then go back after our canoe, so as to prevent the possibility of her falling into the hands of the pirates. Whilst doing this, Bob volunteered an explanation of his motives for attacking the pirate.

"I see'd all you done, Harry," he observed, "and thought as everything were going right, until that fool of a feller took it into his head to come down to the beach. I stowed myself away as well as I could under the quarter of the punt—but if his eyes hadn't ha' been choked up with sleep he must ha' see'd me. Hows'ever, he didn't, and when he turned round to go back, thinks I, 'It wouldn't be a bad idee to put a stop to them wanderin' habits of yourn,' thinks I; 'we should be in a pretty mess if you was to come down ag'in, afore we'd got fairly off with them there boats;' and almost afore I knowed what I intended to do, I'd crept up behind him and flung my arm tight round his neck, with my knee well into the small of his back, and down he comes. He tried to sing out, but the minute he opened his mouth I rammed my handkercher down his throat, and that kept him as quiet as a mouse; and so he's like to be till morning, when I reckon he'll find hisself just about in the centre of a hobble, with these here boats all gone, and the brig afire fore and aft, please God. D'ye think I did right, lad?"

"Excellently," I replied; "nothing could possibly have been done better. Now, here we are, and there goes the anchor. Now, let's stretch away as hard as we can for the canoe; we have been longer than I bargained for over this business, and we shall have daylight upon us before we are finished if we do not look sharp."

I now told Bob what I had heard the pirate say, and that, from his remarks, I gathered that "old Steve" was the only man left on board the brig.

I arranged with Bob that he was to answer in the event of the said "old Steve" hailing us as we went alongside, and directed him what to say, as Bob's phraseology was habitually seasoned far more highly with nautical slang than was my own, and he would, therefore, be less likely to be suspected in the carrying on of a haphazard conversation than myself.

We soon reached the canoe, which lay just as we had left her, and, taking her in tow, we pulled away at once straight for the brig.

In half an hour we reached her, and, contrary to the pirate's surmise, "old Steve" proved to be pretty broad awake.

"Boat ahoy!" hailed he, as we approached.

"Ay, ay!" answered Bob. "Is that you, Steve?"

"In course it is," replied that worthy. "Who the h—I are you, and what do you want off here at this no time o' night?"

"Whisht!" returned Bob warningly. "Belay all that, you old sinner; there's no need to let everybody know as two friends has brought ye off a bottle of grog and a bit of queerish kind of news. Heave us a rope's-end, will ye? for it's that dark that hang me if I can find anything to make fast this here boat's painter to!"

"Ay, ay," answered "Steve;" "look out—here ye are! But who *are* ye at all? I can't make out your voice, d—n me if I can! And who's that with ye?"

"Not make out my voice!" retorted Bob. "No, I s'pose you can't. And I ain't surprised at it neither, considerin' the bushels of smoke as I've swallered from that fire ashore, and the thousands of muskeeters as has flied down my throat; so that's all right. Here's the grog, old cock."

"Steve" leaned over the bulwarks and seized the grog, and Bob and I both climbed the brig's side at the same instant. In another moment "Steve" was on his back, with Bob's knee and his whole weight on his chest; and I was soon busy securing the prisoner with a piece of the rope which was lying about in any quantity on the deck. This was quickly done, and the man gagged with a belaying-pin; after which we made a rapid tour of the deck, cabin, and forecabin, and satisfied ourselves that there was no one else on board to dispute or interfere with our actions.

We decided to set the brig on fire in three places—forward, aft, and in midships—and we lost no time in making our preparations. We found a lot of old sails in a locker at the fore end of the forecabin, and these we divided, taking away a sufficiency to kindle a good rousing fire in the hold; and over these, as soon as we had deposited them in a suitable position, as well as over those remaining in the locker, we poured a few buckets of tar from a cask we found aboard on deck.

We had no fear about the craft not burning well, for she had a large quantity of combustible materials of all sorts in her hold; and we hastily made as large a heap of these as we could, so as to ensure her effectually taking fire.

We then went into the cabin, and piled the bedding from all the berths upon the floor, heaping the chairs and table upon it, and pouring a copious libation of tar upon the whole. We then put a light to it, staying long enough to see the mass burst into fierce flame; when we rushed on deck, and I dived into the hold, whilst Bob went into the forecabin, where we quickly kindled our respective heaps, and then as quickly returned to the deck.

Thin clouds of smoke already poured up through the various openings of the deck, promising speedy and effectual destruction to the brig; so we had now nothing to do but *get* away from her, and return with all speed to the cutter.

“Steve” was lowered over the side into the punt, Bob and I followed, and we at once pushed off for the cove, in the highest glee at having so successfully carried out our daring scheme.

Daylight was just breaking as we pushed off, and by the time that we entered our cove the sun was above the horizon.

We dropped the punt and canoe astern, and the sails being all bent and loose (I having made every possible preparation for an immediate start whilst waiting for the hour at which to set out upon our raid), we were under way and standing out of the cove in ten minutes more.

Bob got our big gaff-topsail on the craft as we ran down towards the passage, and I kept a bright look-out for any signs of alarm in the pirate camp. The camp itself we could not see, of course; but I expected to see men moving about on the shore. Nor was I disappointed, for I soon descried a knot of figures standing upon the low point, which was the nearest land to the brig, watching, in apparent stupefaction, the progress of their vessel’s destruction.

The brig was by this time almost enveloped in flames, and had the entire crew been on board, they could then have done nothing to save her.

We were quickly discovered, of course, and great was the confusion which our appearance seemed to excite; but I cared nothing about that—indeed, it was a part of my programme that the pirates should know to whom they were indebted for their present disaster.

Very shortly a crowd of men appeared hurrying along the beach in our direction, and, as we bore away for the passage, they saluted us with a straggling musketry fire, more in impotent anger than for any harm it could do us, for the shot all fell very far short. When about a quarter of a mile from the entrance to the channel, I hove the cutter to, and we hauled the punt alongside, took out one of her oars, and cast “Steve” adrift from his lashings, leaving him to get ashore to his comrades as best he might with one oar.

We then filled away once more, and ran down upon the boats, took them all in tow, and stood out through the channel. Another volley of musketry betrayed the irritation of the pirates at the sight of our departure and the loss of their boats, to which Bob replied by giving three ironical cheers. At this juncture Ella appeared on deck, wonderfully surprised, of course, at all she saw, and I was at once called on to explain. I did so, briefly narrating the circumstances of Bob’s fortunate discovery of the arrival of the *Albatross* at the island, of his having watched the crew all the previous day, of our plan, and of the manner in which it had been carried out, pointing to the burning brig as the issue of it all.

“Oh! Harry,” exclaimed she, bursting into tears, “how *could* you run such a fearful risk! Only fancy, you two men venturing into the very centre of these dreadful people’s camp, and without arms too! Why, what would have become of you if you had been taken? Really, I could almost find it in my heart to be downright angry with you both. I cannot understand men a bit. They seem—some of them—to have been born absolutely devoid of the faculty of perception of danger, even when it is staring them in the face; and accordingly they rush into the midst of all sorts of perils, seemingly with a happy unconsciousness that they are doing so, and with a heedlessness as to consequences which is perfectly bewildering. No—now do not try to coax me, Harry, for I really *am seriously* angry with you. And to think, too, of your being up all night, weak as you are! I am surprised that you are not ill again. Oh, Harry,” (with fresh sobs), “how thankful I am that you are safe, and that I did not know anything of this until now! And do not look grieved, darling; I did not mean what I said. It was very naughty of me, I know, but I was frightened at the thought of the risks you have run, and how all this *might* have ended. Oh, mercy! what is that?”

A shock, as if the cutter had struck upon a rock—a dull, heavy *boom*—and the fragments of the burning brig were scattered far and wide, to come pelting down again the next minute in a perfect shower of charred and splintered wood, spars, ropes, and the thousand-and-one other matters usually found on board a ship. The brig’s powder magazine had blown up. A heavy cloud of dark smoke marked the spot where the explosion had taken place; and when it drifted away before the fresh morning breeze, one or two half-burnt timbers floating on the water were all that remained of the *Albatross*.

“Ah!” exclaimed Bob, who was busy coiling down the various halliards, etcetera, “I’ve been expectin’ that any time this last half-hour, and I only wonder it didn’t happen afore. Well, that’s a good endin’ to a good job well begun, and I reckon them chaps ashore there may’s well make up their minds to stay where they be for the rest of their nat’ral lives, for they’ve neither ship nor boats, nor stuff to build ’em with either. I don’t reckon there’s many trees on yon island that’d be much use in a ship-buildin’ yard.”

“No,” said I; “I think we may safely consider that their career of crime and bloodshed is put an effectual stop to, for some time at least; unless, indeed, some unfortunate ship should come to the island, in which case they would have her to a certainty.”

“Ay,” returned Bob, “but that’s a very unlikely chance. These here islands don’t lie in the road to nowhere, and it may be years afore they sets eyes on a sail again after they loses sight of that good-lookin’ topsail of ourn. I s’pose they won’t starve there, will they, lad?”

“No,” said I, “there is very little fear of that. The island yields an abundance of fruit, as you know, amply sufficient for all their requirements; and they have their punt, which will serve them to go fishing on the lagoon, though she is too small for any of them to venture to leave the island in her. So, on the whole, I think they are quite as well off as they deserve.”

We were by this time clear of the reef and in open water, so I went down to breakfast, leaving Bob at the tiller. Ella was very penitent for her late "naughtiness," as she termed it, and was so lavish with her endearments, to make up for it, that I would very willingly have experienced such a "thunder-squall" every day of my life to have the air cleared afterwards in so agreeable a manner. When I returned to the deck, Bob asked me, previous to his going below to get his breakfast, what I intended to do with, the boats and the canoe, all of which were in tow. I had not thought very much about it, but now that the question was put, I decided to retain the canoe altogether. She was so small and so light, that I thought we could easily carry her on deck in anything but very bad weather, and, ordinarily, she would tow very comfortably astern. If we could contrive to keep her, I thought, she would frequently save wear and tear in our tube-boat; and where a passage of a short distance across the calm surface of a lagoon, from the cutter to the shore, was all that was required, she would answer the purpose perfectly well. As to the boats of the *Albatross*, I decided to tow them fairly out of sight of the island, and then abandon them; thus effectually precluding the possibility of their getting back into their owners' hands, the prevailing winds there being from about south-east, which would drive the boats ever farther and farther from the island. We accordingly retained them in tow for the remainder of that day and all next night, and cast them adrift on the following morning.

We were now within two days' easy sail of the spot which had been indicated to me as the position of the treasure-island: and our thoughts naturally reverted to the question as to whether the treasure really existed or not; Bob feeling the utmost confidence that it would be found precisely as the dying Spaniard had described it, whilst I began to entertain grave doubts as to our success. The important conversation in which the existence and position of the treasure were revealed was recalled, almost word for word, and the notes which I had made at the time were frequently referred to; and certainly everything seemed to abundantly justify Bob's confidence, whilst I was quite unable to point to a single word or circumstance tending to confirm my doubts; the fact is, I suppose, that as we drew nearer to our goal, and began to realise more fully the vast influence which the possession of the treasure would exercise upon our future, I must have been influenced by a feeling that it was "too good to be true." There was so very decided an infusion of the romantic element into everything connected with the affair, that my matter-of-fact mind seemed unable to accept the possibility that there might be truth in it after all.

But to return to the *Water Lily*. On the evening of the day following that on which we sailed from the pirate's island, we found ourselves so near the reputed position of the treasure-island that I decided to heave the cutter to for the night, so as to avoid the possibility of running upon the outlying reef during the darkness. Bob went aloft the last thing after the sun had set, and before darkness closed down upon the face of the tranquil ocean, but he could see nothing that he was able to identify with certainty as land. On the extreme verge of the western horizon he saw, he said, something which *might* be an island; but evening clouds, especially in fine weather and when low down on the horizon, sometimes assume such forms and hues that it is very difficult for even the most experienced mariner to decide whether what he is looking at is land or merely vapour, particularly when land is known or supposed to exist in the direction in which he is looking.

We took in our spinnaker and gaff-topsail therefore, housed the topmast, lashed our helm a-lee, and hauled the fore-sheet over to windward, allowing the jib-sheet to flow. It was my eight hours in, that night: but it was so close below and the weather was so fine, that I brought my hammock on deck and turned in there, with a waterproof-rug rigged tent-fashion over me, to keep off the dew.

Nothing occurred to disturb the tranquillity of the night; and next morning, as soon as breakfast was over, we filled away upon the cutter again and made sail upon our course. Bob should have been in his hammock, or taking his rest in some other fashion, between breakfast-time and noon; but he was so anxious to catch a glimpse of the spot which had attracted us over so many thousand miles of ocean, and had led us to brave so many dangers, that he could not stay below, and he spent the entire morning at the cross-trees on the look-out. I obtained a most excellent observation for longitude, about half-past nine that morning, and on working it up I found that we were barely twenty miles to the eastward of the point we were aiming for: and as we had hove the cutter about at midnight, so as to keep her as nearly as possible directly to windward of the spot, we ought to have been at anchor at noon. But mile after mile was traversed, and still no land appeared rearing itself above the horizon, and at length the time arrived for me to take my meridian altitude. This also was a very capital observation; and its result was that we found ourselves *exactly* where the island was stated to be situated, with no land in sight in any direction from the mast-head.

I must confess that, in spite of the doubts which had lately obtruded themselves upon my mind, I felt keenly disappointed; and as for Bob, he was so chop-fallen that he had not a word to say.

It was not until I had carefully gone once more over my calculations of that day, and had verified the error in our chronometer for which I had made allowance, and had, in short, satisfied myself thoroughly that we actually were where we supposed ourselves to be, that I realised how strongly, notwithstanding my doubts, I had relied upon finding the island and its buried treasure. So far as the primary object of the voyage was concerned, it appeared that it had been undertaken in vain; and had it not been for our accidental acquisition of intelligence respecting my father, we should now have been without an object for the further prosecution of the voyage, excepting that of returning home again as quickly as possible, to secure the best berths we could, and make up, as far as might be, for lost time.

We had hove the cutter to whilst I was taking and working up my noon observation; and, as soon as we had fully realised our great disappointment, I got out the chart, and Bob and I pored over it for a full hour in the endeavour to fix upon the one island out of the many in the great Archipelago which was most likely to be the one upon which the *Amazon* was cast away. However, there were so many, all of which would answer equally well to the imperfect description which we had received, that we were at last obliged to give it up and revert to our original resolution of examining *all* the likely places, in the hope that we should be more successful in our second search than we had proved in our first.

We therefore filled away upon the cutter again, upon such a course as would take us up through the thickest cluster

of islands; and, such is the elasticity of the human mind, before night closed down upon us we appeared to have almost forgotten everything connected with the treasure-island, and thought and spoke of nothing but the chances in favour of and against the finding of my father.

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## Chapter Nineteen.

### My Father.

As the sun went down the wind fell light, and we did not average more than four knots an hour all through the three night-watches. I was at first afraid that we were about to have another hurricane, as it is not usual for the breeze to fall so light as we had it just then in the trades. But the glass was high and steady, and the weather looked settled, so I did not shorten sail; and when the sun rose next morning he brought the breeze up again somewhat fresher with him.

It was my eight hours out that night; consequently I was on deck when day broke. As morning dawned, and the obscurity of night yielded imperceptibly before the approaches of the great day-god, I became conscious that there was a break in the level of the horizon, about four points on my starboard-bow; and, watching this as it continued to grow lighter, I found that it was land, a small and low island apparently, about nine miles distant I was rather surprised at this, as according to our chart, which was constructed from the most recent surveys, the nearest land was fully a day's sail distant to the westward.

I decided to take a nearer look at the place, and as this would involve a deviation from the course which the cutter was then steering, and would necessitate a jibe, I left the helm for a moment with a couple of turns of the tiller-rope round the head of the tiller, and went forward to take in the spinnaker.

Formerly we had considered it necessary that both Bob and I should be on deck when handling this large sail; but practice had by this time taught us both how to work the cutter alone, so that it was now only on occasions of emergency that either called the other to assist in making or shortening sail.

As the *Water Lily* drew in closer with the land, I made out that it was a small coral island, with the usual encircling reef and lagoon. It seemed to be about two miles long, but, from the direction in which the cutter was approaching it, I was unable to judge of its width.

I was soon near enough to distinguish the line of surf which betrayed the presence of the surrounding coral reef, and I then called Bob to come on deck and take the helm, whilst I went aloft, as usual, to look out for a channel.

When he came on deck—

“Why, Harry, how's this?” he exclaimed. “I thought you said there wasn't no land within a hundred and fifty mile of us last night, and here's as pretty a little spot, close aboard of us, as a man need wish to set his eyes upon.”

“I went by the chart,” I answered, “and that showed a clear sea all about here. But you can never rely upon a chart here, in the Pacific; what is clear sea at the time that a survey is being made, may very possibly be dotted with a score of such small islands as the one ahead in a very few years. I have read that coral islands form very rapidly. This one, however, cannot be of such very recent growth, for there are full-grown cocoa-nuts upon it, as well as other trees; I am surprised that it is not shown on the chart.”

I said this as I was standing at the foot of the mast, and on the point of going aloft. In a few seconds more I was standing on the cross-trees and examining the line of surf ahead for the narrow strip of unbroken water which would indicate the existence of a passage through the reef. As I stood thus, my gaze was arrested by the appearance of a small object in rapid motion across the bosom of the lagoon inside the reef, and a scrutiny of a few seconds was sufficient to satisfy me that it was a canoe. Seating myself upon the cross-trees, that I might more conveniently use the glass which I had taken aloft with me, I quickly focussed the instrument and brought it to bear. With its assistance, I was now enabled to discern that the canoe was a craft of about the same size as the one which we had towing astern, and it held three persons. The two who wielded the paddles were black, but, unless my eyes strangely deceived me, the third was a *white man*.

I cannot attempt to describe the extraordinary feeling which came upon me at this discovery.

“Can it be possible,” thought I, “that this is the island upon which the *Amazon* was cast away, and am I about to have the inexpressible joy of seeing my beloved father once more, and so unexpectedly as this?” I again had recourse to the glass, and being now somewhat nearer, I no longer had any room for doubt; the individual who sat in the stern of the canoe, and who, I now saw, was steering the craft with a paddle, *was* undoubtedly white. I now observed, too, that the canoe was passing through an opening in the south-western edge of the reef. The passage would have escaped my notice in the then position of the cutter, had it not been for seeing the canoe passing through it, for it was broadside-on to us, as it were, and the unbroken water was therefore not easily detected. I turned my telescope upon the island, and now saw a thin film of light blue smoke, as from a wood fire, rising from among the trees; but there was no sign of a wreck of any description within view, and if anything of the kind existed, it must be on the other side of the island.

The canoe was by this time in open water, and I saw that she was paddling along the edge of the reef towards us. Bob now made her out from the deck, and hailed me, asking if I saw her. I answered that I did, and, in an uncontrollable tumult of excitement, descended to the deck. I directed Bob to keep the cutter away for the canoe, for, strangely enough, the thought never entered my head that her occupants might be enemies. I ran down below and got up our club ensign, which I hoisted at the peak, and as it blew out in the fresh morning breeze, we saw the

figure in the stern of the canoe rise to his feet and wave his hat. I took up my glass once more, and was now able to make out that this figure was tall, deeply bronzed by the sun, and had grey hair and a thick bushy grey beard.

"That is a white man, Bob, in that canoe," said I excitedly.

"A white man!" exclaimed Bob; "then it's the skipper, Harry, for a thousand pounds."

"No such luck, Bob, I am afraid," replied I; "this man is grey-haired, and my poor father's hair was dark brown, if you recollect."

"True," answered Bob; "but if not the skipper himself, it may be somebody belonging to him."

"That cannot be, either," I returned; "for according to the account we received from the seaman, there was no one left with him but the chief-mate, who, I presume, was Winter—who, you will recollect, was put into your berth when you met with your accident; and Winter was quite a young man—scarcely thirty, I believe."

"Well, whoever it may be, we shall soon find out all about him now, for we shall be alongside the little hooker in another five minutes," remarked Bob philosophically, but with evident disappointment in the tone of his voice.

This was true, for we were nearing the canoe fast. I again had recourse to my telescope, and, with its assistance, was now able to see with perfect distinctness the occupants of the canoe.

I scanned with the greatest intentness the features of him who was steering, and who was facing directly towards us; and as I did so, in a tumult of the most painful agitation and suspense, feature after feature once more became familiar, and notwithstanding the grey hair and beard, I at length recognised, with unspeakable joy, my father.

"Hurrah!" I shouted; "hurrah! it is he—it *is* my father, Bob; and we have found him after all, and that when we little expected to do so. Thank God; oh! thank God!"

"Amen," answered Bob, taking off his tarpaulin reverently for a moment, while the tears rolled down his weather-beaten cheeks.

We took room, and rounded the cutter to, and as she came up into the wind, with all her canvas shaking, the natives vigorously plied their paddles, and with a few lusty strokes shot their light craft alongside.

I went to the gangway, and held out my hand to assist my father in over our low bulwarks, whilst Bob hove the end of a coil of line into the canoe, shouting to the blacks, "Now then, darkies, look out, and catch a turn with this here rope's-end, will ye? for if you goes astarn, you'll have all your work afore ye to overhaul us and get alongside again."

"Good Heaven! that voice—surely I should know it," murmured my father. "Thank you, sir. Yours is the first sail I have seen for—Why, how is this?"

I had been unable to control myself any longer; and, to my father's infinite surprise, he suddenly found himself in my embrace, and, as suddenly, recognised the tones of the voice which called him "father."

I thought the dear old man would have fainted, but he rallied himself with a powerful effort, though it was some little time before he could speak. At length—

"My son! my noble boy Harry," exclaimed he. "Great God! Merciful Father! I thank Thee for this great and unexpected mercy. Little did I think, my dear boy, when I saw your white sails standing in for the island, what unexpected happiness awaited me. And, if I mistake not," added he, "this is my old friend and staunch shipmate, Robert Trunnion. This is indeed a happy day for me," grasping Bob's hand heartily, "a day I have despaired of ever seeing again. But, tell me, what has happened, and how come you to be here in this small cockle-shell of a craft? You surely cannot have been cast away, and have built her yourselves. If you have, you are wonderfully good shipwrights. And how came you to find out that I was here? or is this happy meeting the result of accident? Everything is so surprising that I feel perfectly bewildered."

"You shall know all, dear sir, in good time," I answered. "The story is too long to be told in a breath. Let us get inside, and come to an anchor; and as soon as we are sufficiently recovered from our present excitement to tell an intelligible tale, you shall know everything."

"Well, well, so be it," answered my father; "and I suppose I had better play pilot in navigating this 'seventy-four' of yours through the channel. What water do you draw?"

"Seven feet aft," I answered, "and she works to perfection; so you will have no difficulty with her."

"So much the better," answered my father, "as it will be rather ticklish work. Keep her well to windward, Robert; do not go closer than forty fathoms to the southern extremity of the surf. And now, my dear boy, one word more. How is your sister?"

"Well; quite well, I am happy to say. At least, she was so when we left England, little more than four months ago," I answered; "and so was everybody else in whom we are interested."

"I am delighted beyond measure to hear it," returned my father; "this is *good* news, better than I could have dared to hope. Now keep her away, Robert. Starboard your helm—hard a-starboard; so, steady now as you go. Do you see the opening of the channel? Steer as straight as you like for it. This *will* be a surprise for Winter, indeed."

"He is still with you, then, dear sir?" said I. "I trust he is in good health."

"Yes, I am happy to say he is quite well," returned my father. "Indeed, we have neither of us had a day's illness since we have been on the island. I was quite an invalid at the time that the ship was lost, certainly; but I soon recovered, thanks to Winter's care and good nursing. But how did you know of his being with me?"

"We learned your whole story, from the time of your sailing for home up to the day of your being so shamefully abandoned," I replied, "and that by the merest accident. We happened to fall in with one of the men whom you shipped at Canton, on board a vessel which we boarded on the line, on our passage out. But here is some one with whom I must make you acquainted, dear sir," I continued, as Ella's fair head appeared at the companion.

I then introduced her to my father, briefly narrating the circumstances under which she became a member of our little crew, and frankly explaining the relation in which we now stood towards each other. When I had finished my explanation, my father took the dear little girl by the hand, kissed her on the forehead, and said a few kind words to relieve the embarrassment and agitation under which it was evident she was suffering; and I had the very great satisfaction of seeing that these two beings, in whom I was so warmly interested, were mutually impressed very favourably towards each other.

We soon worked through the short passage in the reef, and then stood away to the westward, rounding the southern extremity of the island very shortly afterwards. The moment that we cleared this point, and opened the western side of the island, Bob shouted, "Ah! there lies the dear old barkie, sure enough. Look at her, Harry, lad. She's sorely mauled about, poor old beauty, but I should still ha' knowed her anywheres, as far as these old eyes could see her."

There, indeed, lay the wreck of the *Amazon*, close to the beach, about two miles off, and sorely mauled about she was; so much so, that I greatly doubted whether Bob would ever have identified her as our old ship, had not my father's presence, and the story we had already heard of her loss, assisted him. Her three lower-masts were still standing, but the whole of her upper works were gone, and I at first supposed that they had been used for fire-wood, until we opened up a tiny bay somewhat nearer us to the southward, and saw a small vessel in process of being built on the beach.

"You have established a ship-yard here, I see, sir," I remarked, as this object came in view.

"Yes," answered my father; "but we have made but poor progress, so far. You will be of the greatest assistance to us, my dear boy—you and Robert here. Since you have managed to turn out such a sweet little craft as this cutter, I shall be strongly inclined to pull our work to pieces and begin all over again."

"How do you mean, sir?" I inquired. "You surely do not imagine that Bob and I built this cutter?"

"Did you not?" returned my father. "Then where did you pick her up?"

"She was built on the Thames," I replied; "and Bob and I have managed to bring her out here between us."

My father was greatly surprised at hearing this, but as we were now approaching the anchorage, it was decided to defer all explanations until we could have an opportunity of proceeding with them in a straightforward fashion. Sail was shortened, and in about ten minutes afterwards we dropped our anchor in a pretty little well-sheltered bay, within a couple of cables' length of the beach, and in full view of a neat little cottage constructed of bamboo, which stood on a lawn of about an acre in extent, environed with beautiful tropical trees and plants.

Winter was down on the beach full of curiosity respecting the new-comers, and I will leave to the reader's imagination the surprise and delight with which he recognised in them two of his old shipmates.

The two canoes conveyed all hands of us ashore, and my father, after welcoming us heartily to "his dominions" as we stepped from the canoes to the beach, gave his arm to Ella, and with me on his other side, and Bob and Winter following arm-in-arm astern, and the two natives bringing up the rear, we at once wended our way to the cottage, where we found that Winter had prepared a sumptuous breakfast in anticipation of our arrival.

Whilst discussing this meal, I related, at my father's earnest solicitation, our whole story, commencing with an account of the wreck on Portland beach, and of the tale of the treasure-island told by the dying Spaniard, and then going on to relate how we had been induced, by a belief in this story, to build and fit out the *Water Lily* and sail in her in search of the treasure, mentioning, in due course, our meeting with the seaman who had given us a clue to the *Amazon's* fate, and of our resolve, therefore, to search the whole Archipelago, if need be, for the abandoned ones; and winding up with an account of our late achievement of the destruction of the *Albatross* and of the consequent imprisonment of her crew, upon the island we had so recently sailed from.

Great was the surprise of my father and his companion as I proceeded, and frequent their comments and interruptions; but at last I got through with it, and then, of course, I became anxious, in my turn, to hear how matters had gone with my father and Winter during their long stay where they now were.

"I have very little to tell," replied my father, in answer to my questions; "and that little I should not now be alive to relate, but for the unceasing care and attention of my friend and comrade, Winter, here, who refused to save himself from a possible lifetime of captivity on this island by deserting his commander. He watched me all through a long and tedious illness, and, under God, was the means of saving my life for this happy moment. We have never quite despaired of being restored to home and friends, but latterly we have felt that our deliverance might be the work of years. At first, we were kept buoyed up by the hope of being rescued by some passing vessel; but, though we have maintained a ceaseless watch, we have never sighted a single sail from the moment of our first arrival here until you hove in sight this morning. All my charts and instruments of every description were carried off when the mutineers left in the boats, so that I have but a very remote idea of our actual whereabouts, but we must be in a very out-of-the-way corner of the globe, as indeed I now gather clearly from what you have told me. Our first work, after my recovery, was the building of this hut: and then followed the preparation of a garden, a short distance inland from

here, so that we might secure the means of existence. As soon as this was completed to our satisfaction, we went to work upon the building of a small vessel but our appliances were so inadequate to the task, that our progress has been excessively slow, as you may judge when I tell you that we have been at work now fully two years, and the craft is yet barely half-finished. Latterly, indeed, we have got on somewhat better, for the two blacks—who, as far as I can learn from their signs and the few words of English they have picked up since being with us, were blown off their own island in a gale of wind, and came ashore here in the last stage of exhaustion—have been of the greatest assistance to us in the mere handling of heavy weights; and now that you have joined us, I think we may make short work of the remainder of the job.”

I was at first disposed to suggest the abandonment of the half-finished schooner (for such she was), but, on more mature consideration, I came to the conclusion that it would be better to finish her, on many accounts—the chief of which was that as we now mustered seven hands, all told, including the blacks, whom we could not leave behind, we should be uncomfortably crowded on board the cutter; and I doubted much whether we could find room to stow away, in so small a craft, a sufficiency of water, to say nothing of provisions for so large a party.

The day was, of course, declared a high holiday on the island; and, after our mutual explanations had been fully given, we all—the whites, of course, that is—proceeded to the beach to inspect the craft on the stocks. She was a much larger craft than the *Lily*, measuring fully thirty tons. My father and Winter had given a great deal of care and attention to her design, and the result was a very pretty model, though her lines were by no means so fine as the cutter's. She was immensely strong, owing to the fact that it was less laborious to build in the timbers just as they were taken from the *Amazon*, or only with such alterations as were imperatively necessary to bring them to the required shape, than it would have been to reduce them with the imperfect tools in the possession of the builders. The whole of her framing was set up and secured, and the garboard and two adjacent streaks on each side bolted to; and that was all. I could easily understand, as I looked on her massive timbers, how great must have been the labour for two pair of hands to bring her even thus far forward; and, in addition to this, there was the pulling of it all to pieces, in the first instance, on board the parent ship, and the rafting of the materials down to the bay afterwards.

After taking a good look at the craft, we shoved off in the canoes for the wreck, calling on board the cutter on our way, that my father and Winter might satisfy the curiosity they felt concerning the little craft which had so successfully traversed so many thousand miles of ocean. They were, naturally, delighted at everything they saw, and admired her model greatly: but were, nevertheless, loud in their expressions of wonder at what they termed our temerity in venturing on so long a voyage in such a mere boat.

A quiet paddle of about half-an-hour took us alongside the wreck, which lay grounded in about ten feet of water, pretty much as she had been left by the mutineers. We had no difficulty in boarding, a substantial accommodation-ladder having been constructed to facilitate so frequent an operation. There was not much to see when we stood upon her deck—the whole of the poop having been removed to furnish materials for the schooner; but Bob and I naturally felt a deep interest in the ship which had formerly been our floating home, and as to whose fate we had for so long been in a state of such painful uncertainty.

We remained on board about an hour, during which Ella insisted on having pointed out to her the exact spot which my old berth had formerly occupied; and then we returned to the shore and visited the garden, which had been formed in a small natural clearing within about a quarter of a mile of the house. Here we found a goodly patch of wheat, almost ready for the sickle: a large plot of potatoes, which, my father said, grew but indifferently well in that climate; a few other English vegetables, some yams, and several fruit-trees of various kinds, including the very useful bread-fruit, which had been carefully selected and as carefully transplanted to their present position, where they had flourished amazingly under the not very efficient gardening skill which had been bestowed upon them by the two recluses. Of animal food there was no lack, the small island being almost overrun by the many descendants of three pigs and half-a-dozen fowls, which the mutineers had, in an unaccountable paroxysm of generosity, left behind.

The remainder of the day was spent in a tour quite over my father's limited dominions, Bob and Winter having, however, devoted the afternoon to the rigging up of a couple of tents close alongside the hut, for the accommodation of us of the cutter's crew. During our ramble, which Ella shared—though she at first wished to remain aloof, thinking my father and I might have private matters to discuss after so long a separation—the subject of the treasure-island again came uppermost; and my father seemed to be strongly of opinion that, in spite of our failure to find it, it really existed, and that our disappointment had arisen in some error as to its exact position. For my own part, I hardly knew what to think. I could not for a moment believe that the Spaniard, knowing himself to be a dying man, would tell a wanton and objectless falsehood; and I had never supposed him to be otherwise than in the full possession of his senses whilst relating his story. But he had given the position of the island definitely, and, on our arrival at the latitude and longitude named, we had found no land at all. True, there had been a certain amount of reservation in his statement. He had given the position “as near as he could ascertain it,” or in words to that effect; but, allowing the possibility of an error, that error was not likely to exceed a few miles, and I thought that, had the island really existed, we ought to have been able, at all events, to see it from our mast-head when in the position ascribed to it.

We talked the matter over at some length—for no one is quite indifferent to the advantages accruing from the possession of wealth—but we could make nothing very satisfactory of it; so at last the subject was changed, and we discussed and arranged our plan of immediate operations, my father's longing for home being a thousand times increased now that he knew we had sent information home of the possibility of his still being in existence. We all fully shared in his impatience, as I knew that Ada would soon begin to feel uneasy, if she were not already so, at the long period which had now elapsed since she could last have heard from or of us. As for Winter, he was a Portland man, and the stories Bob told him of his kith and kin fully aroused his semi-dormant longings to see them all once more.

The next morning, we all turned to with a will upon the schooner. It happened that more materials were required from the wreck; and the obtaining of these, and the rafting of them down to the ship-yard, had hitherto been a work involving the expenditure of much time and great labour, as, until the arrival of the two blacks in their canoe about six months before, my father had nothing in the shape of a boat, excepting a rude catamaran sort of an affair; and



after the acquisition of the canoe, though she was, of course, most useful for many purposes, the rafting down of the timbers and planking was almost as tedious and laborious an operation as ever, the canoe being too small and too light for towing purposes, and their usual mode of procedure had been to kedge down everything.

But our arrival put an entirely new phase upon this part of the business. We got out our tube-boat, and put her together and rigged her; and then we six men—four whites and the two natives, who were strong, active lads—manned her and the cutter, and proceeded to the wreck, where we combined our forces in taking apart such portions of the wreck as we thought most suitable for our purpose.

By the middle of the afternoon two good-sized rafts were in the water, and the *Lily* taking one of these in tow, and the tube-boat (which Bob insisted on christening as the *Ella*) the other, we got the whole down to the bay and moored to the beach in little more than an hour—a task which, my father declared, had usually occupied him and Winter the best part of a day, and even then the amount of material transported had scarcely been a quarter as great as that now brought down. So great, indeed, had been the additional assistance afforded by the two pairs of strong arms belonging to the cutter's crew, that we considered we now had a sufficiency of material to plank the schooner right up to her gunwale.

I do not know whether I have mentioned it before or not, but, in fitting out the *Water Lily*, I had provided a very complete chest of carpenter's tools, so that we might have the means of effecting any necessary repairs to the cutter, as far as our skill would allow; and these now came into play with excellent effect.

We all worked in high spirits, for it was now no longer a doubtful question as to whether the schooner could be finished or not, the additional strength contributed by Bob and myself being found just sufficient to render manageable, and comparatively easy, work which had before proved too heavy for my father and Winter alone, or even when aided by the two natives. These, I may as well now mention, were two lads of about eighteen years of age, and, having been treated very kindly from their first arrival by my father, proved very tractable and willing, and altogether very valuable aids in many respects.

We were none of us very skilful in the handling of tools, and our work was, consequently, of no very highly finished character; but everything was as strong as wood and iron could make it, and within a fortnight we had contrived, by dint of sheer hard work, to get the schooner planked right up.

At first we had a great deal of difficulty with our fastenings, from want of a smith or a smith's forge; and this had been the greatest bar to my father's progress. Ella was the means of helping us out of this difficulty, by suggesting an idea which I think would never have occurred to any of us men. This was neither more nor less than the construction of a rude but efficient smith's hearth out of some old sheet and pig iron obtained from the wreck, and the manufacture of a bellows from some boards and stout tarpaulin, the nozzle being made of bamboo, and inserted into an orifice in the hearth which was packed air-tight with clay. It was a clumsy contrivance certainly, but it answered our purpose well enough to save us a great deal of time and labour.

The laying of the deck was our next task; and it took us another fortnight to do this, as we resolved that everything should be as well done as possible. This was exclusive of the time occupied in fixing the combings of the hatch and fore-scuttle, cabin-companion, skylight, and other openings. As we "got our hands in," however, we made more rapid progress; and, in little more than two months from the date of the *Water Lily's* arrival, the hull of the schooner was completed and in readiness for the reception of her spars. These we got out of the spars of the wreck, all of which had been sent down long before by my father and Winter, and carefully stored up for this very purpose.

Another month saw these spars all shaped and fitted, and ready to be put into their places. This had been the work of my father and myself, aided in the lifting, turning over, and shifting generally by the natives, Bob and Winter busying themselves meanwhile in the manufacture of a suit of sails from those belonging to the *Amazon*. Our rigging was not very trustworthy, being manufactured, for the most part, out of the old rigging of the wreck; but there had been a good supply of new rope also on board, as a stand-by, and this we had used in, as far as it would go, in the most important parts.

We decided to rig the craft complete upon the stocks, and then launch her, and tow her down alongside the wreck, to take in ballast, and her water-tanks, stores, etcetera. This we accordingly did, finishing off everything, even to the bending of the sails; and four months to a day after the *Water Lily's* arrival saw her caulked, her seams paid, her hull painted, and, in short, everything ready, even to wedging up, for launching.

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## Chapter Twenty.

### The Treasure.

This eventful day, it was unanimously agreed, should be observed as a strict holiday, no work except what was absolutely necessary beyond the launch being permissible. Every preparation had been completed the day before, all of us having worked like galley-slaves to achieve this result, as soon as it became apparent that launching on this day might be possible.

The morning dawned fair and serene, the sky was without a cloud, each quivering leaf and blade of grass glittered with diamond-like dew-drops, and the air was laden with the perfume of numberless flowers. Nature appeared in fact to have arrayed herself in gala attire, in honour of the occasion. Bob and Winter were up by daybreak to dress the schooner out with the flags of the old *Amazon*, in addition to a bran-new burgee—red, with a white border, and the name *Ada*, after my sister, in white letters—which floated gallantly in the breeze from the main-topmast-head, and which, I need scarcely inform the sagacious reader, was the work of Ella's skilful fingers. The cutter's flags were equally divided between her and the tube-boat, both craft being moored a short distance apart in the little bay. Our

gun, which had never been dismantled from the time of the fight with the pirate's boats, was loaded with a blank cartridge, well rammed down, and the muzzle plentifully greased to create a louder report, so that the schooner might be honoured with a salute as she took the water; and one of the blacks was stationed on board the *Water Lily*, with instructions to pull the trigger-line directly he saw the schooner fairly in motion on the ways. A bottle of wine was also slung from the schooner's stem, that the ceremony of christening might not be shorn of its usual rite.

This occupied the two mates until breakfast was ready, when we all sat down to the meal in most exuberant spirits. As soon as it was over we all proceeded to the beach, and Bob climbed on board the craft, and took his station forward, in readiness to let go the anchor as soon as she had slid far enough off from the land. Ella took up a position under the bows, supported by my father, who instructed her how to perform the ceremony of christening after the most approved fashion, whilst Winter and I stood by to knock away the spur-shores, and the second native launched and jumped into a canoe, to go alongside and fetch Bob ashore, as soon as his share of the duty was performed.

When we had all taken our stations—

"Is everybody ready?" inquired my father.

A general "Ay, ay," was the response. Ella took the bottle of wine in her hand, and Winter and I poised our hammers.

"Then knock away with a will, lads!" exclaimed the skipper.

A few lusty strokes brought the shores down, the schooner began to move, and Ella dashed the bottle against the craft's bows, exclaiming in a clear, silvery voice, as the wine dripped from the stem:

"God bless the *Ada*, and send her success and prosperity!"

We all took off our hats and cheered lustily as the schooner rushed down the ways and plunged stern foremost into the sparkling sea; the gun went off with a sharp *bang*, and the native gunner instantly, with a terrific yell, sprang over the side of the cutter, and struck out for the shore with all the vigour and activity that fear could impart to his movements.

The schooner clove the water smoothly and easily as she drove astern when once fairly afloat, and held her way long enough to shoot far beyond her consorts at anchor in the bay. As soon as her speed was sufficiently reduced, Bob let go his anchor, and we had the satisfaction of seeing that she floated lightly and on a perfectly even keel.

As soon as Bob came on shore, he, of course, joined us, and lent his aid in admiring and praising our own handiwork, as is pretty generally the custom with all mortals, though some are not so ingenuous in the exhibition of their actual feelings as we were. And I think we had very good reason for our admiration, for the craft was more than slightly, she was decidedly handsome, and we who had put her together were, after all, it must be remembered, only unskilled amateurs; and though I think I may, without undue vanity, say that we were all prime seamen, and knew perfectly well what constituted a handsome and wholesome craft, it is one thing to know this, and quite another to make your work correspond accurately with your ideas.

When we had admired the schooner to our hearts' content, my father wished to know whether any one had any proposal to make as to the manner in which the remainder of the day should be spent. It appeared, from the general silence which ensued that no one had; but on glancing at Ella, who remained beside him, I noticed an eager look in her face, as though she would like to speak, but was restrained by a feeling of timidity.

"What is it, Ella?" inquired I.

"If no one has anything better to propose," she replied, "I think a picnic would be very nice; and I would suggest that the natives be sent on by land, with everything necessary, to the northern end of the island, opposite the poor old *Amazon*, of which we are so soon to see the last, and that the rest of us take Harry's tube-boat, and sail in her quite round the island—which we new-comers have not seen very much of as yet—and stop at the point I have named."

This, of course, we all cordially agreed to, though I could scarcely help smiling furtively at the idea of a picnic, when our lives had been a sort of continuous picnic affair ever since we had been on the island, though, it is true, our pastime had consisted principally of pretty hard work.

However, I made no remark, and we all returned to the house, and proceeded to pack up the necessary viands, etcetera, and to start the "niggers," as Bob invariably termed our black aids, in the proposed direction.

When everything was ready, however, it was found that there was more than we had the conscience to ask the poor fellows to carry, willing as they were; so Ella's programme was so far departed from as to send them by water in a canoe, instead of by land; and as soon as they were fairly away, we shoved off in the cutter's canoe, got on board the tube-boat, hauled up her grapnel, and made sail to the southward.

Here another departure from the programme took place, for my father was curious to see how so singular a craft behaved in open water: so, as there was a nice fresh breeze blowing, and sufficient sea on outside to give him a fair idea of her qualities, we worked out through the channel as soon as we reached it, and sailed round the island *outside* of everything first of all, resuming the original plan as soon as we came inside again.

Both my father and Winter were much struck with the smooth and easy motion with which she took the seas, especially when going close-hauled to windward, the short, choppy head-sea which the breeze had knocked up having not the slightest perceptible retarding effect upon the sharp, gently-swelling tubes, which pierced the combing seas absolutely without any shock whatever; whereas a boat of the usual mould would have pitched and jerked into them, and half-blinded us and wholly wet us through with spray. And they were quite as much surprised

at her stiffness, for her amount of heel was barely perceptible, though we were driving her through it under whole canvas; whilst had we been in the *Water Lily*, with a proportionate amount of sail set, she would, stiff as she was, have been lying down gunwale under.

So rapidly did she skim along over the water too, that, notwithstanding the extra distance traversed beyond that originally proposed, we were in ample time for the meal—luncheon or dinner, whichever we chose to call it—which it was arranged we should partake of picnic fashion in the open air.

I was delighted to observe that both my father and Winter keenly enjoyed this short cruise outside. It was the first time, excepting when my father came out to meet us and pilot us in, that either of them had been outside the reef; and that they were now fairly at sea, and with a staunch and good sea-boat under their feet, seemed an earnest of their easy escape almost more convincing than the fact that the vessel in which that escape was planned to be made was now actually in the water.

Having made the tour of the island both outside and inside the reef, and admired its many beauties, we at length sat down to our meal in high spirits, and with appetites which enabled us to do the most ample justice to Ella's bounteous provision, which, it now appeared, had been in progress the whole of the previous day, in anticipation of some such arrangement as that which she had proposed.

I had noticed an unusual flutter in the dear little girl's manner more than once during the morning, as well as considerable imperfectly repressed excitement; but I had said nothing to her about it, attributing it to that which had produced so much excitement of feeling among the rest of us, namely, the important event of the launch. This feeling of excitement still continued to animate us; but, strangely enough, Ella seemed the least able of the party to control it, and it appeared to have the effect of agitating her nerves considerably. Moreover, she seemed to be singularly pre-occupied over something, answering remarks at random—sometimes when she was not addressed at all—and then flushing up and apologising confusedly.

When our meal was over, a few bottles from a small stock of carefully-hoarded wine, from the *Amazon's* stores, were produced, and at Ella's especial request, we four men proceeded to regale ourselves, and assist digestion with "the fragrant weed." The chief topic of conversation was, of course, the arrangements to be made for a speedy departure from the island. It was decided that on the following day all hands should employ themselves in getting the schooner ballasted, provisioned and watered, and it was thought that, by hard work, all might be done in readiness for a departure at daybreak on the succeeding morning.

My father, Winter, and the two blacks, were to man the schooner, whilst Ella, Bob, and myself, were to continue in the cutter, and it was, of course, a settled thing that we were to keep company as long as it was possible. We also decided upon certain rendezvous in case of being compelled, by bad weather, to part company at any particular part of the voyage. These rendezvous, I may as well mention, were Melbourne, Cape Town, Saint Helena, Saint Antonio in the Cape de Verde group, and Madeira.

When this topic seemed pretty well exhausted, Ella remarked nervously, "It seems then, Harry, that you have quite given up the idea of making any further search for the treasure-island. I have not heard it mentioned once for—oh! ever so long."

"I fear we must think no more of that," I replied. "When the story was first told to me, it seemed an easy matter to sail direct to the spot, but the fact that some mistake has occurred somewhere with regard to its position has quite thrown us out, and to look for it among the numerous islands which constitute this archipelago would be somewhat like searching for a needle in a bundle of hay, and the chances of finding either the one or the other would be about equal, I should say. If I only held a sufficient clue to warrant the slightest hope of success, I would willingly prosecute a search, but I do not."

"Are you *quite sure* that you do not?" she returned, still very nervously. "Tell us the story all over again; perhaps some useful idea may suggest itself to one or other of us, if it is all gone carefully over once more."

"Certainly I will," said I, "if it be only to gratify you, little one; I anticipate no further result. You must know, then, Ella and gentlemen, that the Spaniard who told me this story was on his death-bed when he confided it to me. He asserted that a treasure-ship lay buried in the sandy beach of a certain island here in the Pacific, and he not only gave me the latitude and longitude of the island, but he minutely described it, so that I might recognise it at once, and he also described certain marks whereby I might be able to fix upon the exact spot in the beach where the buried treasure-ship lay."

"And I suppose you have fixed upon your mind a kind of mental picture of this island, drawn from the description given you," said Ella; "and I presume you are of opinion that you would recognise the island in a moment, if you saw it?"

"Exactly so," I answered. "I can see it before me at this moment,"—shutting my eyes—"as distinctly as possible. There it lies, about three miles away, with the surf beating all round it; and there, in bold relief against the clear blue sky, stands the isolated clump of seven cocoa-nut trees on the extreme northernmost point of the island."

"Somewhat like these that we are sitting under at this moment?" interrupted Ella excitedly.

"Ye-es," said I, "certainly; somewhat like these. It is curious now, but I never noticed until this moment that these trees are seven in number. If, now, any two of them were *marked* in any way—"

"Somewhat like this?" again interrupted Ella, as she started to her feet and placed her hand upon a very perceptible scar in the trunk of the central tree.

We sprang to our feet as one man, infinitely more excited even than Ella was, and walked up to the tree and carefully examined the mark. There was no mistake about it, the bark had been deeply cut away with a knife, and I cannot, for the life of me, say how it was that it had never attracted my attention, unless it be that the wound was now weather-stained, and by no means so conspicuous as I had pictured it in my mind; perhaps it was in a great measure due, too, to the fact that the island we were on, though answering accurately to the description given of the treasure-island, was quite unlike the picture my imagination had conjured up.

"Now for the other mark," I exclaimed; "it is on one or other of the remaining six trees, if this really be—"

"Here it is," again exclaimed Ella, darting to a tree which stood on the edge of the clump, and again pointing out a mark very similar to the first.

Of the nature of this mark, too, there could be no possible doubt. I seized a half-consumed stick from the embers of the expiring fire: and, getting the two marked trees in line, I walked away from them, keeping them in one, until I saw, just clear of the trees and bushes on the southern extremity of the island, a small pinnacle of uncovered rock peering blackly out from among the snowy glittering surf. I then drove the stick I held in my hand deep into the sandy beach, exclaiming, "Here lies the buried treasure-ship, if there be any truth in the story."

"We'll soon set that question at rest," exclaimed Bob. "Here, you two niggers, jump into this here canoe and paddle me down to the cutter as quick as you knows how. I'm off a'ter they shovels as we laid in for this here very job," he explained, turning to me, "and I'll be back ag'in in next to no time."

Whilst he was *gone*, I sought and obtained an explanation from Ella of the manner in which she had made this most important discovery. It seemed that she had amused herself by wandering pretty nearly all over the island, whilst we were hard at work upon the schooner, and in one of her rambles her attention had been attracted to this very clump of trees. Their number had impressed itself upon her, and, endeavouring to remember what it was she had heard or dreamed connected with seven cocoa-nut trees, the story of the treasure had suddenly flashed across her mind. This led, of course, to an examination of the trees and the discovery of the marks upon them, on the day but one preceding the launch of the schooner; and, seeing that we were disposed to make the launching day a gala day, she decided to keep her own counsel until the arrival of the day itself, and to let the revelation of the discovery be made at such a time as still further to increase our reasons for rejoicing. And upon this resolution had been based her plot for the picnic.

"I am so delighted, Harry, dear," she added in conclusion, "that it is I who have made this discovery: you cannot think what a pleasure it is to a woman to contribute to the happiness and prosperity of the man she loves. And, beside this, there is the satisfaction of knowing that, if the wealth you have spoken of really lies buried here, and I have no doubt whatever that it does, you will now be under no necessity for following up a profession which must inevitably have involved long separations from me. I am so happy, dearest, for I do not think I could have endured that."

I was deeply affected by this and frequent other evidences of the warmth and strength of Ella's attachment to me, and of the confiding frankness with which she revealed it; and I believe most conscientiously that the greatest gratification I derived from the discovery of the treasure arose from a knowledge of the extended power it would bestow upon me to contribute to her happiness.

Bob soon returned with a couple of shovels, and, springing ashore from the canoe, he handed one to Winter, and began at once to ply the other most vigorously himself, exclaiming as he did so:

"There you are, my lad: now fire away as hard as you like. There's only a few feet of sand between us and gold enough to make all our fortin's a dozen times over, so let's rouse it up and have a look at it, without any more words."

The two men worked with a will, and soon stood in a good-sized hole, about three feet deep, whilst the rest of us looked on at their labours with the keenest interest. At length Winter's shovel struck upon something hard, and he announced the fact with a joyous shout. Bob, however, still continued working away without meeting with any resistance. A few more strokes of Winter's shovel laid bare a small patch of damp discoloured planking, a further proof, if we needed one, of the truth of the story. Bob was still digging away as hard as ever. Presently he ceased digging, and began shovelling the loose sand off a piece of the deck or something else which he had got down to. This was soon uncovered, and we then saw that it was a piece of *loose* plank, which he and Winter succeeded between them in raising, and underneath it lay a dark hollow cavity. To work they both went once more, and in a short time three more loose planks were so far uncovered as to permit of their being removed.

This accomplished, it was found that we had been so fortunate as to hit, at the first trial, upon the hole through which the Spaniard had penetrated to the innermost recesses of the ship. A great deal of sand still remained to be cleared away, however, before we could get at the gold; and my father and I were on the point of relieving the two mates, when the natives, who had looked on at the operations with a great deal of interest and intelligence, stepped forward, and said, "No, no; now me work." And though they had probably never seen shovels in their lives before, and were a little awkward at first in the handling of them, they soon got into the swing of it, and did their work as well as either of the others. And so they kept on, spell and spell, the mates and the "niggers," neither party seeming willing that my father or I should share in the hard work; and in about an hour and a half, Bob's shovel suddenly struck sharply upon something harder than wood. He and Winter were both working under the influence of powerful excitement, so it was not long before they had cleared away the sand sufficiently to enable them to lay hold of and drag forth an ingot, black and discoloured almost as rusty iron, but heavy enough to prove most satisfactorily that it was not that metal. It was handed up, and I at once proceeded to scrape away with my strong clasp knife upon its surface, quickly establishing the fact that it was indeed the precious metal.

This I considered sufficient for one day, especially as it had been agreed that it should be a holiday. So, with

considerable difficulty, I at length persuaded the two mates to come out of their hole, and rest after their violent exertions; and shortly afterwards our goods and chattels were packed up and put on board one of the canoes, in charge of the two natives, and the remainder of the party embarked in the tube-boat with the gold—thirteen ingots in all—that had been brought to light, the sails were hoisted, and we ran down to the anchorage in the bay with both canoes in tow.

It would be difficult to express the satisfaction which all felt at this important discovery, but to Bob and me the satisfaction was peculiarly great, for we had now accomplished all that our most sanguine expectations had led us to hope for in projecting this adventurous voyage—more, indeed; for, as the reader is aware, when the subject was first mooted we had no hope of finding my father, having quite given him up as dead.

The next day saw us hard at work again, and, not to dwell too long upon matters which may be passed over briefly, in three days we had the box of gems, and as much gold as we considered we could take. The schooner was ballasted with it, taking in, as nearly as we could calculate, twenty tons, and the precious metal was also substituted for the lead ballast of the cutter. The aperture in the deck of the buried ship was then carefully boarded over as before, the sand shovelled back into its place, and to time and the winds were left the work of completely eradicating all remaining traces of our labours. Both craft were then fully provisioned and watered, abundant preparation having already been made, and on the morning following the completion of our final arrangements, both craft made sail from the island, the *Ada* leading out through the channel, and stood away to the southward and westward under every stitch of canvas that would draw. We soon found, however, that in moderate weather the *Water Lily* could sail round and round the *Ada*, and we had to take in our topsail and haul down a reef in our mainsail to avoid running away from her altogether; it was only when it came to double-reefed canvas that her superior power told sufficiently to produce an equality in our speeds. It seemed as though everything which we were to meet with in the shape of adventure had befallen us on the first half of our voyage, for day after day passed by without anything to distinguish it from the others, and after a quick and pleasant run, we reached Melbourne just in time to catch the homeward-bound mail, and to send a hurried letter to my sister, acquainting her with the agreeable intelligence of our double success. I here had an opportunity of acquainting the proper authorities with all the circumstances connected with the destruction of the pirate-brig, and of the crew being imprisoned on the island, and I afterwards learned that a cruiser had been despatched to the spot, and that the entire band were captured, tried, condemned upon a mass of evidence, which was soon collected against them, and hanged.

Here also I had the happiness of being united to the dear girl who had in so many ways proved herself worthy of my best and strongest love, and as our story—excepting that part of it which related to the finding of the treasure—had got wind, the sympathy and kind feeling shown towards us by the warm-hearted colonists, was such as to convert our wedding-day almost into a day of public rejoicing. All the ships, without exception, were dressed with flags, and there was a long article in one of the local papers headed, “Thrilling Romance of the Sea,” in which the story of Ella’s rescue from the wreck told with great effect.

We remained at Melbourne about a week, and then made sail once more, still with favourable winds and fine weather, until we reached the Cape of Good Hope—which we did in little more than a month—when we encountered a very strong breeze from the southward and eastward, from which we were glad enough to take shelter behind the fine breakwater in the Bay. Here we again filled up provisions and water, and once more despatched letters home.

By the time that we had done what we wanted, the gale was over, and we lost no time in making a fresh start. We soon got into the south-east trades, and, as they happened to be blowing strong, we made the best of them, and did not attempt to stop at Saint Helena. We were fortunate again in crossing the line, getting a little slant of wind, which carried us handsomely across the usually calm belt which so tries the patience of the homeward-bound seaman at that spot; and after a remarkably fine passage of thirty-nine days from Table Bay, we found ourselves at anchor in Funchal Roads.

One of the canoes (both of which the schooner carried on deck) was got out, and my father and I went ashore to the post-office, where we found, as we expected, letters from my sister in answer to ours from Melbourne. My poor father was completely unmanned by the warmth of affection breathed forth in my sister’s letter to him, and I was scarcely less so at the delight she manifested at our safety and success, and the warm sympathy with which she responded to the timid message my letter had conveyed to her from her unknown sister.

We hurriedly got in a stock of wine, and once more made sail, and after a baffling passage of a fortnight, against head-winds and light airs and calms, reached Weymouth Bay on a most lovely evening in the last week of June, having accomplished our voyage round the world, with all its delays, in somewhat under eleven months.

The moment that we were at anchor one of the canoes was got into the water, and my father, Ella, and I were paddled ashore by the two natives (who could now speak English tolerably well, and had accustomed themselves to the use of civilised clothing), Bob and Winter remaining on board their respective craft that night to take care of them.

We landed at the flight of steps at the pier-end, and made the best of our way at once to my aunt’s house. My sister was there, eagerly expecting us; for it appeared that she had been on the Esplanade listening to the strains of the regimental band, and had recognised the *Water Lily* as we drew in towards the anchorage.

I will pass over in silence the rapturous meeting which ensued, for the feelings of all were of too deep and sacred a character for so inexperienced a pen as mine to deal with. Suffice it to say that we all enjoyed on that evening one of those short seasons of perfect, unalloyed happiness which are occasionally permitted even here on earth.

Little now remains to be told. We succeeded, after a vast amount of hard work and difficulty, in turning our gold into cash: and the proceeds were equally divided among us five whites; the result being, as I suppose, I need hardly say, a magnificent fortune to each. Winter, like the honest fellow that he was, immediately married the girl who had

consented to share his uncertain fortune as a seaman: and the two blacks attached themselves, as a matter of course, to my father's establishment. As for Bob, he asserted roundly that his gold would be of no use or value to him if I "turned him adrift," so he became, I need scarcely say with my hearty good-will, a fixture in my establishment; and his whole thoughts are now set on being made sailing-master of a fine schooner yacht which is building for me.

I found out Ella's relations, and communicated the fact of her rescue from the wreck, and of her having become my wife; but I said nothing respecting our immense wealth, merely stating that I was possessed of a comfortable independency, as I wished to ascertain whether they were willing to receive her as a relative, on her own and her mother's account. I regret, for the sake of human nature, to say that the interview was eminently unsatisfactory; and I left their house with a mental resolve that my wife should never, with my consent, enter the doors of such unnatural relatives.

## The End.

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