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by William Clark Russell**

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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE WRECK OF THE GROSVENOR,
VOLUME 1 OF 3 ***

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THE WRECK OF THE "GROSVENOR."

THE
WRECK OF THE "GROSVENOR:"

AN ACCOUNT OF
*THE MUTINY OF THE CREW AND THE
LOSS OF THE SHIP*
WHEN TRYING TO MAKE THE BERMUDAS.

IN THREE VOLUMES.
VOL. I.

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THE WRECK OF THE "GROSVENOR."

CHAPTER I.

There was every appearance of a south-westerly wind. The coast of France, which had been standing high and shining upon the horizon on the port bow, and so magnified by the clear northerly air that you could discern, even at that distance, the dim emerald sheen of the upper slopes and the streaky shadows thrown by projecting points and elbows on the white ground, was fast fading, though the sun still stood within an hour of its setting beyond the bleak Foreland. The north wind, which had rattled us with an acre of foam at our bows right away down the river, and had now brought us well abreast of the Gull lightship, was dropping fast. There was barely enough air to keep the royals full, and the ship's number, which I had just hoisted at the peak—a string of gaudy flags which made a brilliant figure against the white canvas of the spanker—shook their folds sluggishly.

The whole stretch of scene, from the North Foreland down to the vanishing French headlands miles away yonder, was lovely at that moment—full of the great peace of an ocean falling asleep, of gently moving vessels, of the solemn gathering of shadows. The town of Deal was upon the starboard bow, a warm cluster of houses, with a windmill on the green hills turning drowsily, here and there a window glittering with a sudden beam of light, an inclined beach in the foreground with groups of boats high and dry upon it, and a line of foam at its base which sang upon the shingle so that you could hear it plainly amid intervals of silence on board the ship. The evening sun shining over the giant brow of the South Foreland struck the grey outline of the cliff deep in the still water, but the clear red blaze fell far and wide over the dry white downs of Sandwich and the outlying plains, and threw the distant country into such bold relief against the blue sky that, from the sea, it looked close at hand, and but a short walk from the shore.

There were three or four dozen vessels at anchor in the Downs waiting for a change of wind or anticipating a dead calm for some hours. A few others, like ourselves, were swimming stealthily over the slack tide, with every foot of their canvas piled upon them with the effort to reach safe anchorage before the wind wholly failed and the tide turned. A large ship, with her sails stowed and her masts and rigging showing with the fineness of ivory-tracing against the sky, was being towed up Channel, and the slapping of the water by the paddles of the tug, in fast capricious revolutions, was quite audible, though both ship and steamer were a long league distant. Here and there small boats were rowing away from the anchored ships for the shore. Now and again you could hear the faint distant choruses of seamen furling a big sail or paying out more cable, the *clank, clank* of which was as pretty as music. Down in the east the heavens were a deep blue, flecked along the water line with white sails, which glowed in the sunshine like beacons.

I was in a proper mood to appreciate this beautiful tranquil scene. I was leaving England for a long spell, and the sight of that quiet little town of Deal and the grand old Foreland cliffs shutting out the sky, and the pale white shores we had left far astern, went right to my heart. Well, it was just a quiet leave-taking of the old country without words or sobs.

"The pilot means to bring up. I have just heard him tell the skipper to stand by for a light sou'-westerly breeze. This is a *most* confounded nuisance! All hands, perhaps, in the middle watch to get under way."

"I expected as much," said I, turning and confronting a short, squarely-built man, with a power of red hair under his chin, and a skin like yellow leather through thirty years exposure to sun and wind and dirt all over the world. This was the chief mate, Mr. Ephraim Duckling, confidently assumed by me to be a Yankee, though he didn't talk with his nose. I had looked at this gentleman with some doubt when I first met him in the West India Docks. He had blue eyes, with a cast in the port optic; this somehow made him humorous, whether or no, when he meant to be

droll, so he had an advantage over other wits. He had hair so dense, coarse, and red withal, that he might have been safely scalped for a door-mat. His legs were short, and his body very long and broad, and I guessed his strength by the way his arm filled out, and threatened to burst up the sleeve of his coat when he bent it. So far he had been polite enough to me, in a mighty rough fashion indeed; and as to the men, there had been little occasion for him to give orders as yet.

"I expected as much," said I. "I have been watching the coast of France for the last quarter of an hour, and the moisture has nearly shut it out altogether. I doubt if we'll fetch the Downs before the calm falls."

"There's a little wind over the land, though, or that mill wouldn't be turning."

He turned his eyes up aloft; then went to the ship's side, and looked over. I followed him. The clear green water was slipping slowly past, and now and again a string of sea-weed went by, or a big, transparent jelly-fish, or a great crab floating on the top of the water. A thin ripple shot out in a semicircle from the ship's bow, and, at all events, we might tell that we were moving by watching the mast of the Gull lightship sliding by the canvas of a vessel hull below the horizon to the eastward of the sands.

Some of the hands were on the forecastle, looking and pointing towards the shore. Others stood in a group near the galley, talking with the cook, a fat, pale man, with flannel shirt-sleeves rolled above his elbows. The pigs in the long-boat grunted an accompaniment to the chattering of a mass of hens cooped under the long-boat. There was no movement in the sea, and the great sails overhead hung without flapping, and nothing stirred aloft but the light canvas of the royals, which sometimes shook against the masts lazily, and with a fine distant sound.

The skipper stood on the weather-side of the poop, against the starboard quarter-boat, conversing with the pilot.

Have before you a tall, well-shaped man, with iron-grey hair, a thin aquiline nose, a short compressed mouth, small dark eyes, which looked at you imperiously from under a perfect hedge of eyebrow, and whitish whiskers, which slanted across his cheeks; dressed in a tall hat, a long monkey-jacket, and square-toed boots.

Captain Coxon was a decidedly good-looking man, not in the smallest degree approaching the conventional notion of the merchant-skipper. Happily, it is no condition of good seamanship that a man should have bow-legs, and a coppery nose, and groggy eyes; and that he should prefer a dish of junk to a savoury kickshaw, and screeching rum to good wine. I had heard before I joined the *Grosvenor* that Coxon was a smart seaman, though a bully to his men. But this did not prejudice me. I thought I knew my duties well enough to steer clear of his temper; and for the rest, knowing what a seafaring life is, and how scarcely an hour ever comes without bringing some kind of peril of its own, I would rather any day take service under a Bashaw who knew his work, than a mild-natured creature who didn't.

The pilot was a little dusky-faced man, with great bushy whiskers, and a large chocolate-coloured shawl round his throat, though we were in August. I was watching these two men talking, when Duckling said—

"It's my belief that we shall have trouble with those fellows forward. When we trimmed sail off the North Foreland did you notice how they went to work?"

"Yes, I did. And I'll tell you what's the matter. As I was going forward after dinner, the cook stopped me, and told me the men were grumbling at the provisions. He said that some of the pork served out stunk, and the bread was mouldy and full of weevils."

"Oh, is that it!" said Duckling. "Wait till I get them to sea, and I'll give them my affidavit now, if they like, that *then* they'll have something to cry over. There's a Portugee fellow among them, and no ship's company can keep honest when one of those devils comes aboard. He'll always find out something that's wrong, and turn and tumble it about until it sets all hands on fire."

He went to the break of the poop and leaned, with his arms squarely set, upon the brass rail, and stared furiously at the group of men about the galley. Some of them grew uneasy, and edged away and got round to the other side of the galley; others, of those who remained, folded their arms and stared at him back, and one of them laughed, which put him in a passion at once.

"You lazy hounds!" he bellowed in a voice of thunder, "have you nothing to get about? Some of you get that cable range there more over to windward. You, there, get some scrubbing-brushes and clean the long-boat's bottom. Forecastle, there, come down out of that and see that your halliards are clear for running! I'll teach you to palaver the cook, you grumbling villains!" and he made a movement so full of menace that the most obstinate-looking of the fellows got life into them at once, and bustled about.

I looked at the skipper to see what he thought of this little outbreak; but neither he nor the pilot paid the smallest attention to it: only, when Duckling had made an end, the pilot gave an order which was repeated by the chief mate with lungs of brass—

"Aft here, and clew up the mainsail and furl it!"

The men threw down the scrubbing-brushes and chain-hooks which they had picked up, and came aft to the main-deck in a most surly fashion. Duckling eyed them like a mastiff a cat. I noticed some smart-looking hands among them, but they all to a man put on a lubberly air; and as they hauled upon the various ropes which snug a ship's canvas upon the yard preparatory to its being furled, I heard them putting all manner of coarse, violent expressions, having reference to the ship and her officers, into their songs.

They went up aloft slowly and laid out along the yard, grumbling furiously. And to show what bad sailors they were, I suppose, they stowed the sail villainously, leaving bits of the leech sticking out, and making a bunt that must have blown out to the first cap-full of wind.

I was rather of opinion that Duckling's behaviour was founded on traditions which had been surrendered years ago by British seamen to Yankee skippers and mates. He had sailed a voyage in this ship with Coxon, and the captain therefore knew his character. That Coxon should abet Duckling's behaviour towards the men by his silence, was a bad augury. I reckoned that they understood each other, and that the whole ship's company, including myself, might expect a very uncomfortable voyage.

Meanwhile, Duckling waited until the men were off the yard and descending the rigging: he then roared out, "Furl the mainsail!"

The men stopped coming down, and looked at the yard and then at Duckling; and one of them said, in a sullen tone, "It is furled."

I was amazed to see Duckling hop off the deck on to the poop-rail and spring up the rigging: I thought that he was going to thrash the man who had answered: and the man evidently thought so too, for he turned pale, and edged sideways along the ratline on which he stood, whilst he held one of his hands clenched. Up went Duckling, shaking the shrouds violently with his ungainly, sprawling way of climbing, and making the men dance upon the ratlines. In a moment he had swung himself upon the foot-rope and was casting off the yard-arm gaskets. I don't think half a dozen men could have loosed the sail in the time taken by him to do so. Down it fell, and down he came, hand over fist along the main-topsail sheets against the mainmast, bounded up the poop-ladder, and without loss of breath, roared out, "Furl the mainsail!"

The men seemed inclined to disobey: some of them had already reached the bulwark: but another bellow, accompanied by a gesture, appeared to decide them. They mounted slowly, got upon the yard, and this time did the job in a sailor-like fashion.

"I'm only beginning with them," he said in his rough voice to me; and then glanced at Coxon, who gave him a nod and a smile.

The pilot now told me to go forward and see everything ready for bringing up. We were drawing close to the Downs, but the air had quite died out and the sea stretched like oil to the horizon. I don't know what was giving us way, for the light sails aloft hung flat, and the smoke of a steamboat with its two funnels only showing away across the Channel, went straight up into the sky. There must, however, have been a faint, imperceptible tide running, but it took us another half-hour to reach the point where the pilot had resolved to bring up, and by that time the sun had sunk behind the great headland beyond Deal, and was casting a broad crimson glare upon the further sea.

The royals and top-gallant sails were clewed up and furled, and then the order was given to let go the topsail halliards. Down came the three heavy yards rumbling along the masts, with the sound of chain rattling over sheaves. The canvas fell into festoons, and the pilot called, "All ready forrard?"

"All ready."

"Let go the anchor."

"Stand clear of the cable!" I shouted.

Whack! whack! went the carpenter's driving hammer. A moment's pause, then a tremendous splash, and the cable rushed with a hoarse outcry through the hawser hole.

When this job was over I waited on the forecastle to superintend the stowing of the sails forward. The men worked briskly enough, and I heard one of them who was stowing the fore-topmast stay-sail say "that it was good luck the skipper had brought up. He didn't think he'd be such a fool."

This set me wondering what their meaning could be; but I thought it best to take no notice nor repeat what I had heard, as I considered that the less Mr. Duckling had to say to the men the better we should all get on.

It was half-past seven by the time the sails were furled and the decks cleared of the ropes. The hands went below to tea, and I was walking aft when the cook came out of the galley and said—

"Beg your pardon, sir; would you mind tasting of this?" And he handed me a bit of the ship's biscuit. I smelt it and found it mouldy, and put a piece in my mouth, but soon spat it out.

"I can't say much for this, cook," said I.

"It's not fit for dogs," replied the cook. "But, so far as I've seen, all the provisions is the same. The sugar's like mud, and the molasses is full of grit; and though I've been to sea man and boy two and twenty year, I never saw tea like what they've got on board this ship. It ain't tea—it makes the liquor yaller. It's shavings, and wot I say is, regular tea *ain't* shavings."

"Well, let the men complain to the captain," I answered. "He can report to the owners and get the ship's stores condemned."

"It's my belief they was condemned afore they came on board," answered the cook. "I'll bet any man a week's grog that they was bought cheap in a dockyard sale o' rotten grub, by order o' the Admiralty."

"Give me a biscuit," said I, "and I'll show it to the captain."

He took one out from a drawer in which he kept the dough for the cuddy's use, and I put it in my pocket and went aft.

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CHAPTER II.

I will here pause to describe the ship which, being the theatre of much that befel me which is related in this book, I should place before your eyes in as true a picture as I can draw.

The *Grosvenor*, then, was a small, full-rigged ship of five hundred tons, painted black, with a single white streak below her bulwarks. She was a soft-wood vessel, built in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Her lines were very perfect. Indeed, the beauty of her hull, her lofty masts, stayed with as great perfection as a man-of-war's, her graceful figure-head, sharp yacht-like bows and round stern, had filled me with admiration when I first beheld her. Her decks were white and well kept. She had a poop and a top-gallant forecastle, both of which I think the builder might have spared, as she was scarcely big enough for them. There was a good deal of brass-work on her after-decks, and more expense than she deserved, from the perishable nature of the material of which she was constructed, had been lavished upon her in respect of deck ornamentation. Her richly carved wheel, brass belaying-pins, brass capstan, brass binnacle, handsome skylights, and other such details made her look like a gay pleasure-vessel rather than a sober trader. Her cuddy, however, was plain enough, containing six cabins, including the pantry. The woodwork was cheaply varnished mahogany; a fixed table ran from the mizzen-mast to within a few feet of the cuddy front, and on either side this table was a stout hair-covered bench. Aft the mizzen-mast were the two cabins respectively occupied by Captain Coxon and Mr. Duckling. My own cabin was just under the break of the poop, so that from the window in it I could look out upon the main-deck. A couple of broad skylights, well protected with brass wire-fenders, let plenty of light into the cuddy; and swinging trays and lamps, and red curtains to draw across the skylights when the sun beat upon them, completed the furniture of this part of the vessel.

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We could very well have carried a few passengers, and I never learned why we did not; but it may, perhaps, have happened that nobody was going our way at the time we were advertised to sail.

We were bound to Valparaiso with a general cargo, consisting chiefly of toys, hardware, Birmingham and Sheffield cutlery, and metal goods, and a stock of pianofortes. The ship, to my thinking, was too deep, as though the owners had compensated themselves for the want of passenger-money by "taking it out" in freight. I readily foresaw that we should be a wet ship, and that we should labour, more than was comfortable, in a heavy sea. The steerage was packed with light goods, bird-cages and such things, but space was left in the 'tween decks, though the cargo came flush with the deck in the hold.

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However, in spite of being overloaded, the *Grosvenor* had beaten everything coming down the river that day. Just off the Reculvers, for example, when we had drawn the wind a trifle more abeam, we overhauled a steamer. She was pretty evidently a fast screw, and her people grew jealous when they saw us coming up astern, and piled up the fires, but could not stop us from dropping her, as neatly as *she* dropped an old coal brig that was staggering near the shore under dirty canvas. But she smothered us with her smoke as we passed her to leeward, and I dare say they were glad to see the dose we got for our pains.

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I came aft, as I have said, after leaving the baker, with the biscuit in my pocket, and got upon the poop. The skipper had gone below with the pilot, and they were having tea. Duckling was walking the poop, swearing now and again at a couple of ordinary seamen, whom he had set to work to flemish-coil the ropes along the deck, for no other reason than that he might put as much work upon them as he could invent—for this flemish-coiling was of no use under the circumstances, and is only fit for Sundays on passenger ships when you want to please the ladies with "tidy" effects, or when a vessel is in port. A watch had been set forward, and having cast a look up aloft to see that everything was trim, I went down the companion-ladder to the cuddy, followed by Duckling.

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The interior of the cabin looked like some old Dutch painting, for the plain mahogany woodwork gave the place an antique air. The lamps were alight, for it was dusk here, though daylight was still abroad upon the sea; and the lamplight imparted a grave, old-fashioned colouring to the things it shone upon. The skipper sat near the mizzen-mast, stirring the sugar in a cup of tea. He looked better without than with his hat; his forehead was high, though rather peaked, and his iron-grey hair, parted amid-ships and brushed carelessly over his ears, gave him a look of dignity. The coarse little pilot was eating bread and butter voraciously, his great whiskers moving as he worked his jaws.

Duckling and I seated ourselves at the table, and I had some difficulty to prevent myself from laughing at the odd figures Duckling and the pilot made side by side—the one with his whiskers working like a pair of brushes, and the other with that door-mat of red hair on his head, and the puzzling cast of the eye that made me always doubt which one I should address when I tried to look him full in the face.

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"There's a breeze coming from the sou'-west, sir," said Duckling to the captain. "The water's darkish out in that quarter, but I don't think there's enough of it to swing the ship."

"Let it come favourable, and we'll get under way at once," answered Coxon. "I had a spell of this sort of thing last year—for ten days, wasn't it, Duckling?—because I neglected a light air that sprang up south-easterly. I thought it couldn't have held ten minutes, but it would have carried me well away to the French side before it failed, and made me a free passage down, for the wind came fresh from south by west and dead-locked me here. Mr. Royle, what's going forwards among the men? I heard them cursing pretty freely when they were up aloft."

"They are complaining of the ship's provisions, sir," I replied. "The cook gave me a biscuit just now, and I promised to show it to you."

Saying which, I pulled the biscuit out of my pocket and put it upon the table. He contracted his bushy eyebrows, and, without looking at the biscuit, stared angrily at me.

"Hark you, Mr. Royle," said he, in a voice I found detestable for the sneering contempt it conveyed. "I allow no officer that sails under me to become a confidant of my crew. Do you understand?"

I flushed up as I answered that I was no confidant of the crew: that the cook had stopped me to explain the men's grievance, and that I had asked him for a biscuit to show the captain as a sample of the ship's bread which the steward was serving out.

"It's very good bread," said the obsequious pilot, taking up the biscuit whilst he wiped the butter out of the corners of his mouth.

"Eat it, then!" I exclaimed.

"Damnation! eat it yourself!" cried Coxon, furiously. "You're used to that kind of fare, I should think, and like it, or you wouldn't be bringing it into the cuddy in your pocket, would you, sir?"

I made him no answer. I could see by the expression in Duckling's face that he sided with the skipper, and I thought it would be a bad look-out for me to begin the voyage with a quarrel.

"I'll trouble you to put that biscuit where you took it from," the captain continued, with an enraged nod in the direction of my pocket, "and return it to the blackguard who gave it, and tell him to present Captain Coxon's respects to the men, and inform them that if they object to the ship's bread, they're welcome to take their meals along with the pigs in the long-boat. The butcher 'll serve them."

"Mr. Royle tells me they find the meat worse than the bread," said Mr. Duckling. "I guess the hounds who grumble most are men who have shipped out of workhouses, where their grub was burnt burgoo twice a day, and a lick of brimstone to make it easy."

He laughed loudly at his own humour, and was joined by the pilot, who rubbed his hands and swore that he hadn't heard a better joke for years.

I made what despatch I might with my tea, not much desiring to remain in company with Coxon in his present temper. I fancy he grew a little ashamed of himself presently, for he softened his voice and now and again glanced across at me. The pilot, looking up through the skylight, called attention to the vane at the main-royal masthead, which was fluttering to a light air from the south-west, as had been predicted, and as I could tell by referring to the tell-tale compass, which was swung just over where Coxon was seated. Then Coxon and his chief mate talked of the time they meant to occupy in the run to Valparaiso. I understood the former to say that his employers had given him eight weeks to do it in. I should like to have said that had they added another two to that, they would still have been imposing enough upon us all to keep us alive. But at this point I quitted the table, giving Coxon a bow as I rose, which he returned with a sort of half-ashamed stiffness, and repaired to my cabin to get my pipe for a half-hour's enjoyment of the beautiful autumn evening on deck.

I don't think tobacco has the same flavour ashore that it has at sea. Something in the salt air brings out the full richness and aroma of it. A few whiffs on the main-deck came like oil upon the agitation of my mind, ruffled by Coxon's impertinence and temper. I stepped on to the fore-castle to see that the riding-lamps were all right, and that there was a man on the look-out. The crew were in the fore-castle talking in subdued voices, and the hot air that came up through the fore-scuttle was intolerable as I passed it. I then regained the poop, and seated myself on the rail among the shadows of the backstays leading from the main-royal and top-gallant masts.

The sun had gone down some time now, and only faint traces of daylight lowered in the westward. The light on the South Foreland emitted a most beautiful, clear, and brilliant beam, and diffused a broad area of misty radiance on the land around. The light-beacons were winking along the Goodwin Sands, and pretty close at hand were the lights of Deal, a pale, fine constellation, which made the country all the darker for their presence. The moon would not rise until after nine, but the heavens were spangled with stars, some so lustrous that the calm sea mirrored them in cones of silver; and from time to time flashing shooting-stars chased across the sky, and with their blue fires offered a peculiar contrast to the eye with the yellow and red lights on the water.

There was a little air moving from the southward, but so light as scarcely to be noticeable to any man but a sailor awaiting a change. The vessels at anchor near us loomed large in the starlit gloom that overspread the face of the sea. Lights flitted upon them; and the voices of men singing, the jingling of a concertina or a fiddle, the rumbling of yards lowered aboard some newcomers which could not be descried, and now and again the measured splash of oars, were

sounds which only served to give a deeper intensity to the solemn calm of the night.

The inmates of the cuddy still kept their seats, and their voices came out through the open skylights. I heard Captain Coxon say—

"I should like to know what sort of a fellow they have given me for a second mate. He strikes me as coming the gentleman a trifle, don't he, Duckling?"

To which the other replied, "He seems a civil-spoken young man, and up to his work. But I guess there's too much molasses mixed with his blood to suit my book. He wants a New Orleans training, as my old skipper used to say. Do you know what that means, sir?" evidently addressing the pilot. "Well, it means a knife in your ribs when you're not disposed to hurry, and a knuckle-duster in the shape of a marlin-spike down your throat if you stop to arguefy."

The pilot laughed and said, "Here's your health, sir. Men of your kind are wanted nowadays, sir."

It was plain from this speech that the pilot had exchanged his tea for something stronger. The captain here began to speak, but I couldn't catch his words, though I strained my ears, as I was anxious to gain all the insight I could into his character that I might know how to shape my behaviour.

I say this for a very weighty reason—I was entirely dependent on the profession I had adopted. I knew it was in the power of any captain I sailed with to injure me, and perhaps ruin my prospects. Everything in seafaring life depends upon reports and testimonials; and in these days, when the demand for officers is utterly disproportionate to the immense supply, owners are only too willing to listen to objections, and take any skipper's word as an excuse to decline your services or get rid of you.

Neither the captain nor Mr. Duckling appeared on deck again. The pilot came up shortly after one bell (half-past eight) and looked about him for a few minutes. The tide had swung the ship with her stern up Channel. He went and looked over the side, and then had a stare at Deal, but took no notice of me, whom he could very plainly see, and returned below.

I lingered three quarters of an hour on deck, during which time the little sigh of wind that had come from the south-west died out, and a most perfect calm fell. The larger stars burned with amazing brilliancy and power, and I thought it possible that the wind might go to the eastward. This idea detained me on deck longer than I had meant to stop, as I thought it would do me no ill service if I should be the first to report a fair wind to the skipper, and show myself smart in getting the hands up. Perhaps the moon would bring a breeze with her, and as she rose at twenty minutes past nine, I filled another pipe to await her coming.

As I struck a match, the steward came half-way up the poop-ladder to tell me that the spirits were on the table.

"Did the captain send you?" I asked.

"No, sir," he answered. "I thought I'd let you know, as they'll be cleared away after nine, and my orders are not to serve them again when once they're stowed away for the night. That's the captain's rule."

"All right," said I. Another time I should have gone below and had my glass of grog; but I considered it my best policy to keep clear of Coxon until the temper that had been excited by my unfortunate production of the ship's biscuit was cooled down.

I took some turns along the deck, and shortly after nine one of the lamps in the cuddy was extinguished, and on looking through the skylight I found that the three men had left the table. There was a man pacing to and fro the forecastle, and I could just make out his figure against the stars which gleamed and throbbled right down to the horizon. The rest of the crew had evidently turned in, for I heard no voices, and now that the talking which had been going on in the cuddy no longer vexed the ear with rough accents, a profound silence and peace came down upon the ship. Around me, the anchored vessels gloomed like phantoms; the sea unrolled its dark, unbreathing surface into the visionary distances; nothing sounded from the shore but the murmur of the summer surf upon the shingle. One might have said that the spirit of life had departed from the earth; that nothing lived but the stars, which looked down upon a scene as impalpable and elusive as a dream.

At last uprose the moon. She made her coming apparent by paling the stars in the southern sky, then by projecting a white mist of light over the horizon. Anon her upper limb, red as fire, jetted upwards, and the full orb, vast and feverish as the setting sun, sailed out of the sea, most slowly and solemnly, lifting with her a black mist that belted her like a circle of smoke: this vanished, and by degrees, perceptible to the eye, her colour changed; the red chastened into pearl, her disc grew smaller, and soon she was well above the horizon, shining with a most clear and silvery splendour, and making the sea beneath her lustrous with mild light. But not a breath of air followed her coming. The ships in the Downs caught the new light, and their yards showed like streaks of pearl against the night. The red lights of the Goodwin Sands dwindled before the pure, far-reaching radiance into mere floating sparks of fire. The heavens were cloudless, and the sea a wonderful calm. I might keep watch all night, and still have nothing to report; so, knocking the ashes out of my pipe, I descended the poop-ladder and entered my cabin.

CHAPTER III.

I had slung a cot, although there was a good mahogany bunk in the cabin. No sensible person would sleep in a bunk at sea when he could swing in a hammock or cot. Suppose the bunk is athwart-ship: when the vessel goes about you must shift your pillow; and very often she will go about in your watch below and catch you asleep, so that when you wake you find your feet are in the air, and all the blood in your body in your head. When I first went to sea I slept in a 'thwartship bunk. The ship was taken aback one night when I was asleep, and they came and roared, "All hands shorten sail!" down the booby hatch. I heard the cry and tried to get out of my bed, but my head was jammed to leeward by the weight of my body, and I could not move. Had the ship foundered, I should have gone to the bottom, in bed, helpless. Always after that I slept in a hammock. 41

The watch on deck had orders to call the captain if a change of wind came; also I knew that the pilot would be up, sniffing about, off and on, through the night: so I turned in properly and slept soundly until two; when, waking up, I drew on my small clothes and went on deck, where I found Duckling mousing about in the moonshine in a pair of yellow flannel drawers, he having, like myself, come up to see if any wind was stirring. He looked like a new kind of monkey in his tight white rig and immense head of hair. "No wind, no wind," he muttered, in a sleepy grumble, and then went below with a run, nearly tumbling, in fact, head over heels down the companion-ladder. 42

I took a turn forward to see if the riding lights burned well and the man on the look-out was awake. The decks were wet with dew, and the moon was now hanging over the South Foreland. The sky was still cloudless, and not a breath of air to be felt. This being the case, I went back to my cot.

When I next awoke I found my cot violently swinging. I thought for the moment that we were under way and in a heavy sea; but on looking over I saw Mr. Duckling, who exclaimed, "Out with you, Mr. Royle! There's a good breeze from the east'ards. Look alive and call the boatswain to pipe all hands." 43

Hearing this, I was wide awake at once, and in a few minutes was making my way to the boatswain's cabin, a deck-house on the port side against the forecastle. He and the carpenter were fast asleep in bunks placed one over the other. I laid hold of the boatswain's leg, which hung over the bunk—both he and the carpenter had turned in "all standing," as they say at sea—and shook it. His great brown hairy face came out of the bolster in which it was buried; he then threw over his other leg and sat upright.

"All hands, sir?"

"Yes; look sharp, bo'sun."

He was about to speak, but stopped short and said, "Ay, ay, sir;" whereupon I hurried aft.

It was twenty minutes past five by the clock in the cuddy. The sun had been risen half an hour, and was already warming the decks. But there was a fine breeze—not from the eastward, as Duckling had said, but well to the northward of east—which brought ripe, fresh morning smells from the land with it, and made the water run in little leaps of foam against the ship's side. 44

Captain Coxon and the pilot were both on the poop, and as I came up the former called out—

"Is the boatswain awake yet?"

"Yes, sir," I answered, and dived into my cabin to finish dressing. I heard the boatswain's pipe sound, followed by the roar of his voice summoning the hands to weigh anchor. My station was on the forecastle, and thither I went. But none of the hands had emerged as yet, the only man seen being the fellow on the look-out. All about us the outward-bound vessels were taking advantage of the wind: some of them were already standing away, others were sheeting home their canvas; the clanking of the windlasses was incessant, and several Deal boats were driving under their lugs among the shipping. 45

"Mr. Royle," cried out the captain, "jump below, will you, and see what those fellows are about."

I went to the fore-scuttle and peered into it, bawling, "Below there!"

"There's no use singing out," said a voice; "we don't mean to get the ship under way until you give us something fit to eat."

"Who was that who spoke?" I called. "Show yourself, my man."

A fellow came and stood under the fore-scuttle, and looking up, said in a bold, defiant way—

"I spoke—'Bill Marling, able seaman.'"

"Am I to tell the captain that you refuse to turn to?"

"Ay, and tell him we'd rather have six months of chokee than one mouthful of his damned provisions," he answered; and immediately a lot of voices took up the theme, and as I left the forecastle to deliver the message, I heard the men cursing and abusing us all violently, the foreigners particularly—that is, the Portuguese and a Frenchman, who was half a negro—swearing in the worst English words and worst English pronunciation, shrilly and fiercely. 46

Coxon pretty well knew what was coming. He and Duckling stood together on the poop, and I delivered the men's message from the quarter-deck.

Coxon was in a great rage and quite pale with it. The expression in his face was really devilish. His lips became bloodless, and when he glanced his eyes around and saw the other ships taking advantage of the fine breeze and sailing away, he seemed deprived of speech. He had sense enough, however, with all his fury, to know that in this case no good could come from passion. He seized the brass rail with both hands, and made a gesture with his head to signify that I should draw nearer.

"Who was the man who gave you that message, sir?"

"A fellow who called himself Bill Marling."

"Do they refuse to leave the fore-castle?"

"They refuse to get the ship under way."

"Is the boatswain disaffected?"

"No, sir; but I fancy he knows the men's minds."

He turned to Mr. Duckling.

"If the boatswain is sound, we four ought to be able to make the scoundrels turn to."

This was like suggesting a hand to hand fight—four against twelve, and Duckling had the sense to hold his tongue. The boatswain was standing near the long-boat, looking aft, and Coxon suddenly called to him, "Lead the men aft."

I now thought proper to get upon the poop; and in a short time the men came aft in twos and threes. They were thirteen in all, including the carpenter, four ordinary seamen, the cook, and the cook's mate. The boatswain kept forward.

There was a capstan just abaft the mainmast, and here the men assembled. There was not much in the situation to move one's gravity, and yet I could scarcely forbear smiling when I looked down upon their faces fraught with expressions so various in kind, though all denoting the same feelings. Some were regular old stagers, fellows who had been to sea all their lives, with great bare arms tattooed with crucifixes, bracelets, and other such devices, in canvas or blanket breeches and flannel shirts, with the invariable belt and knife around their middle. Some, to judge from their clothes, had evidently signed articles in an almost destitute condition, their clothes being complete suits of patches, and their faces pale and thin. The foreigners were, of course, excessively dirty; and the "Portugee's" wonderfully ugly countenance was hardly improved by the stout silver earrings with which his long ears were ornamented.

The first movement of mirth in me, however, was but transient. Pity came uppermost in a few moments. I do think there is something touching in the simplicity of sailors, in the childlike way in which they go about to explain a grievance and get it redressed. They have few words and little experience outside the monotonous life they follow; they express themselves ill, are subdued by a harsh discipline on board, or by acts of cruelty which could not be tolerated in any kind of service ashore; the very negroes and savages of distant countries have more interest taken in them by the people of England than sailors, for whom scarcely a charity exists; the laws which deal with their insubordination are unnecessarily severe; and of the persons who are appointed to inquire into the causes of insubordination, scarce five in the hundred are qualified by experience, sympathy, or disinterestedness to do sailors justice.

Some such thoughts as these were in my mind as I stood watching the men on the quarter-deck.

Coxon, with his hands still clutching the rail, said, "The boatswain has piped you out to get the ship under way. Do you refuse?"

The man named Bill Marling made a step forward. The men had evidently constituted him spokesman.

"We don't mean to work this here ship," said he, "until better food is put aboard. The biscuits are not fit for dogs; and I say that the pork stinks, and that the molasses is grits."

"That's the truth," said a voice; and the Portuguese nodded and gesticulated violently.

"You blackguards!" burst out the captain, losing all self-control. "What do you know about food for dogs? You're not as good as dogs to know. Aren't you shipped out of filthy Ratcliffe Highway lodgings, where the ship's bread and meat and molasses would be eaten by you as damned fine luxuries, you lubbers? Turn to at once and man the windlass, or I'll find a way to make you!"

"We say," said the spokesman, pulling a biscuit out of his bosom and holding it up, "that we don't mean to work the ship until you give us better bread than this. It's mouldy and full of weevils. Put the bread in the sun, and see the worms crawl out of it."

"Will the skipper pitch the cuddy bread overboard and eat oorn?" demanded a voice.

"And the cuddy meat along with it!" exclaimed a man, a short, powerfully built fellow with a crisp black beard and woolly hair, holding up a piece of pork on the blade of a knife. "Let Captain Coxon smell this."

The captain looked at them for a few moments with flashing eyes, then turned and walked right aft with Duckling. Here they were joined by the pilot, and a discussion took place among them that lasted some minutes. Meanwhile I paced to and fro athwart the poop. The men talked

in low tones among themselves, but none of them seemed disposed to give in. For my own part, I rather fancied that though their complaint of the provisions was justifiable enough, it was advanced rather as a sound excuse for declining to sail with a skipper and chief mate whose behaviour so far towards them was a very mild suggestion of the treatment they might expect when they should be fairly at sea, and in these two men's power. I heard my name mentioned among them and one or two remarks made about me, but not uncomplimentary. The cook had probably told them I was well-disposed, and I believe that some of them would have harangued me had I appeared willing to listen.

Presently Mr. Duckling left the captain and ordered the men to go forward. He then called the boatswain, and turning to me, said that I was to be left in charge of the ship with the pilot whilst he and the captain went ashore.

The boatswain came aft and got into the quarter-boat which Duckling and I lowered; and I then towed her by her painter to the gangway, where Duckling and the captain got into her.

As no signal was hoisted I was at a loss to conceive what course Captain Coxon proposed to adopt. Duckling and the boatswain each took an oar while Coxon steered, and away they went, sousing over the little waves which the fresh land breeze had set running along the water.

By this time all the outward-bound ships had got their anchors up, and were standing down Channel. Some of them which had got away smartly were well around the Foreland, and we were the only one of them all that still kept the ground. Captain Coxon's rage and disappointment were, of course, intelligible enough; for time to him was not only money, but credit—I mean that every day he could save in making the run to Valparaiso would improve him in his employers' estimation.

The men peered over the bulwarks at the departing boat, wondering what the skipper would do. There was a tide running to the southward, and they had to keep the boat heading towards Sandwich. Strong as the boatswain was, I could see what a much stronger oar Duckling pulled by the way the boat's head swerved under his strokes.

I stood watching them for some time and then joined the pilot, who had lighted a pipe and sat smoking on the taffrail. He gave me a civil nod, being well-disposed enough now that Coxon was not by, and made some remark about the awkwardness of the men refusing work when the breeze was so good.

"True," said I; "but I think you'll find that the magistrates will give it in their favour. There's some mistake about the ship's stores. Such bread as the men have had served out to them ought never to have been put on board, and the steward has owned to me that it's all alike."

"The captain don't intend to let it come before the magistrates," answered the pilot with a wink, and pulling his pipe from his mouth to inspect the bowl. "He wants to be off, and means to telegraph for another crew and turn those fellows yonder adrift."

"Won't he ship some better provisions?"

"I don't know, sir. Preehaps he's satisfied that the provisions is good enough for the men, and preehaps he isn't. Leastways he'll not be persuaded contrarily to his belief."

"So, then, the police are to have nothing to do with this matter, and the stores will be retained for another crew?"

"That's as it may be."

"There will be a mutiny before we get to Valparaiso."

"Something 'll happen, I dare say."

I not only considered the captain's behaviour in this matter bad morally, but extremely impolitic. His motives were plain enough. The stores had been shipped as a cheap lot for the men to eat; and I dare say the understanding between Coxon and the owners was that the stores should not be changed. This view would account for his going on shore to telegraph for a new crew, since sending the old crew about their business would promise a cheaper issue than signalling for the police and bringing the offenders before the magistrates, and causing the vessel to be detained while inquiries were made. But that he would be imperilling the safety of his vessel by shipping a fresh crew without exchanging the bad stores for good was quite certain, and I wondered that so old a sailor as he should be such a fool as not to foresee some disastrous end to his own or his owners' contemptible cheese-paring policy.

However, I had not so good an opinion of the pilot's taciturnity as to make him my confidant in these thoughts; we talked on other matters for a few minutes and he then went below, and after a while, on passing the skylight, I saw him stretched on one of the cuddy benches sound asleep.

The Downs now presented a very different appearance from what they had exhibited an hour before. There were not above four vessels at anchor, and of those which had filled and stood away scarce half a dozen were in sight. These were some lumbering old brigs with a barque among them, with the water almost level with their decks; picturesque enough, however, in the glorious morning light, as they went washing solemnly away, showing their square sterns to the wind. A prettier sight was a fine schooner yacht coming up fast from the southward, with her bow close to the wind; and over to the eastward the sea was alive with smacks, their sails shining like copper, standing apparently for the North Sea.

The land all about Walmer was of an exquisite soft green, and in the breezy summer light Deal looked the quaintest, snuggest little town in the world.

A little after eight the steward called me down to breakfast, where I found the pilot impatiently sniffing an atmosphere charged with the aroma of broiled ham and strong coffee. I own, as I helped myself to a rasher and contrasted the good provisions with which the cuddy table was furnished with the bad food served to the men, that I was weak enough to sympathize very cordially with the poor fellows. The steward told me that not a man among them had broken his fast; this he had been told by the cook, who added that the men would rather starve than eat the biscuit that had been served out to them. Such was their way of showing themselves wronged; and the steward declared that he did not half like bringing our breakfast from the galley, for the men, when they smelt the ham and saw him going aft with a tin of hot rolls, became so forcible in their language that he every moment, during his walk along the main-deck, expected to feel himself seized behind and pitched overboard.

"It's the old story, sir," said the pilot, who was making an immense breakfast, "and it's true enough what Mr. Duckling said last night, which I thought uncommonly good. They ship sailors out of places where there's nothing to be seen but rags and rum—rum and rags, sir; they give 'em a good cabin to live in, pounds sterling a month, grog every day at eight bells, plenty of good livin', considering what they was, where they come from, and what they deserves: and what do they do but turn up their noses at food which they'd crawl upon their knees to get in their kennels ashore, and swear that they won't do ne'er a stroke of work unless they're bribed by the very best of everything. What do they want?—lobsters for breakfast, and wenison and plum-duff for dinner, and chops and tamater sauce for supper? It's the ruination of owners, sir, are these here new-fangled ideas; and I don't say—mind, I don't say that it don't go agin pilots as a body. A pilot can't do his dooty as he ought when he's got such crews as sarve nowadays to order about. Here am I stuck here, with a job that I knows of waitin' and waitin' for me at Gravesend. And all because this blessed ship's company wants wenison and plum-duff for dinner!"

He helped himself to a large slice of broiled ham and devoured it with sullen energy.

I could have said a word for the men, but guessed that my remarks would be repeated to the skipper; and since I could not benefit them, there was no use in injuring myself.

After breakfast I went upon deck, and saw a Deal boat making for the ship. She came along in slashing style, under her broad lug—what splendid boats those Deal luggers are, and how superbly the fellows handle them!—and in a short time was near enough to enable me to see that she towed our quarter-boat astern, and that Coxon and Duckling were among her occupants. I went to the gangway to receive her: she fell off, then luffed, running a fine semicircle; down dropped her lug, her mizzen brought her right to, and she came alongside with beautiful precision, stopping under the gangway like a carriage at your door.

I caught the line that was flung from her, took a turn with it, and then Coxon and the chief mate stepped on board. The moment he touched the deck, Coxon called to the men who were hanging about the forecastle.

"Get your traps together, and out with you! If ever a man among you stops in my ship five minutes, I'll fling him overboard."

With which terrible threat he walked into the cuddy. Duckling remained at the gangway to see the crew leave the ship. The poor fellows were all ready. They had made up their minds to go ashore, but hardly knew under what circumstances. I had noticed them pressing forward to look into the boat when she came alongside, no doubt expecting to see the uniform of a police-superintendent there. The presence of such an official would, of course, have meant imprisonment to them; they would have been locked up until brought before the magistrates. They were clearly disappointed by the skipper's procedure, for as they came to the gangway, carrying their bags and chests, all kinds of remarks, expressive of their opinion on the matter, were uttered by them.

"The old blackguard," said one, flinging his bag into the boat, and lingering before Duckling and myself in order to deliver his observations, "he hasn't the pluck to have us tried. Pitch us overboard! let him try his (etc.) hand upon the littlest of us! I'd take six months, and thank 'em, just to warm my fist on his (etc.) face!" and so forth.

Duckling was wise to hold his peace. The men were furious enough to have massacred him had he opened his lips.

The older hands got into the boat in silence; but none of the rest left the ship without some candid expression of his feelings. One said he'd gladly pay a pound for leave to set fire to the ship. Another called her a floating workhouse. A third hoped that the vessel would be sunk, and the brutes commanding her drowned before this time to-morrow. Every evil wish that malice and rage could invent was hurled at the vessel and at those who remained in her. In after days I recalled that beautiful morning, the picture of the lugger alongside the ship, the hungry, ill-used men with their poor packs going over the vessel's side, and the curses they pronounced as they left us.

An incident followed the entry of the last of the men in the boat.

The sail was hoisted, the rope that held the boat let go, and her head was shoved off; when the "Portugee," in the excitement and fury of his feelings, drew in his breath and his cheeks, and spat with tremendous energy at Duckling, who was watching him: but the missile fell short; in a word, he spat full in the face of one of the old hands, who instantly knocked him down. He tumbled head over heels among the feet of the crowd of men, while Duckling roared out, "If the man who knocked that blackguard down will return to his duty, I'll be his friend." But all the answer he got

was a roar which resembled in sound and character the mingled laughter and groans of a large mob; the fresh wind caught and filled the sail, the boat bounded away under the pressure, and in a few minutes was a long distance out of hail.

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CHAPTER IV.

A fresh crew came down from London the following morning in charge of a crimp.

Duckling went ashore to meet them at the railway station, and they came off in the same boat that had landed the others on the previous day.

They appeared much the same sort of men as those who had left us; badly clothed for the most part, and but four of them had sea-chests, the rest bringing bags. There was one very big man among them, a fellow that dwarfed the others; he held himself erect, wore good boots, and might very well have passed for an escaped Lifeguardsman, were it not for the indescribable *something* in his gait, and the way in which he hung his hands, that marked him for a Jack.

68

Another fellow I noticed, as he scrambled over the ship's side, and sung out, in notes as hoarse as a raven's, to pitch him up his "blooming portmantey," had a very extraordinary face, altogether out of proportion with his head, being, I dare say, a full third too small. The back of the skull was immense, and was covered with hair coarser than Duckling's—as coarse as hemp-yarns. This hair grew down beside his ears, and got mixed up with streaky whiskers, which bound up the lower part of his face like a tar poultice. Out of this circle of hair looked a face as small as a young boy's; little half-closed Chinese eyes, a bit of a pug nose, and a square mouth, kept open so as to show that he wanted four front teeth. The frame belonging to this remarkable head and face was singularly vigorous though grievously misshapen. His long arms went far down his legs; his back, without having a hump, was as round as a shell, and he looked as if he measured a yard and a half from shoulder to shoulder. I watched this strange-looking creature with great curiosity until I lost sight of him in the fore-castle.

69

The men bustled over the side with great alacrity, bawling for their bags and property to be handed up in a great variety of accents. There were two Dutchmen and a copper-coloured man, with African features, among them; the rest were English.

The crimp remained in the boat, watching the men go on board. He was from the other side of Jordan. His woolly hair was soaked with oil, and shone resplendent in the sun; the oil seemed to have got into his hat, too, for that had a most fearful polish. He wore a greatcoat that came down to his shins, and beneath this he exhibited a pair of blue serge breeches, terminating in boots as greasy as his hat. He was genteel enough to wear kid gloves; but the imagination was not to be seduced by such an artifice from picturing the dirt under the gloves.

70

I knew something of crimps, and amused myself with an idle speculation or two whilst watching the man. This was a fellow who would probably keep a lodging-house for sailors in some dirty little street leading out of the West India Dock Road. His terms would be very easy: seven shillings a week for board and lodging, and every gentleman to pay for extras. He would probably have two or three amiable and obliging sisters, daughters, or nieces living with him, knowing the generous and blind confidence Jack reposes in the endearments of the soft sex, and how very prodigally he will pay for them. So this greasy miscreant's dirty West India Dock Road lodging-house for sailors would always be pretty full, and he would never have much difficulty in mustering a crew when he got an order to raise one. Of course it would pay him as it pays other crimps to let lodgings to sailors, so as to have them always about him when a crew is wanted; for will he not obligingly cash their advance-notes for them, handing them say, thirty shillings for three pounds ten? "What do I do with this dirty risk?" he will exclaim, when Jack expostulates. "Supposing you cut stick? I lose my money! I only do this to oblige you. Go into the street," he cries, pretending to get into a passion, "and see what you'll get for your dirty piece of paper. You'll be comin' back to me on your bended knees, with the tears a tricklin' and runnin' over your cheeks, axing my parding for wronging me and willin' to say a prayer of thankfulness for me bein' put in your vay. You'll want a bag for your clothes, and here's one, dirt cheap, five and a 'arf. And you can't go to sea vith one pair o' brigs, and you shall have these beauties a bargain—come, fourteen and six, for *you*, and I'll ask you not to say what you gave for 'em, or I shall have four hundred and fifty-vun customers comin' in a rage to tell me I'm a villin for charging of 'em a guinea for the shame article. And here's a first-class knife and belt—something fit for the heye to rest upon—honestly vorth 'arf a sovrin, which I'll make you a present of for a bob, and if you say a vord I'll take everything back, for I *can't* stand ingratitood."

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Our friend watched the crew over the vessel's side with jealous eyes, for had they refused at the last moment to remain in the ship, he would have been a loser to the amount he had given them for their advance-notes. He looked really happy when the last man was out of the lugger and her head turned for the shore. He raised his greasy hat to Duckling, and his hair shone like polished mahogany in the sun.

73

"Aft here, some of you, and ship this gangway. Boatswain, pipe all hands to get the ship under weigh," cried Duckling; and turning to me with a wink, he added, "If the grub is going to bring

more rows, we must fight 'em on the high seas."

There was a little breeze from the south-east; quite enough to keep the lighter sails full and give us headway against the tide that was running up Channel. The men, zealous as all newcomers are, hastened briskly out of the forecastle on hearing Duckling's voice and the boatswain's whistle, and manned the windlass. The pilot was now on the poop with the skipper, the latter looking lively enough as he heard the quick clanking of the palls. The men broke into a song and chorus presently, and the rude strains chimed in well with the hoarse echo of the cable coming link by link in-board.

Presently I reported the cable up and down. Then from Duckling, the pilot's mouthpiece, came the familiar orders—

"Loose the outer jib."

"Lay aloft, some of you, and loose the topsails."

"Up with that jib smartly, my lads."

"A hand aft here to the wheel."

The ship lay with her head pointing to the direction in which she was going: there was nothing more to do than sheet home the topsails and trip the anchor. The men were tolerably nimble and smart. The three topsails were soon set, the windlass again manned, and within a quarter of an hour from the time when the order was given, the ship was under way, and pushing quietly through a tide that raced in a hundred wrinkles around her bows.

We set the fore and main top-gallant sails and spanker presently: the yards were braced sharp up, for we were heading well south, so as to give the Foreland a wide berth. This extra canvas sent us swirling past the red-hulled lightship off this point, and soon the Dover pier opened, and the great white cliffs with their green heights. Anon, our course bringing the wind more aft, we set the mainsail and main-royal and mizzen top-gallant sail, with the staysails and jibs.

The breeze freshened as we stretched seawards; the ship was now carrying a deal of canvas, and the men seemed pleased with her pace.

The day was gloriously fine. The sea was of an emerald green, alive with little leaping waves each with its narrow thread of froth: the breeze was strong enough to lay the vessel over, just so far as to enable one looking over the weather side to see her copper, shining red below the green line of water. The brilliant sunshine illuminated the brass-work with innumerable glories, and shone with fluctuating flashes in the glass of the skylights, and made the decks glisten like a yacht's. The canvas, broad and white, towered nobly to the sky, and the main-royal against the deep blue of the sky seemed like a cloud among the whiter clouds which swept in quick succession high above. It was a sight to look over the ship's bows, to see her keen stem shredding the water, and the permanent pillar of foam leaning away from her weather-bow.

This part of the Channel was full of shipping, and I know, by the vividness with which my memory reproduces the scene, how beautiful was the picture impressed upon it. All on our right were the English shores, made delicate and even fanciful by distance; here and there fairy-like groups of houses, standing on the heights among trees or embosomed in valleys, with silver sands sloping to the sea: deep shadows staining the purity of the brilliant chalk, and a foreground of pleasure-boats with sails glistening like pearl and bright flags streaming. And to our right and left vessels of different rigs and sizes standing up or down Channel, some running like ourselves, free, with streaming wakes, others coming up close-hauled, some in ballast high out of water, stretching their black sides along the sea and exposing to windward shining surfaces of copper.

At half-past two o'clock in the afternoon, all sail that was required having been made, and the decks cleared, the hands were divided into watches, and I, having charge of the port watch, came on deck. The starboard watch went below; but as the men had not dined, a portion of my own watch joined the others in the forecastle to get their dinner.

I now discovered that the copper-faced man, to whom I have drawn attention, was the new cook. I heard the men bandying jokes with him as they went in and out of the galley, carrying the steaming lumps of pork and reeking dishes of pea-soup into the forecastle, whence I concluded that they had either not yet discovered the quality of the provisions, or that they were more easily satisfied than their predecessors had been.

Among the men in my own watch was the great strapping fellow whom I had likened to a Lifeguardsmen. I had thought the man too big to be handy up aloft, but was very much deceived; for in all my life I never witnessed such feats of activity as he performed. His long legs had enabled him to take two ratlines at a time, and he saved himself the trouble of getting over the futtock shrouds by very easily making two steps from the mainshrouds to the mainyard, and from the mainyard to the maintop. I watched him leave the galley, carrying his smoking mess; but I also noticed, before I lost sight of him, that he took a suspiciously long sniff at the steam under his nose, and then violently expectorated.

The breeze was now very lively; the canvas was stretching nobly to it, and the shore all along our starboard beam was a gliding panorama, brilliant with colour and sunshine. They were having dinner in the cuddy, and as often as I passed the skylight I could see the captain glancing upwards at the sails with a well-pleased expression.

I presently noticed the cook's copper face, crowned with an odd kind of knitted cap, protruding from the galley, and his small eyes gazed intently at me. I paced the length of the poop, and when I returned, the cook's head was still at its post, and then his body came out and he stood staring

in my direction.

I had to turn abruptly to hide my mirth, for his face was ornamented with an expression of disgust exquisitely comical with the wrinkled nose, the arched thick mouth, and the screwed-up eyebrows.

When I again looked he was coming along the deck, swinging a piece of very fat pork at the end of a string. He advanced close to the poop-ladder at the top of which I was standing, and holding up the pork, said—

"You see dis, sar?"

"Yes," I answered.

"Me belong to a country where we no eat pork," he exclaimed, with great gravity, still preserving his wrinkled nose and immensely disgusted expression.

"What country is that?" I asked.

"Hot country, sar," he answered. "But me will eat pork on board ship."

"Very proper."

"But me will *not* eat stinking pork on board ship or anywhere else," he cried excitedly.

"Is that piece of pork tainted?" I inquired.

"Don't know nuffen 'bout tainted, sar," he replied; "but it smells kinder strong. But not so strong as the liquor where t'other porks was biled in. Nebber smelled de like, sar. Most disgusting. Come and try it, sar. Make you feel queer."

"Pitch the water overboard, then."

"No good, sar. Fork'sle full of stinks, and men grumblin' like hell. Me fust-rate cook, too—but no make a stink sweet. Dat beats me."

He held up the pork, with an expression on his face as if he were about to sneeze, shook his finger at it as though it were something that could be affected by the gesture, and flung it overboard.

"Dat's my rations," said he. "Shouldn't like to eat de fish dat swallers it."

And turning jauntily in his frocked canvas breeches he walked off.

A few moments afterwards the extraordinary-looking man with the small face and large head, and shell-shaped back, came out of the forecabin, walking from side to side with a springing jerky action of the legs, they being evidently moved by a force having no reference to his will.

"Ax your pardon, sir," he said, twirling up his thumb in the direction of his forehead; "but the meat's infernal bad aboard this here wessel."

"I can't help it," I answered, annoyed to be the recipient of these complaints, which seemed really to justify Coxon's charge of my being the crew's confidant. "You must talk to the captain about it."

"Ne'er a man among us can eat of the pork; and the cook, as is better acquainted than us with these here matters, says he'd rather be biled alive than swallow a ounce of it."

"The captain is the proper person to complain to."

"That may be, sir," said the man, dropping his chin, so that by projecting his beard his face appeared to withdraw, and grow smaller still. "But the boatswain says there'll not be much got by complaining to the skipper."

"I can't make the ship's stores better than they are," I replied, moving a step, for I now perceived that some of the crew were watching us, and I did not want the captain to come on deck and find me talking to this man about the provisions. But it so happened that at this particular moment the captain emerged from the companion hatchway. The man did not stir, and the captain said—

"What does that fellow want?"

"He is complaining of the pork, sir. I have referred him to you."

He gave me a sharp look, and leaning forwards, said in a quiet, mild voice—

"What's the matter, my man?"

"Why, sir, I've been asked to come and say that the pork that's been served to the men is in a werry bad state, to be sure. It's more smell than meat, and what ain't smell is brine."

"I am sorry to hear that," said the captain in a most benignant manner. "Look into the cuddy and tell the steward I want him."

The steward stepped on to the quarter-deck and looked up at his master in a way that made me suspect he had got his cue.

"What's the matter with the pork, steward?"

"Nothing, sir, that I know of."

"The men say it smells strong—that's what you say, I think?" remarked the captain, addressing the man.

"Werry strong, sir—strong enough to sit upon, sir."

"I don't know how that can be," exclaimed the steward, looking very puzzled indeed. "It's sweet enough in the cask. Perhaps it's the fault of the biling." 86

"Nothing to do with the biling, mate," said the man, shaking his extraordinary head, at the same time surveying the steward indignantly. "Biling clears away smells as a rule."

"Perhaps you've opened a bad cask. If so," said the captain, "fling it overboard, for I'll not have the men poisoned. Let the cook boil me a sample from the next cask you open, and put it upon my table—do you hear?"

"Yes, sir."

"That will do," continued the captain, addressing the man. "You may go forward and tell your mates what I have said."

And away straggled the man to inform the crew, no doubt, that the skipper was a brick, and that he'd like to punch the steward's head.

At seven o'clock next morning we were abreast the Isle of Wight, having carried a strong south-easterly breeze with us as far as Eastbourne, when the wind lulled and remained light all through the middle watch; but after four it freshened again from the same quarter, and came on to blow strong; but we kept the fore and main royals on her all through, and only furled them to heave the ship to off Ventnor, where we landed the pilot. 87

There was a nasty lump of a sea on just here, and some smacks making for Portsmouth carried half sails soaking and their decks running with water. The *Grosvenor*, owing to her weight, lay steady enough; a little too steady, I thought, for she shipped water over her starboard bow without rising, reminding me of a deep-laden barge, along which you will see the swell running and washing, whilst she herself goes squashing through with scarcely a roll.

A dandy-rigged boat put off, in response to our signal, and I enjoyed the pretty picture she made as she came foaming, close hauled, towards the ship, burying herself in spray as she shoved her keen nose into the sea, and hopping nimbly out of one trough into another, so that sometimes you could see her forefoot right out of water. 88

I was glad when the pilot got over the side. He was a mean toady, and had done me no good with the captain. The gangway ladder had been thrown over to enable him to descend, and the boat washed high and low, up and down, alongside, sometimes level with the deck, sometimes twelve or fourteen feet in a hollow.

"Now's your time," said I, mischievously, as he hung on to the man-rope with one leg out to catch the boat as she rose. He took me at my word and let go; but the boat was sinking, and down he went with her, and I had the satisfaction of seeing him roll right into the boat's bottom, and there get so hopelessly entangled with the pump and some trawling gear, that it took two boatmen to pull him out and set him on his feet. 89

Then away they went, the pilot waving his hat to the skipper, who cries—

"Man the lee main braces."

The great yards were swung around, and the ship lay over to the immense weight of canvas.

"Ease off those jib-sheets there, and set the mainsail."

The ship, feeling the full breeze, surged slowly forwards, parting the toppling seas with thundering blows of her bows. She had as much sail on her as she could well carry, and a trifle to spare, for the breeze had freshened whilst we had been lying to, a couple of vessels to windward were taking in their fore and mizzen top-gallant sails, and ahead was a smart brig with a single reef in her fore-topsail. The wind was well abeam, perhaps half a point abaft, and every sail was swollen like the cheeks of rude Boreas in the picture of that bleak worthy. 90

This cracking on delighted Duckling, whose head turned so violently about as he stared first at these sails, then at those, then forward, then aft, that I thought he would end in putting a kink into his neck.

"This is proper!" he exclaimed, in his hoarse voice, after ordering some hands "to clap the watch-tackle on to the main-tack and rouse it down." "We'll teach 'em how to froth this blessed Channel! I guess we've had enough of calms, and if the Scilly ain't some miles astern by the second dog-watch to-morrow I'll turn a monk, you see!"

We were heading well west-south-west, and the water was flying in sheets of foam from the ship's bows. By this time it was dark, and the sky thick with the volume of wind that swept over it; the stars shone hazily, but it was as much as I could do to trace the outlines of the main-royal and top-gallant sail. 91

The vessel was rushing through the water at a great pace. I felt as exhilarated as one new to the life when I looked astern and saw the broad path of foam churned by the ship rising and falling and fading upon the desolate gloom of the hilly horizon. Blue fires burnt in the water; but, by-and-by, when by stretching out we had got into the broader sea, and the vessel plunged to the heavier waves which were running, big flakes of phosphorescent light were hurled up with the water every time the ship pitched, and for twenty fathoms astern the water was as luminous as the Milky Way. The roaring of the wind on high, the creaking of the spars, the clanking and grinding of the chain-sheets, the squeal of sheaves working on rusty pins, the hissing and spitting of the seething foam, and ever and anon the sullen thunder of a sea striking the ship, filled the 92

ear with a wonderful volume of sound. The captain was cracking on to make up for lost time, and he was on deck when I went below at ten o'clock to get some rest before relieving Duckling at midnight. There were then two hands at the wheel, and a couple on the look-out; our lamps were burning bravely, but we had long ago outrun all sight of shore and of lights ashore.

I slept soundly, and at eight bells Duckling roused me up. The unpleasantest part of a sailor's life is this periodical turning out of warm blankets to walk the deck for four hours. The rawness of the night air is anything but stimulating to a man just awake and very sleepy. Let the wind be never so steady, the decks are full of powerful draughts rushing out of the sails and blowing into your eyes and ears and up the legs of your trousers, and down the collar of your shirt, turn where you will: and you think, as your hair is blown over your eyes and a shower of spray comes pattering upon your oilskins and annoying your face, of your sheltered cabin and warm cot, and wonder what, in the name of common sense, caused you to take to this uncomfortable profession. The crew in this respect are better off than their officers; for the watch on deck at night can always manage to sneak into the forecabin and dose upon their chests, or on the deck and keep under shelter; whereas the mate in charge must be always wide awake and on his legs throughout his watch, and shirk nothing that the heavens may choose to pour upon his defenceless person.

I had four hours before me when I went on deck, and I may perhaps have wished myself ashore in a quiet bed. The captain stood near the wheel. It was blowing very fresh indeed, the wind about east-southeast, with a strong following sea. The yards had been braced further aft, but no other alteration had been made since I had gone below. If I had thought that the vessel was carrying too much sail then, I certainly thought that she was carrying a great deal too much sail now. She could have very well dispensed with the main-royal and two top-gallant sails, and in my opinion would have made the same way with a single reef in the topsails. The press of canvas was burying her. Well aft as the wind was, the vessel lay over to starboard under it, and she was dragging her heavy channels sluicing and foaming through the water. The moon was weak, with a big ring round her, and the sky was obscured by the scud which fled swiftly away to the northwest. The horizon was thick, and the troubled sheen of the moon upon the jumping seas made the dark waters, with their ghastly lines of phosphorescent foam, a most wild and weird panorama.

I mustered the watch, and a couple of them went to relieve their mates on the forecabin. A night-glass lay on one of the skylights, and I swept the horizon with it, but nothing was to be seen. I walked aft to see how she was steering, for these heavy following seas lumping up against a ship's quarter play the deuce with some vessels, making the compass-card swing wildly and setting the square sails lifting; but found her steering very steadily, though the rush of some of the seas under her counter might have bewildered a two-thousand-ton ship. She rose, too, better than I thought she would, though she was sluggish enough, for some of the seas ran past her with their crests curling above her lee bulwarks, and she had received one souser near the galley; but her decks to windward were dry.

Coxon was smoking a big Dutch pipe, holding it with one hand and the rail with the other. He had a hair cap on with flaps over his ears, and sea-boots, and all that he was doing was first to blow a cloud and then look up at the sails, and then blow another cloud and then look up again. This would appear to have been going on since nine o'clock. I thought he must be pretty tired of his diversion by this time.

"She bears her canvas well, sir," said I.

"Yes," he answered gruffly, "I have lost twenty-four hours. I ought to have been clear of the Channel by this."

"She is a fast vessel, sir. We are doing good twelve, I should say."

He cast his eyes over the stern, then looked up aloft, but made no answer. I was moving away when he exclaimed—

"Go forward and tell the men to keep a bright look-out. And keep your weather-eye lifting yourself, sir."

I did as he bade me, and got upon the forecabin. I found the two men who were indistinguishable from the poop, wrapped in oilskins leaning against the forecabin rail. It blew harder here than it did aft, for a power of wind rushed slanting from the fore-topmast stay-sail and whirled up from under the foot of the foresail. The crashing sound of the vessel's bows, urged through the heavy water by the great power that was bellowing overhead, was wonderful to hear: an uproar of thunder was all around, mingled with wild shrieking cries and the strange groaning of straining timbers. The moon stood away to windward of the mizzen royal-mast head, and it was a sight to look up and see the grey canvas, full like balloons, soaring into the sky, and to hear the mighty rush of the wind among the rigging as the vessel rolled against it, making the moon whirl across her spars to and fro, to and fro.

I had been on deck three quarters of an hour when, feeling the wind very cold, I dived into my cabin for a shawl to wrap round my neck.

I had hardly left the cuddy door to return, when I heard a loud cry from the forecabin, and both hands roared out simultaneously, "A sail right ahead!"

Coxon walked quickly forward to the poop-rail to try to see the vessel to windward. Then he went over to the other side and peered under the mainsail; after which he said, "I see nothing. Where is she?"

I shouted through my hands, "On which bow is she?"

"Right ahead!" came the reply.

"There was a short pause, and then one of the men roared out, "Hard over! we're upon her! She's cutter rigged! she's a smack!"

"Hard a-port! hard a-port!" bawled Coxon.

I saw the spokes of the wheel fly round, but almost at the same moment, I felt a sudden shock—an odd kind of *thud*, the effect of which upon my senses was to produce the impression of a sudden lull in the wind.

"God Almighty!" bellowed a voice, "we've run her down!"

In a second I had bounded to the weather-side of the poop and looked over, and what I saw sliding rapidly past, was a mast and a dark-coloured sail, which in the daylight would probably be red, stretched flat upon the wilderness of foam which our ship was sweeping off her sides. Upon this ghastly white ground the sail and mast were distinctly outlined—for a brief moment only—they vanished even as I watched, swallowed up in the seething water. And then all overhead the sails of the ship began to thunder, and the rigging quivered and jerked as though it must snap.

"Hard over! hard over!" bellowed Coxon.

I saw him rush to the wheel, thrust away one of the men, and pull the spokes over with all his force. The vessel answered splendidly, swerved nobly round like a creature of instinct, and was again rushing headlong with full sail over the sea.

This was a close shave. At the speed at which she was travelling she had obeyed the rudder in the first instance so promptly as to come round close to the wind. A few moments more and she would have been taken aback; and this, taking into consideration the amount of canvas she was carrying, must infallibly have meant the loss of most, if not of all, her spars.

Horrified by the thoughts of living creatures drowning in our wake, I cried out to the skipper—

"Won't you make an effort to save them, sir?"

"Save them be hanged!" he answered fiercely. "Why the devil didn't they get out of our road?"

I was so much shocked by the coarse inhumanity of this reply, that I turned on my heel; but yet was constrained by an ugly fascination to turn again and cast shuddering glances at the spot where I pictured the drowning wretches battling with the waves.

Captain Coxon was too intent upon the compass to notice my manner; he was giving directions to the men in a low voice, with his eyes fixed on the card.

Presently he exclaimed, in his gruffest voice, "Call the carpenter to sound the well."

This was soon despatched, and I returned and reported a dry bottom.

"Heave the log, sir."

I called a couple of hands aft and went through the tiresome and tedious job of ascertaining the speed by the measured line and sand-glass. The reel rattled furiously in the hands of the man who held it: I thought the whole of the line would go away overboard before the fellow who was holding the glass cried, "Stop!"

"What do you make it?" demanded Coxon.

"Thirteen knots, sir."

He looked over the side as though to assure himself that the computation was correct, then called out—

"Clew up the main-royal, and furl it!"

This was a beginning, and it was about time that a beginning was made. The breeze had freshened into a strong wind, this had grown into half a gale, and the look of the sky promised a whole gale before morning. The main-royal halliards were let go, and a couple of hands went up to stow the bit of canvas that was thumping among the clouds.

Presently, "Furl the fore and mizzen top-gallant sails."

This gave occupation to the watch; and now the decks began to grow lively with the figures of men running about, with songs and choruses, with cries of "Belay, there!"—"Up with it smartly, my lads!" and with the heavy flapping of canvas.

All this, however, was no very great reduction of sail. The *Grosvenor* carried the old-fashioned single topsails, and these immense spaces of canvas were holding a power of wind. Overhead the scud flew fast and furious, and all to windward the horizon was very thick. We took in the main-top-gallant sail; and while the hands were aloft we came up hand over fist with a big ship, painted white. She was to leeward, stretching away under double-reefed topsails, and showed out quite distinctly upon the dark sea beyond, and under the struggling moonshine. We ran close enough to take the wind out of her sails, and could easily have hailed her had there been any necessity to do so; but we could discern no one on deck but a single hand at the wheel. She showed no lights, and with her white hull and glimmering sails, and fragile naked yards and masts, she looked as ghostly as anything I ever saw on the water. She rolled and plunged solemnly among the seas, and threw up her own swirling outline in startling relief upon the foam she flung from her side, and which streamed away in pyramid-shape. She went astern like a buoy, and in a few minutes had vanished as utterly from our sight as if she had foundered.

I now stood waiting for an order which I knew must soon come. It is one thing to "carry on," but it is another thing to rip the masts out of a ship. I don't think we had lost half a knot in speed through the canvas that had been taken in: the vessel seemed to be running very nearly as fast as the seas. But the wind was not only increasing, but increasing with squalls, so that there were times when you would have thought that the inmates of forty mad-houses had got among the rigging and out upon the yards, and were screeching, yelling, and groaning with all the force they were master of.

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At last the captain gave the order I awaited.

"All hands reef topsails."

In a few minutes the boatswain's pipe sounded, and the watch below came tumbling out of the fore-castle. Now came a scene familiar to every man who has been to sea, whether as a sailor or a passenger. In a ship of war the crew go to work to the sound of fiddles or silver whistles; every man knows his station; everything is done quickly, quietly, and completely. But in a merchantman the men go to work to the sound of their own voices: these voices are, as a rule, uncommonly harsh and hoarse; and as every working party has its own solo and chorus, and as all working parties sing together, the effect upon the ear, to say the very least, is hideous. But also in a merchantman the crew is always less in number than they ought to be. Hence, when the halliards are let go, the confusion below and aloft becomes overwhelming; for not more, perhaps, than a couple of sails can be handled at a time, and, meanwhile, the others waiting to be furled are banged about by the wind, and fling such a thunder upon the ear that orders are scarce audible for the noise.

107

All this to a certain degree happened in the present instance. The captain having carried canvas with fool-hardy boldness, now ran into the other extreme. The quick fierce gusts which ran down upon the ship frightened him, and his order was to let go all three topsail halliards, and double-reef the sails. The halliards were easily let go; but then, the working hands being few, confusion must follow. The yards coming down upon the caps, the sails stood out in bellies hard as iron. A whole watch upon each reef-tackle could hardly bring the blocks together. When the mizzen-topsail was reefed, it was found that the fore-topsail would require all hands; the helm had to be put down to shake the sail, so as to enable the men to make the reef-points meet. The main-topsail lifted as well as the fore-topsail, and both sails rattled in unison; and the din of the pealing canvas, furiously shaken by the howling wind, the cries of the men getting the sail over to windward, the booming of the seas against the ship's bows, the groaning of her timbers, the excited grunting of terrified pigs, and the rumbling of an empty water-cask, which had broken from its lashings and was rolling to and fro the main-deck, constituted an uproar of which no description, however elaborate, could even faintly express the overwhelming character.

108

When the dawn broke it found the *Grosvenor* under reefed topsails, fore-topmast, staysail, foresail, main-trysail, and spanker, snug enough, but with streaming decks, for the gale had raised a heavy beam sea, and the deep-laden ship was sluggish, and took the water repeatedly over her weather-bulwarks.

109

The watch below had turned in again, but it was already seven bells, and at four o'clock my turn would come to go to bed. I had charge of the ship, for the captain having passed the night in observing his vessel's sailing powers under all canvas, had gone below, and I was not sorry to get rid of him, for his continued presence aft had become a nuisance to my eyes.

The sea under the gathering light in the east was a remarkable sight. The creaming arching surfaces of the waves took the pale illumination, but the troughs or hollows were livid, and looking along the rugged surface as the ship rose, one seemed to behold countless lines of yawning caverns opening in an illimitable waste of snow. Nothing could surpass the profound desolation of the scene surveyed in the faint struggling dawn, the pallid heaven, bearing its dim and languishing stars, over which were swept long lines of smoke-coloured clouds torn and mangled by the wind; the broken ocean pouring and boiling away to a melancholy horizon, still dark, save where the dawn was creeping upwards with its chilly light, and making the eastern sea and sky leaden-hued.

110

I had now leisure to recall the fatal accident I have related, and the inhumanity of Captain Coxon's comment upon it. I hugged myself in my thick coat as I looked astern at the cold and rushing waters, and thought of the bitter sudden deaths of the unfortunates we had run down. With what appalling rapidity had the whole thing happened! not even a dying shriek had been heard amid the roar of the wind among the masts. For many a day the memory of that dark-coloured sail, prone upon the foaming water, haunted me. The significance of it was awful to think upon. But for the men on the look-out, never a soul among us would have known that living beings had been hurled into sudden and dreadful death, that the ship in which we sailed had perchance made widows of sleeping wives, had made children fatherless, and that ruin and beggary and sorrow had been churned up out of the deep by our unsparing bows.

111

Our voyage had begun inauspiciously enough, God knows: and as I looked towards the east where the morning light was kindling over the livid, rugged horizon, a strange depression fell upon my spirits, and the presentiment then entered my mind and never afterwards quitted it, that perils and suffering and death were in store for us, and that when I had looked on the English coast last night I was unconsciously bidding farewell to scenes I should never behold again.

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113

CHAPTER V.

I was on deck again at eight o'clock. It was still blowing a gale, but the wind had drawn right aft, and though the topsails were kept reefed, Duckling had thought fit to set the main top-gallant sail, and the ship was running bravely.

Yet, though her speed was good, she was rolling abominably; for the wind had not had time to change the course of the waves, and we had now all the disadvantage of a beam sea without the modifying influence over the ship's rolling of a beam wind.

I reckoned that we had made over one hundred and thirty knots during the twelve hours, so that if the gale lasted, we might hope to be clear of the Scilly Isles by next morning. There was a small screw steamer crossing our bows right ahead, possibly hailing from France and bound to the Bristol Channel. I watched her through a glass, sometimes breathlessly, for in all my life I never saw any vessel pitch as she did, and live. Sometimes she seemed to stand clear out of water so as to look all hull: then down she would go and leave nothing showing but a bit of her funnel sticking up with black smoke pouring away from it. Several times when she pitched I said to myself, "Now she is gone!" Her bows went clean under, heaving aloft a prodigious space of foam: up cocked her stern, and, with the help of the glass, I could see her screw skurrying round in the air. Her decks were lumbered with cattle-pens, but the only living thing I could see on board was a man steering her on the bridge. She vanished all on a sudden, amid a Niagara of spray; but some minutes after I saw her smoke on the horizon. Had I not seen her smoke I should have been willing to wager that she had foundered. These mysterious disappearances at sea are by no means rare; but are difficult to account for, since they sometimes happen when the horizon is clear. I have sighted a ship and watched her for some time: withdrawn my eyes for a minute, looked again, and perceived no signs of her. It is possible that mists of small extent may hang upon the sea, not noticeable at a distance, and that they will shut out a vessel suddenly and puzzle you as a miracle would. The fascinating legend of the "Phantom Ship" may have originated in disappearances of this kind, for they are quite complete and surprising enough to inspire superstitious thoughts in such plain, unlettered minds as sailors'. 114

They were breakfasting in the cuddy and in the forecabin, and I was waiting for the skipper to come on deck that I might go below and get something to eat. But before he made his appearance, the confounded copper-coloured cook, accompanied by a couple of men, came aft.

"Sar," said this worthy, who looked lovely in a pink-striped skirt and yellow overalls, "me ask you respectfally to speak to de skipper and tell him him biscuit am dam bad, sar."

"I'm messman for the starboard watch, sir," exclaimed one of the men, "and the ship's company says they can't get the bread down 'em nohow."

"Why do you come to me?" I demanded of them angrily. "I have already told you, cook, that I have nothing to do with the ship's stores. You heard what Captain Coxon said yesterday?" 117

"Can't the steward get us up a fresh bag of bread for breakfast?" exclaimed the third man.

"He's in the cuddy," I replied; "ask him."

They bobbed their heads forward to see through the cuddy windows, and at that moment Duckling came on deck up through the companion.

"You can get your breakfast," said he to me. "I'll keep watch until you've done."

"Here are some men on the quarter-deck complaining of the bread," said I. "Will you speak to them?"

He came forward at once, very briskly, and looked over.

"What's the matter?" he called out.

"We've come to complain of the ship's bread, sir," said one of the men, quite civilly.

"Dam bad bread, sar. Me honest man and speak plain truff," exclaimed the cook, who possibly thought that his position privileged him to be both easy and candid on the subject of eating. 118

"Get away forward!" cried Duckling, passionately. "The bread's good enough. You want to kick up a shindy."

The men made a movement, the instinct of obedience responding mechanically to the command. But the cook held his ground, and said, shaking his head and convulsing his face—

"De bread am poison, sar. All de flour's changed into worms. Nebber see such a ting. It get here"—touching his throat—"and make me—yaw!"

"Go forward, I tell you, you yellow-faced villain!" shouted Duckling. "D'ye hear what I say?"

"Dis chile is a cook," began the fellow; but Duckling sprang off the poop, and with his clenched fist struck him full under the jaw: the poor devil staggered and whirled round, and then up went Duckling's foot, and cook was propelled at a great pace along the main-deck towards the galley. He stopped, put his hand to his jaw, and looked at the palm of it; rubbed the part that had been kicked, turned and held up his clenched fist, and went into the galley. The two other men disappeared in the forecabin. 119

"Curse their impudence!" exclaimed Duckling, remounting the poop-ladder and polishing his

knuckles on the sleeve of his coat. "Now, Mr. Royle, get you down to your breakfast. I want to turn in when you've done."

I entered the cuddy, not very greatly edified by Duckling's way of emphasizing his orders, and made a bow to the captain, who was still at table. He condescended to raise his eyes, but for some minutes afterwards took no notice of me whatever, occupying himself with glancing over a bundle of slips which looked like bill-heads in his hand. 120

The vessel was rolling so heavily that the very plates slid to and fro the table, and it not only required dexterity, but was no mean labour to catch the coffee-pot off the swinging tray as it came like a pendulum over to my side, and to pour out a cup of coffee without capsizing it. The mahogany panelling and cabin doors all round creaked incessantly, and in the steward's pantry there was a frequent rattle of crockery.

"What was going forward on the main-deck just now?" demanded Coxon, stowing away the papers in his pocket, and breaking fragments from a breakfast roll.

I explained. 121

"Ah!" said he; "they're still at that game, are they?"

"Mr. Duckling punched the cook's head——"

"I saw him, sir. Likewise he kicked him. Mr. Duckling knows his duty, and I hope he has taught the cook his. Steward!"

"Yes, sir?" responded the steward, coming out of the pantry.

"See that a piece of the pork you are serving out to the men is put upon my table to-day."

"Yes, sir."

The captain fell into another fit of silence, during which I ate my breakfast as quickly as I could, in order to relieve Duckling.

"Mr. Royle," said he presently, "when we ran that smack down this morning, what were you for doing?"

"I should have hove the ship to," I replied, meeting his eyes. 122

"Would you have hove her to had you been alone on deck, sir?"

"Yes, and depended on your humanity to excuse me."

"What do you mean by my humanity?" he cried, dissembling his temper badly. "What kind of cant is this you have brought on board my ship? Humanity! Damn it!" he exclaimed, his ungovernable temper blazing out: "had you hove my ship to on your own hook, I'd have had you in irons for the rest of the voyage."

"I don't see the use of that threat, sir," said I, quietly. "You have to judge me by what I did do, not by what I might or would do."

"Oh, confound your distinctions!" he went on, pushing his hair over his ears. "You told me that you would have hove the ship to had you been alone, and that means you would have whipped the masts out of her. Do you mean to tell me that you knew what sail we were carrying, to talk like this?" 123

"Perfectly well."

My composure irritated him more than my words, and I don't know what savage answer he was about to return; but his attention was on a sudden arrested and diverted from me. I turned my eyes in the direction in which he was staring, and beheld the whole ship's company advancing along the main-deck, led by the big seaman whose name was Johnson, and by the tortoise-backed, small-faced man who was called Fish—Ebenezer Fish.

The moment the captain observed them, he rose precipitately, and ran up the companion-ladder; and as I had finished breakfast, I followed him.

By the time I had reached the break of the poop the hands were all gathered about the mainmast. A few of them held tin dishes in their hands, in which were lumps of meat swimming in black vinegar. One carried some dozen biscuits supported against his breast. Another held a tin pannikin filled with treacle, and another grasped a salt-jar, or some such utensil, containing tea. 124

The *coup d'œil* from the poop was at this moment striking. All around was a heavy sea with great waves boiling along it; overhead a pale blue sky, along which the wildest clouds were sweeping. The vessel running before the wind under double-reefed topsails, rolled deeply both to port and to starboard, ever and anon shipping a sheet of green water over her bulwarks, which went rushing to and fro the decks, seething and hissing among the feet of the men, and escaping, with loud bubbling noises, through the scupper-holes. 125

I was almost as soon on deck as Coxon, and therefore heard the opening address of Johnson, who, folding his arms upon his breast, and "giving" on either leg, so as to maintain his equilibrium while the deck sloped to and fro under him, said in a loud, distinct voice—

"The ship's company thinks it a dooty as they owe theirselves to come aft altogether to let you know that the provisions sarved out to 'em ain't eatable."

"Out, all hands, with what you've got to say," replied Coxon, leaning against the rail, "and when you've done I'll talk to you."

"Now then, mates, you hear what the skipper says," exclaimed Johnson, turning to the others.

Just then I noticed the copper face of the cook, who was skulking behind the men, with his eyes fixed, flashing like a madman's, upon Duckling. 126

The fellow with the biscuits came forward, but a heavy lurch at that moment made him stumble, and the biscuits rolled out of his arms. They were collected officiously by the others, and placed again in his hands, all sopping wet; but he said, in a collected voice—

"These here are the starboard watch's bread. Ne'er a man has tasted of them. We've brought 'em for you to see, as so be it may happen that you aren't formiliar with the muck the steward sarves out."

"Hand up a dry one," said the skipper.

A man ran forward and returned with a biscuit, which the captain took, broke, smelt, and tasted. He then handed it to Duckling, who also smelt and tasted. After which he (the captain) said, "Fire away!"

The fellow with the biscuits withdrew, and one of the men, bearing the pork swimming in vinegar, advanced. He was a Dutchman, and was heard and understood with difficulty. 127

"My mates they shay tat tiss pork ish tam nashty, an' it isshn't pork ash I fanshy; but Gott knowsh what it iss; an' I shwear it gifs me ta shtomack-ache—by Gott, it doess, sir, ass I am a man."

This speech was received with great gravity by the men as well as Coxon, who answered, "Hand it up."

The mess was shoved through the rail and poked at by the skipper with a pen-knife; he even jobbed a piece of it out and put it into his mouth. I watched for a grimace, but he made none. He handed the tin dish as he had the biscuit to Duckling, who looked at it closely and put it on the deck.

"The next?" said the captain. 128

The Dutchman, looking as a man would who is conscious of having discharged a most important duty, hustled back among the others, and the man with the treacle came out.

"This, sir, is what the steward's givin' us for molasses," said he, looking into the pannikin.

The captain made no answer.

"And though his senses are agin him, he goes on a callin' of it molasses."

Another pause.

"But to my way of thinkin' it ain't no more molasses than it's oysters. It's biled black-beetles, that's what I call it, and you want a toothpick as strong as a marlin-spike to get the shells out o' your teeth arter a meal of it."

"Hand it up," said the captain, from whom every moment I was expecting an explosion of temper. He did not offer to taste the stuff, but inspected it with apparent attention, and tilted the vessel first this way and then that, that the treacle might run. 129

"Here's your molasses," said he, handing down the pannikin. "What else is there?"

"We're willin' to call this tea," said a man, holding up an earthenware jar filled with a black liquor; "but it ain't tea like what they sells ashore, an' it ain't tea like what I've bin used to drink on board other wessels. It's tea," continued he, looking first into the jar and then at the skipper, "and yet it ain't. Maybe it was growed in England, for there isn't no flavour of Chaney about it. It's too faint for 'bacca-leaves, and it ain't sweet enough for liquorish. Fish here says it's the mustiness as makes it taste like senna."

Here followed a pause, during which the men gazed eagerly at the skipper. I noticed some angry and even sinister countenances among them; and the cook looked as evil as a fiend, with his hard yellow face and gleaming eyes staring upwards under his eyebrows. But so far there had been nothing in the men's speeches and behaviour to alarm the most timid captain; and I thought it would require but little tact and a few kindly concessions to make them, on the whole, a hard-working and tractable crew. 130

The captain having kept silence for some time, exchanged looks with Duckling, and called to know if the men had any more complaints to make. They talked among themselves, and Johnson answered "No."

"Very well, then," said he. "I can do nothing for you here. There are no bake-houses yonder," nodding at the sea, "to get fresh bread from. You must wait till we get to Valparaiso." 131

A regular growl came up from the men, and Johnson exclaimed—

"We can't live on nothing till we get to Valparaiso."

"What do you want me to do?" cried the skipper savagely.

"It's not for us to dictate," replied Johnson. "All that the crew wants is grub fit to eat."

"Put into Brest," exclaimed a voice. "It ain't fur off. There's good junk and biscuit to be got at Brest."

"Who dares to advise me as to what I'm to do?" shouted the skipper in his furious way. "By Heaven, I'll break every bone in the scoundrel's body if he opens his infernal mutinous mouth

again. I tell you I can't change the provisions here, and I'm not going to alter the ship's course with this wind astern, not if you were all starving in reality." But having said this he pulled up short, as if his temper were diverting him from the line of policy he had in his mind to follow; he lowered his voice and said, "I'll tell you what, my lads; you must make the provisions serve you for the present, and if I can make a fair wind of it, I'll haul round for some Spanish port: or if not there, I'll see what land is to be picked up."

"You hear what the captain says, don't you?" growled Duckling.

"It isn't us that minds waiting, it's our stomachs," said Fish, the small-faced man.

"Do you mean to tell me you can't get a meal out of the food in your hands?" demanded the captain, pointing amongst them.

"We'd rayther drink cold water than the tea," said one.

"And the water ain't over-drinkable, neither," exclaimed another.

"The cook shays te pork 'll gif us te cholera," said one of the Dutchmen.

"We wouldn't mind if the bread an' molasses was right," cried Fish. "But they aren't. Nothen's right. The werry weevils ain't ordinary; they're longer an' fatter nor common bread-worms."

"Hold your jaw!" bawled Duckling. "The captain has spoke you fairer than any skipper that ever I sailed under would have spoke. So now cut forward—do you hear?—and finish your breakfast. Cook, come out from behind the mainmast, you loafing nigger, and leave the main-deck, or I'll make you trot to show the others the road."

He pulled a brass-belaying pin out of the rail and flourished it. The captain walked aft to the wheel, leaving Duckling to finish off with the men. They moved away, talking in low grumbling tones among themselves, manifestly dissatisfied with the result of their conference, and presently were all in the forecastle.

"I'll tell you what it is, Mr. Royle," said Duckling, turning impudently upon me; "you must wake up, if you please, and help me to keep those fellows in their place. No use in staring and listening. You must talk to 'em and curse 'em, damme! do you understand, Mr. Royle?"

"No, I don't understand," I replied. "I don't believe in cursing men. I've seen that sort of thing tried, but it never answered."

"Oh, I suppose you are one of those officers who call all hands to prayers before you reef down, are you?" he asked, with a coarse, sneering laugh. "I don't think Captain Coxon will appreciate your services much if that's your kind."

"I am sorry you should misunderstand me," I answered gravely. "I believe I can do my work and get others to do theirs without foul language and knocking men down."

"Thunder and lightning! what spooney skipper nursed *you* at his breast? Could you knock a man down if you tried?"

I glanced at him with a smile, and saw him running his eyes over me as though measuring my strength. There was enough of me, perhaps, to make him require time for his calculations. Sinewy and vigorous as his ill-built frame was, I was quite a match for him—half a head taller, and weighed more, with heavier arms upon me and a deeper chest than he; and was eight and twenty, whilst he was nearly fifty.

"I think," said I, "that I *could* knock a man down if I tried. Perhaps two. But then I don't try, and must be badly provoked in order to try. The skipper who nursed me was not a New Orleans man, but an Englishman, and something better—an English gentleman. That means that no one on board his ship ever gave him occasion to use his fists."

He muttered something about my thinking myself a very fine sort of bird, no doubt, but I could not catch all that he said owing to the incessant thundering of the gale; he then left me and joined the captain, who advanced to meet him, and they both went below.

It was now pretty plain that I was unsuited for the taste and society of the two men with whom I was thrown. The captain saw I was not likely to help his paltry views, and that my sympathy was with the crew; and try as I might, I could *not* disguise my real contempt for Duckling. They were great chums, and thoroughly relished each other's nature. They were both bullies, and, in addition, Duckling was a toady. Hence it was inevitable—but less from the subordinate position that I filled than from the dislike I had of these men's characters—that I should be an outsider, distrusted by the skipper as objecting to his dealings with the crew and capable of opposing them, and hated by Duckling for the contempt of him I could not disguise. Much as I regretted this result and had done what I could to avert it, now that it was thrust upon me, I resolved to meet it quietly. For the rest of that watch, therefore, I amused myself by shaping my plans, which simply amounted to a determination to do my duty as completely as I could, so as to deprive Coxon of all opportunity of making my berth more uncomfortable than it was; to hold my tongue, to take no notice of the skipper's doings, to steer as clear of Duckling as possible, and to quit the ship, if possible, at Valparaiso. How I kept these good resolutions you shall hear.

CHAPTER VI.

The weather mended next day, and we made all sail with a fine breeze, steering south-south-west. We had left the Downs on Tuesday, the 22nd of August, and on the 25th we found by observation that we had made a distance of over 900 miles, which, considering the heavy seas the ship had encountered and the depth to which she was loaded, was very good sailing.

However, though we carried the strong north-westerly wind with us all day, it fell calm towards night, then shifted ahead, then drew away north, and then fell calm again. We were now well upon the skirts of the Bay of Biscay, and the heavy swell for which that stretch of sea is famous, did not fail us. All through the night we lay like the ship in the song, rolling abominably, with Coxon in a ferocious temper on deck, routing up the hands to man first the port, and then the starboard braces, bousing the yards about to every whiff of wind, like a madman in the Doldrums, until both watches were exhausted. All this work was put upon us, merely because the skipper was in a rage at the calm, and not caring to rest himself, determined that his crew should not; but for all the good this slueing the yards about did, he might as well have laid the mainyards aback, and waited until some wind really came.

Early in the morning a light breeze sprang up aft, and the fore-topmast stun'-sail was run up, and the ship began to move again. This breeze held steady all day, and freshened a bit at night—but being right aft scarcely gave us more than six knots when liveliest. However, it saved the men's arms and legs, and enabled them to go about other and easier work than manning braces, stowing sails, and setting them again.

And so till Wednesday, the 31st of August, on which day we were, to the best of my memory, in latitude 45° and longitude about 10°.

The men during this time had been pretty quiet. The boatswain told me that grumbling among them was as regular as meal-times; but no murmurs came aft, no fresh complaints were made to the skipper. The reason was, I think, the crew believed that the skipper meant to touch at Madeira or one of the more southerly Canary Islands. That this was their notion was put into my head by a question asked me by a hand at the wheel when I was alone on deck: would I tell him where the ship was?

I gave him the results of the sights taken at noon.

"That's to the east'ard of Madeery, ain't it, sir?"

"Yes."

He bent his eyes on the compass-card, and seemed to be reflecting on the ship's course. The subject dropped; but after he had been relieved, and was gone forward, I saw him talking to the rest of the watch: and one of them knelt down and drew some kind of figure with a piece of chalk upon the deck (it looked to me, and doubtless was, a rude chart of the ship's position), whereupon the cook began to jabber with great vehemence, extending his hands in the wildest way, and pulling one of the men close to him, and whispering in his ear. They noticed me watching them, presently, and broke up.

Had I been on friendly terms with Coxon or Duckling, I should have made no delay in going to one or the other of them and communicating my misgivings; for misgivings I had, and pretty strong misgivings they were. But I perfectly well foresaw the reception my hints would meet with from both Duckling and the captain. I really believed that the latter disliked me enough now to convert my apprehension of trouble into some direct charge against me. He might swear that I had sympathized all along with the crew—and this I had admitted—and that if the mutiny which my fears foreboded broke out, I should be held directly responsible for it and treated as the ringleader. Besides, there was another consideration that influenced me: my misgivings *might* be unfounded. I might make a report which would not only imperil my own position, but provoke him into assuming an attitude towards the men which would produce in reality the mutiny that might, as things went, never come to pass. This consideration more than anything else decided me to hold my tongue, to let matters take their course, and to leave the captain and his chief mate to use their own eyesight, instead of obtruding mine upon them.

When I left the deck at four o'clock on the Wednesday afternoon, there was a pleasant breeze blowing directly from astern, and the ship was carrying all the canvas that would draw. The sky was clear, but pale, like a winter's sky, and there was a very heavy swell rolling up from the southward. The weather, on the whole, looked promising, and, despite the north-easterly wind, the temperature was so mild that I could have very well dispensed with my pilot jacket.

There was something, however, about the aspect of the sun which struck me as new and strange. Standing high over the western horizon it should be brilliant enough: and yet it was possible to keep one's eye fixed upon it for some moments without pain. It hung indeed, a fluctuating molten globe in the sky, without any glory of rays. This seemed to me a real phenomenon, viewed with respect to the *apparent* purity of the sky; but of course I understood that a mist or fog intervened between the sight and the sun, though I never before remembered having seen the sun's disc so dim in brilliancy and at the same time so *clean* in outline in a blue sky.

I looked at the barometer before entering my cabin and found a slight fall. Such a fall might betoken rain, or a change of wind to the southward. In truth, there is no telling what a rise or fall

in the barometer *does* betoken, beyond a change in the density of the atmosphere. I would any day rather trust an old sailor's or an old farmer's eye: and as to weather forecasts, based upon a thousand fantastic hobbies, I liken them to dreams, of which every one remembers the one or two that were verified, and forgets the immense number that were never fulfilled.

Throughout the dog-watches the weather still held fair; but the glass had fallen another bit and the wind was dropping. Captain Coxon had very little to say to me now and I to him. I was just civil, and he was barely so; but when I was taking a glass in the cuddy preparatory to turning in for three hours, he asked me what I thought of the weather.

"It's difficult to know what this swell means, sir," I answered. "Either it comes in advance of a gale or it follows a gale." 147

"In advance," he said. "If you are going to turn in, keep your clothes on. There was a thundering gale in the sun this afternoon, and if you clap your nose over the ship's side you'll smell it coming."

Oddly as he expressed himself, he was quite serious, and I understood him.

As the wind grew more sluggish, the vessel rolled more heavily. I never was in a cuddy that groaned and strained more than this, owing to the mahogany fittings having shrunk and warped away from their fixings. Up through the skylights it was pitch dark, from the effect of the swinging lamps within; and though both skylights were closed, I could hear the sails flapping like sharp peals of artillery against the masts, and the gurgling, washing sob of the water as the roll of the ship brought it up through the scupper-holes. 148

Just then Duckling overhead sang out to the men to get the fore-topmast stun'-sail in: and Coxon at once quitted the cabin and went on deck. There was something ominous in the calm and darkness of the night and the voluminous heaving of the sea, and I made up my mind to keep away from my cabin a while longer. I loaded a pipe and posted myself in a corner of the cuddy front. Had this been my first voyage, I don't think I should have found more difficulty in keeping my legs. The roll of the vessel was so heavy that it was almost impossible to walk. I gained the corner by dint of keeping my hands out and holding on to everything that came in my road; but even this nook was uncomfortable enough to remain in standing, for, taking the sea-line as my base, I was at one moment reclining at an angle of forty degrees, the next, I had to stiffen my legs forward to prevent myself from being shot like a stone out of the corner and projected to the other side of the deck. 149

The men were at work getting in the fore-topmast stun'-sail, and some were aloft rigging in the boom. There was no air to be felt save the draughts wafted along the deck by the flapping canvas. Even where I stood I could hear the jar and shock of the rudder struck by the swell, and the grinding of the tiller-chains as the wheel kicked. The sky was thick with half a dozen spars sparsely glimmering upon it here and there. The sea was black and oily, flashing fitfully with spaces of phosphorescent light which gleamed below the surface. But it was too dark to discern the extent and bulk of the swell: that was to be felt.

Duckling's voice began to sound harshly, calling upon the men to bear a hand, and *their* voices, chorusing up in the darkness, produced a curious effect. So far from my being able to make out their figures, it was as much as I could do to trace the outlines of the sails. After awhile they came down, and immediately Duckling ordered the fore and main royals to be furled. Then the fore and mizzen top-gallant halliards were let go, and the sails clewed up ready to be stowed when the men had done with the royals. So by degrees all the lighter sails were taken in, and then the whole of the watch was put to close-reef the mizzen-topsail. 150

As I knew one watch was not enough to reef the other topsails, and that all hands would soon be called, I put my pipe in my pocket and got upon the poop. Duckling stood holding on to the mizzen-rigging, vociferating, bully-fashion, to the men. I walked to the binnacle and found that the vessel had no steerage way on her, and that her head was lying west, though she swung heavily four or five points either side of this to every swell that lifted her. The captain took no notice of me, and I went and stuck myself against the companion-hatchway and had a look around the horizon which I could not clearly see from my former position on the quarter-deck. 151

The scene was certainly very gloomy. The deep, mysterious silence, made more impressive by the breathless rolling of the gigantic swell, and by the impenetrable darkness that overhung the water-circle, inspired a peculiar awe in the feelings. The rattle of the canvas overhead had been in some measure subdued; but the great topsails flapped heavily, and now and again the bell that hung just abaft the mainmast tolled with a single stroke. 152

It was a relief to turn the eye from the black space of ocean to the deck of the ship catching a lustre from the cuddy lights.

Duckling, perceiving my figure leaning against the hatchway, poked his nose into my face to see who I was.

"I believed you were turned in," said he.

"I thought all hands would be called, and wished to save myself trouble."

"We shall close-reef at eight bells," said he, and marched away.

This was an act of consideration towards the men, as it meant that the watch below would not be called until it was time for them to turn out. At all events the ship was snug enough now, come what might, even with two whole topsails on her. Having close-reefed the mizzen-topsail, the hands were now furling the mainsail, and only a little more work was needful to put the ship in 153

trim for a hurricane. So I took Duckling's hint and laid down to get some sleep, first taking a peep at the glass and noting that it was dropping steadily.

Sailors learn to go to sleep smartly and to get up smartly. And they also learn to extract refreshment out of a few winks, which is an art scarce any landsman that I am acquainted with ever succeeded in acquiring. I was awakened by one of the hands striking eight bells, and at once tumbled up and got on deck.

The night was darker than it was when I had gone to my cabin; no star was now visible, an inky blackness overspread the confines of the deep, and inspired a sense of calm that was breathless, suffocating, insupportable. The heavy swell still rose and sunk the vessel, washing her sides to the height of the bulwarks, and making the rudder kick furiously. 154

The moment Coxon saw me he told me to go forward and set all hands to close-reef the fore-topsail. I did his bidding, calling out the order as I went stumbling and sprawling along the main-deck, and letting go the halliards to wake up the men, after groping for them. Indeed, it was *pitch* dark forward. I might have been stone-blind for anything I could see, barring the thin rays of the fore-castle lamp glimmering faintly upon a few objects amidships.

Owing to this darkness it was a worse job to reef the topsails than had it been blowing a hurricane in daylight. It was a quarter to one before both sails were reefed, and then the watch that had been on deck since eight o'clock turned in.

Here were we now under almost bare poles, in a dead calm; and yet had the skipper ordered both the fore and mizzen topsails to be furled, he would not have been doing more than was justified by the extraordinary character of the night—the strange and monstrous sub-swell of the ocean, the opacity of the heavens, the sinister and phenomenal breathlessness and heat of the atmosphere. 155

Duckling was below, lying at full length upon one of the cuddy benches, ready to start up at the first call. I glanced at him through the skylight, and wondered how on earth he kept himself steady on his back. I should have been dislodged by every roll as surely as it came. Perhaps he used his shoulder-blades as cleats to hold on to the sides of the bench; and to so wildly proportioned a man as Duckling, a great deal was possible.

The card was swinging in the binnacle as before, and just now the ship's head was north-west. With more canvas upon the vessel her position would have been perilous by the impossibility of guessing from what quarter the wind would come—if it came at all. Even to be taken aback under close-reefed topsails might prove unpleasant enough, should a sudden gale come down and find the ship without way on her. 156

The captain, who was on the starboard side of the wheel, called me over to him.

"Are the decks clear?"

"All clear, sir."

"Fore-topsail sheets?"

"Ready for running, sir."

"How's her head now?" to the man at the helm.

"Nor'-west, half north."

"Keep a brisk look-out to the south'ard, sir," he said to me; "and sing out if you see the sky clearing."

I saw him, by the binnacle-light, put his finger in his mouth and hold it up. But there was no other air to be felt than the short rush first one way, then another, as the ship rolled. 157

Scarcely ten minutes had passed since he addressed me, when I saw what I took to be a ship's light standing clear upon the horizon, right astern.

I was about to call out when another light sprang up just above it. Then a small, faint light, a little to the westward of these, then another.

Owing to the peculiar character of the atmosphere these lights looked red, and so completely was I deceived by their appearance, that I halloed out—

"Do you see those lights astern, sir? They look like a fleet of steamers coming up."

But I had scarcely spoken when I knew that I had made a fool of myself. They were not ships' lights, *but stars*, and at once I comprehended the import of this sudden astral revelation. 158

"Stand by the starboard braces!" roared the skipper; and the men, awake to a sense of a great and perhaps perilous change close at hand, came shambling and stumbling along the deck.

A wonderful panorama was now being rapidly unfolded in the south.

All down there the sky was clearing as if by magic, and the stars shining; but as I watched, great flying wreaths like mighty volumes of smoke pouring out of gigantic factory chimneys, came rushing over and obscuring them, though always leaving a few brightly burning in a foreground which advanced with astonishing rapidity towards the ship. To right and left of this point of the horizon, the sky cleared only to be obscured afresh by the flying clouds. Soon, amid the solemn pauses falling upon the ship between the intervals of her pitching, for she had now swung right before the swell, we could hear the coming whirlwind screeching along the surface of the water. The contrast of its approach with the oily, breathless, heaving surface of the sea 159

around us and all ahead, and the utter stagnation of the air, produced an effect upon my mind, and, I believe, upon the minds of all others who were witnesses of the sight, to which no words could give expression—an emotion, if you like, of suspense that was almost terror, and yet terror deprived of pain by a wild and tingling curiosity.

But such a gale as I am describing travels quickly: all overhead the sky was first cleared and then massed up with whirling clouds, before the wind struck us: the white surface of the sea, cleanly lined like the surf upon a beach, was plainly seen by us, even when the water all around was still unruffled; and *then*, with a prolonged and pealing yell, the gale and the spray it was lashing out of the sea were upon us. In a moment our decks were soaking—the masts creaked, and every shroud and stay sang to the sudden, mighty strain; the vessel staggered and reeled—stopped, as a heavy swell rolled under her bows, and threw her all aslant against the hurricane, which screeched and howled through the rigging, and then fled forwards under the yards, which had squared themselves as the starboard braces were slackened.

It was lucky for the *Grosvenor* that the gale struck her astern. So great was its fury that, had it taken her aback, I doubt if she would have righted.

This furious wind had cleared the horizon, and the water-line all around was distinctly figured against the sky. The sea was a sheet of foam, and, what will scarcely seem credible, the swell *subsided* under the lateral pressure of the wind, so that for a short time we seemed to be racing along a level surface of froth. Large masses of this froth, bubbly and crackling like wood in a fire, were jogged clean off the water and struck the decks or sides of the ship with reports like the discharge of a pistol, and no more than a handful of water blown against my face hit me with such force, that for some moments I suffered the greatest torment, as though my eyes had been scalded, and I hardly knew whether I had not lost my sight.

The wind was blowing true from the south and we were bowling before it due north, losing as much ground every five minutes as had taken us an hour to get during the day. Coxon, however, was *feeling* the gale before he brought the ship close: at any moment, you see, the wind might chop round and blow a hurricane; though, to be sure, the sky with its torn masses of skurrying clouds had too wild an aspect to make us believe that this gale was likely to be of short duration.

The sea now began to rise, and it was strange to watch it. First it boiled in short waves which the wind shattered and blew flat. But other waves rose, too solid for the wind to level: they increased in bulk as they ran, and broke in coils of spray, while fresh and larger waves succeeded, and the ship began to pitch quickly in the young sea.

The wonderful violence of the wind could not be well appreciated by us who were running before it; but when the crew manned the braces and the helm was put to starboard, it seemed as if the wind would blow the ship out of the water. She came to slowly, laying her main-deck level with the sea, and the screeching of the wind was diabolical and absolutely terrifying to listen to. With the weather leeches just lifting, she was still well away from her course, and her progress under all three topsails was all leeway.

But I soon saw that she could not carry two of the three topsails, owing to the tremendous sudden pressure put upon the masts by her lurches to windward; and sure enough Duckling (who had turned out along with all hands when the gale had first struck the ship) roared through a speaking-trumpet to clew up and furl the fore and mizzen topsails.

It took all hands to deal with each sail separately, and I helped to stow the fore-topsail.

To be up aloft in weather of the kind I am describing is an experience no landsman can realize by imagination. To begin with, it is an immense job to *breathe*, for the wind stands like something solid in your mouth, and up your nostrils, and makes the expelling of your breath a task fitter for a one-horse engine than a pair of human lungs. Then you have two remorseless forces at work in the shape of the wind and the sail doing their utmost to hurl you from the yard. The fore-topsail was snugged as well as bunt-lines and clew-lines, hauled taut as steel bars, could bring it; and besides, there were already three reefs in it. And yet it stood out like cast-iron, and all hands might have danced a horn-pipe upon it without putting a crease into the canvas with their united weight. We had to roar out to Duckling to put the helm down, and spill the sail, before we could get hold of it; and so fiercely did the canvas shake in the hurricane as the ship came to, that I, who stood in the bunt, expected to see the hands out at the yard-arms shaken off the foot-ropes, and precipitated into the sea.

But what a wildly picturesque scene was the ocean surveyed from the height of the foremast! The sea was now heavy, and furiously lashing the weather bow; avalanches of spray ran high up the side, and were blown in a veil of hurtling sleet and froth across the forecastle. Casting my eyes backwards, the ship looked forlornly naked with no other canvas on her than the close-reefed main-topsail, with the bare outlines of her main and after yards, and the slack ropes and lines blown to leeward in semicircles, surging to and fro in long sweeps against the stars, which glimmered and vanished between the furiously whirling clouds. The hull of the vessel looked strangely narrow and long, contemplated from my elevation, upon the boiling seas; the froth of the water made an artificial light, and objects on deck were clear now, which, before the gale burst upon us, had been wrapped in impenetrable darkness.

When the sail was furled, all hands laid down as smartly as they could; but just under the foretop the rush of wind was so powerful, that when I dropped my leg over the edge to feel with my foot for the futtock shrouds, my weight was entirely sustained and buoyed up, and I believe that had I let go with my hands, I should have been blown securely against the fore-shrouds and there held.

The ship was now as snug as we could make her, hove to under close-reefed main-topsail and fore-topmast staysail, riding tolerably well, though, to be sure, the wind had not yet had time to raise much of a sea. The crew were fagged by their heavy work, and the captain ordered the steward to serve out a tot of grog apiece to them, more out of policy than pity, I think, as he would remember what was in their minds respecting their provisions, and how the ship's safety depended on their obedience.

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CHAPTER VII.

All that night it blew terribly hard, and raised as wild and raging a sea as ever I remember hearing or seeing described. During my watch, that is, from midnight until four o'clock, the wind veered a couple of points, but had gone back again only to blow harder, just as though it had stepped out of its way a trifle to catch extra breath.

I was quite worn out by the time my turn came to go below, and though the vessel was groaning like a live creature in its death-agonies, and the seas thumping against her with such shocks as kept me thinking that she was striking hard ground, I fell asleep as soon as my head touched the pillow, and never moved until routed out by Duckling four hours afterwards.

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All this time the gale had not bated a jot of its violence, and the ship laboured so heavily that I had the utmost difficulty in getting out of the cuddy on to the poop. When I say that the decks fore and aft were streaming wet, I convey no notion of the truth; the main-deck was simply *afloat*, and every time the ship rolled, the water on her deck rushed in a wave against the bulwarks and shot high in the air, to mingle sometimes with fresh and heavy inroads of the sea, both falling back upon the deck with the boom of a gun.

I had already ascertained from Duckling that the well had been sounded and the ship found dry; and therefore, since we were tight below, it mattered little what water was shipped above, as the hatches were securely battened down fore and aft, and the mast-coats unwrung. But still she laboured under the serious disadvantage of being overloaded; and the result was her fore parts were being incessantly swept by seas which at times completely hid her fore-castle in spray.

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Shortly after breakfast Captain Coxon sent me forward to despatch a couple of hands on to the jib-boom to snug the inner jib, which looked to be rather shakily stowed. I managed to dodge the water on the main-deck by waiting until it rolled to the starboard scuppers, and then cutting ahead as fast as I could; but just as I got upon the fore-castle, I was saluted by a green sea which carried me off my legs and would have swept me down on the main-deck had I not held on stoutly with both hands to one of the fore shrouds. The water nearly drowned me, and kept me sneezing and coughing for ten minutes afterwards. But it did me no further mischief, for I was encased in good oilskins and sou'wester, which kept me as dry as a bone inside.

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Two ordinary seamen got upon the jib-boom, and I bade them keep a good hold, for the ship sometimes danced her figurehead under water and buried her spritsail yard, and when she sank her stern her flying jib-boom stood up like the mizzen-mast. I waited until this job of snugging the sail was finished, and then made haste to get off the fore-castle, where the seas flew so continuously and heavily that had I not kept a sharp look-out I should several times have been knocked overboard.

Partly out of curiosity and partly with a wish to hearten the men, I looked into the fore-castle before going aft. There were sliding doors let into the entrance on either side the windlass, but one of them was kept half open to admit air, the fore-scuttle above being closed. The darkness here was made visible by an oil-lamp, in shape resembling a tin coffee-pot with a wick in the spout, which burnt black and smokily. The deck was up to my ankles in water, which gurgled over the pile of swabs that lay at the open entrance. It took my eye some moments to distinguish objects in the gloom, and then by degrees the strange interior was revealed. A number of hammocks were swung against the upper deck, and around the fore-castle were two rows of bunks, one atop of the other. Here and there were sea-chests lashed to the deck, and these, with the huge windlass, a range of chain-cable, lengths of rope, odds and ends of pots and dishes, with here a pair of breeches hanging from a hammock, and there a row of oilskins swinging from a beam, pretty well made up all the furniture that met my eye.

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The whole of the crew were below. Some of the men lay smoking in their bunks, others in their hammocks with their boots over the edge; one was patching a coat, another greasing his boots, others were seated in a group talking, whilst under the lamp were a couple of men playing at cards upon a chest, three or four watching and holding on by the hammocks over their heads.

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A man, lying in his bunk with his face towards me, started up and sent his legs, encased in blanket trousers and brown woollen stockings, flying out.

"Here's Mr. Royle, mates!" he called out. "Let's ask him the name of the port the captain means to touch at for proper food, for we aren't goin' to wait much longer."

"Don't ask me any questions of that kind, my lads," I replied promptly, seeing a general movement of heads in the bunks and hammocks. "I'd give you proper victuals if I had the

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ordering of them; and I have spoken to Captain Coxon about you, and I am sure he will see this matter put to rights."

I had difficulty in making my voice heard, for the striking of the seas against the ship's bows filled the place with an overwhelming volume of sound, and the hollow, deafening thunder was increased by the uproar of the ship's straining timbers.

"Who the devil thinks," said a voice from a hammock, "that we're going to let ourselves be grinded as we was last night, without proper wittles to support us? I'd rather have signed articles for a coal-barge with drowned rats to eat from Gravesend to Whitstable, than shipped in this here cursed wessel, where the bread's just fit to make savages retch!"

I had not bargained for this, but had merely meant to address them cheerily, with a few words of approval of the smart way in which they had worked the ship in the night. Seeing that my presence would do no good, I turned about and left the forecastle, hearing as I came away one of the Dutchmen cry out: "Look here, Mishter Rile, vill you be pleased to ssay when we are to hov' something to eat?—for, by Gott! ve vill kill te dom pigs in the long-boat, if the shkipper don't mindt—so look out!"

As ill-luck would have it, Captain Coxon was at the break of the poop, and saw me come out of the forecastle. He waited until he had got me alongside of him, when he asked me what I was doing among the men.

"I looked in to give them a good word for the work they did last night," I answered.

"And who asked you to give them a good word, as you call it?"

"I have never had to wait for orders to encourage a crew."

"Mind what you are about, sir!" he exclaimed in a voice tremulous with rage. "I see through your game, and I'll put a stopper upon it that you won't like."

"What game, sir? Let me have your meaning."

"An infernal mutinous game!" he roared. "Don't talk to me, sir! I know you! I've had my eye upon you! You'll play false if you can, and are trying to smother up your damned rebel meanings with genteel airs! Get away, sir!" he bellowed, stamping his foot. "Get away aft! You're a lumping, useless encumbrance! But, by thunder! I'll give you two for every one you try to give me! So stand by!"

And apparently half-mad with his rage he staggered away in the very direction in which he had told me to go, and stood near the wheel, glaring upon me with a white face, which looked indescribably malevolent in the fur cap and ear protectors that ornamented it.

I was terribly vexed by this rudeness, which I was powerless to resist, and regretted my indiscretion in entering the forecastle after the politic resolutions I had formed. However, Captain Coxon's ferocity was nothing new to me; truly I believed he was not quite right in his mind, and expected, as in former cases, that he would come round a bit by-and-by, when his insane temper had passed. Still, his insinuations were highly dangerous, not to speak of their offensiveness. It was no joke to be charged, even by a madman, with striving to arouse the crew to mutiny. Nevertheless, I tried to console myself as best I could by reflecting that he could not prove his charges; that I need only endure his insolence for a few weeks, and that there was always a law to vindicate me and punish him should his evil temper betray him into any acts of cruelty against me.

The gale, at times the severest that I was ever in, lasted three days, during which the ship drove something like eighty miles to the north-west. The sea on the afternoon of the third day was appalling: had the ship attempted to run, she would have been pooped and smothered in a minute; but lying close, she rode fairly well, though there were moments when I held my breath as she sunk into a hollow like a coal-mine, filled with the astounding noise of boiling water, really believing that the immense waves which came hurtling towards us with solid, sharp, transparent ridges, out of which the wind tore lumps of water and flung them through the rigging of the ship, must overwhelm the vessel before she could rise to it.

The fury of the tempest and the violence of the sea, which the boldest could not contemplate without feeling that the ship was every moment in more or less peril, kept the crew subdued, and they eat as best they could the provisions without complaint. However, it needed nothing less than a storm to keep them quiet; for on the second day a sea extinguished the galley-fire, and until the gale abated no cooking could be done; so that the men had to put up with cold water and biscuit. Hence all hands were thrown upon the ship's bread for two days, and the badness of it, therefore was made even more apparent than heretofore, when its wormy mouldiness was in some degree qualified by the nauseousness of bad salt pork and beef, and the sickly flavour of damaged tea.

As I had anticipated, the captain came round a little a few hours after his insulting attack upon me. I think his temper frightened him when it had reference to me. Like others of his breed, he was a bit of a cur at bottom: my character was a trifle beyond him, and he was ignorant enough to hate and fear what he could not understand. Be this as it may, he made some rough attempts at a rude kind of politeness when I went below to get some grog, and condescended to say that when I had been to sea as long as he, I would know that the most ungrateful rascals in the world were sailors; that every crew he had sailed with had always taken care to invent some grievance to growl over—either the provisions were bad, or the work too heavy, or the ship unseaworthy—and that long ago he had made up his mind never to pay attention to their complaints, since no

sooner would one wrong be redressed, than another would be coined and shoved under his nose.

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I took this opportunity of assuring him that I had never willingly listened to the complaints of the men, and that I was always annoyed when they spoke to me about the provisions, as I had nothing whatever to do with that matter; and that so far from my wishing to stir up the men into rebellion, my conduct had been uniformly influenced by the desire to conciliate them and represent their condition as very tolerable, so as to repress any tendency to disaffection which they might foment among themselves.

To this he made no reply, and soon afterwards we parted; but all next day he was sullen again, and never addressed me save to give an order.

On the evening of the third day the gale broke; the glass had risen since the morning, but until the first dog-watch the wind did not bate one iota of its violence, and the horizon still retained its stormy and threatening aspect. The clouds then broke in the west, and the setting sun shone forth with deep crimson light upon the wilderness of mountainous waters. The wind fell quickly, then went round to the west, and blew freshly; but there was a remarkable softness and sweetness in the feel and taste of it. A couple of reefs were at once shaken out of the main-topsail, and sail made. By midnight the heavy sea had subsided into a deep, long, rolling swell, still strangely enough coming from the south; but the fresh westerly wind held the ship steady, and for the first time for nearly a hundred hours we were able to move about the decks with comparative comfort. Early next morning the watch were set to wash down and clear up the decks, and when I left my cabin at eight o'clock, I found the weather bright and warm, with a blue sky shining among heavy, white, April-looking clouds, and the ship making seven knots under all plain sail. The decks were dry and comfortable, and the ship had a habitable and civilized look by reason of the row of clothes hung by the seamen to dry on the forecastle.

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It was half-past nine o'clock, and I was standing near the taffrail looking at a shoal of porpoises playing some few hundreds of feet astern, when the man who was steering asked me to look in the direction to which he pointed, that was, a little to the right of the bowsprit, and say if there was anything to be seen there; for he had caught sight of something black upon the horizon twice, but could not detect it now.

I turned my eyes towards the quarter of the sea indicated, but could discern nothing whatever; and, telling him that what he had seen was probably a wave which, standing higher than its fellows, will sometimes show black a long distance off, walked to the fore part of the poop.

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The breeze still held good and the vessel was slipping easily through the water, though the southerly swell made her roll, and at times shook the wind out of the sails. The skipper had gone to lie down, being pretty well exhausted, I dare say, for he had kept the deck for the greater part of three nights running. Duckling was also below. Most of my watch were on the forecastle, sitting or lying in the sun, which shone very warm upon the decks; the hens under the long-boat were chattering briskly, and the cocks crowing and the pigs grunting with the comfort of the warmth.

Suddenly, as the ship rose, I distinctly beheld something black out away upon the horizon, showing just under the foot of the foresail. It vanished instantly; but I was now satisfied, and went for the glass which lay upon brackets just under the companion. I then told the man who was steering to keep her away a couple of points for a few moments, and resting the glass against the mizzen-royal backstay, pointed it towards the place where I had seen the black object.

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For some moments nothing but sea or sky filled the field of the glass as the ship rose and fell; but all at once there leaped into this field the hull of a ship, deep as her main-chains in the water, which came and went before my eye as the long seas lifted or dropped in the foreground. I managed to keep her sufficiently long in view to perceive that she was totally dismantled.

"It's a wreck," said I, turning to the man; "let her come to again and luff a point. There may be living creatures aboard of her."

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Knowing what sort of man Captain Coxon was, I do not think that I should have had the hardihood to luff the ship a point out of her course had it involved the bracing of the yards; for the songs of the men would certainly have brought him on deck, and I might have provoked some ugly insolence. But the ship was going free, and would head more westerly without occasioning further change than slightly slackening the weather braces of the upper yards. This I did quietly, and the dismantled hull was brought right dead on end with our flying jib-boom. The men now caught sight of her, and began to stare and point, but did not sing out as they saw by the telescope in my hand that I perceived her. The breeze unhappily began to slacken somewhat, owing perhaps to the gathering heat of the sun; our pace fell off, and a full hour passed before we brought the wreck near enough to see her permanently, for up to this she had been constantly vanishing under the rise of the swell. She was now about two miles off, and I took a long and steady look at her through the telescope. It was a black hull, with painted ports. The deck was flush fore and aft, and there was a good-sized house just before where the mainmast should have been. This house was uninjured, though the galley was split up and to starboard stood up in splinters like the stump of a tree struck by lightning. No boats could be seen aboard of her. Her jib-boom was gone, and so were all three masts, clean cut off at the deck, as though a hand-saw had done it; but the mizzen-mast was alongside, held by the shrouds and backstays, and the port main and fore shrouds streamed like serpents from her chains into the water. I reckoned at once that she must be loaded with timber, for she never could keep afloat at that depth with any other kind of cargo in her.

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She made a most mournful and piteous object in the sunlight, sluggishly rolling to the swell which ran in transparent volumes over her sides and foamed around the deck-house. Once, when her stern rose, I read the name *Cecilia* in broad white letters.

I was gazing at her intently in the effort to witness some indication of living thing on board, when, to my mingled consternation and horror, I witnessed an arm project through the window of the deck-house, and frantically wave what resembled a white handkerchief. As none of the men called out, I judged this signal was not perceptible to the naked eye, and in my excitement I shouted—

"There's a living man on board of her, my lads!" dropped the glass, and ran aft to call the captain. 189

I met him coming up the companion-ladder. The first thing he said was, "You're out of your course," and looked up at the sails.

"There's a wreck yonder!" I cried, pointing eagerly, "with a man on board signalling to us."

"Get me the glass," he said sulkily, and I picked it up, and gave it to him.

He looked at the wreck for some moments, and addressing the man at the wheel, exclaimed, making a movement with his hand—

"Keep her away. Where the devil are you steering to?"

"Good Heaven!" I ejaculated; "there's a man on board—there may be others!"

"Damnation!" he exclaimed, between his teeth; "what do you mean by interfering with me? Keep her away!" he roared out. 190

During this time we had drawn sufficiently near to the wreck to enable the sharper-sighted among the hands to remark the signal; and they were calling out that there was somebody flying a handkerchief aboard the hull.

"Captain Coxon," said I, in as firm a voice as I could command—for I was nearly in as great a rage as he, and rendered insensible to all consequences by his inhumanity—"if you bear away, and leave that man yonder to sink with that wreck, when he can be saved with very little trouble, you will become as much a murderer as any ruffian who stabs a man asleep."

When I had said this, Coxon turned black in the face with passion. His eyes protruded, his hands and fingers worked as though he were under some electrical process, and I saw for the first time in all my life, a sight I had always laughed at as a bit of impossible novelist description—a mouth foaming with rage. He rushed aft just over Duckling's cabin, and stamped with all his might. 191

"Now," thought I, "they may try to murder me!" And without a word, I pulled off my coat, seized a belaying-pin, and stood ready, resolved that, happen what might, I would give the first man who should lay his fingers on me something to remember me by whilst he had breath in his body.

The men, not quite understanding what was happening, but seeing that a "row" was taking place, came off the forecastle, and advanced by degrees along the main-deck. Among them I noticed the cook, muttering to one or the other who stood near.

Mr. Duckling, awakened by the violent clattering over his head, came running up the companion with a bewildered, sleepy look in his face. The captain grasped him by the arm, and pointing to me, cried out with an oath, "that that villain was breeding a mutiny on board, and, he believed, wanted to murder him and Duckling." 192

I at once answered, "Nothing of the kind! There is a man miserably perishing on board that sinking wreck, Mr. Duckling, and he ought to be saved. My lads!" I cried, addressing the men on the main-deck, "is there a sailor among you all who would have the heart to leave that man yonder without an effort to rescue him?"

"No, sir!" shouted one of them. "We'll save the man, and if the skipper refuses we'll make him!"

"Luff!" I called to the man at the wheel.

"Luff, at your peril!" screamed the skipper. 193

"Aft here, some hands," I cried, "and lay the main-yard aback. Let go the port-main braces!"

The captain came running towards me.

"By the living God!" I cried, in a fury, grasping the heavy brass belaying-pin, "if you come within a foot of me, Captain Coxon, I'll dash your brains out!"

My attitude, my enraged face and menacing gesture, produced the desired effect. He stopped dead, turned a ghastly white, and looked round at Duckling.

"What do you mean by this (etc.) conduct, you (etc.) mutinous scoundrel!" roared Duckling, with a volley of foul language.

"Give him one for himself if he says too much, Mr. Royle!" sung out some hoarse voice on the main-deck, "we'll back yer!" And then came cries of "They're a cursed pair o' murderers!" "Who run the smack down?" "Who lets men drown?" "Who starves honest men?" This last exclamation was followed by a roar. 194

The whole of the crew were now on deck, having been aroused by our voices. Some of them

were looking on with a grin; others with an expression of fierce curiosity. It was at once understood that I was making a stand against the captain and chief mate, and a single glance at them assured me that by one word I could set the whole of them on fire to do my bidding even to shedding blood.

In the mean time the man at the wheel had luffed until the weather leeches were flat and the ship scarcely moving. And at this moment, that the skipper might know their meaning, a couple of hands jumped aft and let go the weather main-braces. I took care to keep my eyes on Coxon and the mate, fully prepared for any attack that one or both might make on me. Duckling eyed me furiously, but in silence, evidently baffled by my resolute air and the posture of the men. Then he said something to the captain, who looked exhausted and white and haggard with his useless passion. They walked over to the lee-side of the poop, and after a short conference the captain, to my surprise, went below, and Duckling came forward.

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"There's no objection," he said, "to your saving the man's life, if you want. Lower away the starboard quarter-boat, and you go along in her," he added to me, uttering the last words in such a thick voice that I thought he was choking.

"Come along, some of you," I cried out, hastily putting on my coat; and in less than a minute I was in the boat with the rudder and thole-pins shipped and four hands ready to out oars as soon as we touched the water.

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Duckling began to fumble at one of the boat's falls.

"Don't let him lower away!" roared out one of the men in the boat. "He'll let us go with a run. He'd like to see us drowned."

Duckling fell back scowling with fury, and, shoving his head over as the boat sank quietly into the water, he discharged a volley of execrations at us, saying that he would shoot some of us, if he swung for it, before he was done; and especially applying a heap of abusive terms to me.

The fellow pulling the bow oar laughed in his face, and another shouted out, "We'll teach you to say your prayers yet, you ugly old sinner!"

We got away from the ship's side cleverly, and in a short time were rowing fast for the wreck. The excitement under which I laboured made me reckless of the issue of this adventure. The sight of the lonely man upon the wreck, coupled with the unmanly, brutal intention of Coxon to leave him to his fate, had goaded me into a state of mind infuriate enough to have done and dared everything to *compel* Coxon to save him. He might call it mutiny, but I called it humanity, and I was prepared to stand or fall by my theory. The hate the crew had for their captain and chief mate was quite strong enough to guarantee me against any foul play on the part of Coxon, otherwise I might have prepared myself to see the ship fill and stand away and leave us alone on the sea with the wreck. One of the men in the boat suggested this; but another immediately answered: "They'd pitch the skipper overboard if he gave such an order, and glad o' the chance. There's no love for 'em among us, I can tell you, and by --- there'll be bloody work done aboard the *Grosvenor* if things aren't mended soon, as you'll see."

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They all four pulled at their oars savagely as these words were spoken, and I never saw such sullen and ferocious expressions on men's faces as came into theirs when they fixed their eyes as with one accord upon the ship.

She, deep as she was, looked a beautiful model on the mighty surface of the water, rolling with marvellous grace to the swell, the strength and volume of which made me feel my littleness and weakness as it lifted the small boat with irresistible power. There was wind enough to keep her sails full upon her graceful, slender masts, and the brass-work upon her deck flashed brilliantly as she rolled from side to side.

Strange contrast to look from her to the broken and desolate picture ahead! My eyes were rivetted upon it now with new and intense emotion, for by this time I could discern that the person who was waving to us was a female—woman or girl I could not yet make out—and that her hair was like a veil of gold behind her swaying arm.

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"It's a woman!" I cried in my excitement; "it's no man at all. Pull smartly, my lads, pull smartly, for God's sake!"

The men gave way stoutly, and the swell favouring us, we were soon close to the wreck. The girl, as I now perceived she was, waved her handkerchief wildly as we approached; but my attention was occupied in considering how we could best board the wreck without injury to the boat. She lay broadside to us, with her stern on our right, and was not only rolling heavily with wallowing, squelching movements, but was swirling the heavy mizzen-mast that lay alongside through the water each time she went over to starboard, so that it was necessary to approach her with the greatest caution to prevent our boat from being stove in. Another element of danger was the great flood of water which she took in over her shattered bulwarks, first on this side, then on that, discharging the torrent again into the sea according as she rolled. This water came from her like a cataract, and in a second would fill and sink the boat unless extreme care were taken to keep clear of it.

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I waved my hat to the poor girl to let her know that we saw her and had come to save her, and steered the boat right around the wreck that I might observe the most practicable point for boarding her.

She appeared to be a vessel of about 700 tons. The falling of her masts had crushed her port bulwarks level with the deck, and part of her starboard bulwarks was also smashed to pieces.

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Her wheel was gone, and the heavy seas that had swept her deck had carried away capstans, binnacle, hatchway gratings, pumps—everything, in short, but the deck-house and the remnants of the galley. I particularly noticed a strong iron boat's davit twisted up like a corkscrew. She was full of water, and lay as deep as her main-chains, but her bows stood high, and her fore-chains were out of the sea. It was miraculous to see her keep afloat as the long swell rolled over her in a cruel, foaming succession of waves.

Though these plain details impressed themselves upon my memory, I did not seem to notice anything, in the anxiety that possessed me to rescue the lonely creature in the deck-house. It would have been impossible to keep a footing upon the main-deck without a life-line or something to hold on by; and seeing this and forming my resolutions rapidly, I ordered the man in the bows of the boat to throw in his oar and exchange places with me, and head the boat for the starboard port-chains. As we approached I stood up with one foot planted on the gunwale ready to spring; the broken shrouds were streaming aft and alongside, so that if I missed the jump and fell into the water there was plenty of stuff to catch hold of.

"Gently—'vast rowing—ready to back astern smartly!" I cried, as we approached. I waited a moment: the hull rolled towards us, and the succeeding swell threw up our boat; the deck, though all aslant, was on a line with my feet. I sprang with all my strength, and got well upon the deck, but fell heavily as I reached it. However, I was up again in a moment, and ran forward out of the wash of the water.

Here was a heap of gear, staysail and jib-halliards and other ropes, some of the ends swarming overboard. I hauled in one of these ends, but found I could not clear the raffle; but looking round, I perceived a couple of coils of line, spare stun'-sail tacks or halliards I took them to be, lying close against the foot of the bowsprit. I immediately seized the end of one of these coils and flung it into the boat, telling them to drop clear of the wreck astern; and when they had backed as far as the length of line permitted, I bent on the end of the other coil and paid that out until the boat was some fathoms astern. I then made my end fast, and sung out to one of the men to get on board by the starboard mizzen-chains and to bring the end of the line with him. After waiting a few minutes, the boat being hidden, I saw the fellow come scrambling over the side with a red face, his clothes and hair streaming, he having fallen overboard. He shook himself like a dog, and crawled with the line, on his hands and knees, a short distance forward, then hauled the line taut and made it fast.

"Tell them to bring the boat round here," I cried, "and lay off on their oars until we are ready. And you get hold of this line and work yourself up to me."

Saying which I advanced along the deck, clinging tightly with both hands. It very providentially happened that the door of the deck-house faced the forecabin within a few feet of where the remains of the galley stood. There would be, therefore, less risk in opening it than had it faced beam-wise; for the water, as it broke against the sides of the house, parted clear of the fore and after parts; that is, the great bulk of it ran clear, though, of course, a foot's depth of it at least surged against the door.

I called out to the girl to open the door quickly, as it slid in grooves like a panel, and was not to be stirred from the outside. The poor creature appeared mad, and I repeated my request three times without inducing her to leave the window. Then, not believing that she understood me, I cried out, "Are you English?"

"Yes," she replied. "For God's sake, save us!"

"I cannot get you through that window," I exclaimed. "Rouse yourself and open that door, and I will save you."

She now seemed to comprehend, and drew in her head. By this time the man out of the boat had succeeded in sliding along the rope to where I stood, though the poor devil was nearly drowned on the road; for when about half-way the hull took in a lump of a swell which swept him right off his legs, and he was swung hard a-starboard, holding on for his life. However, he recovered himself smartly when the water was gone, and came along hand over fist, snorting and cursing in wonderful style.

Meanwhile, though I kept firm hold of the life-line, I took care to stand where the inroads of water were not heavy, waiting impatiently for the door to open. It shook in the grooves, tried by a feeble hand; then a desperate effort was made, and it slid a couple of inches.

"That will do!" I shouted. "Now, then, my lad, catch hold of me with one hand and the line with the other."

The fellow took a firm grip of my monkey-jacket, and I made for the door. The water washed up to my knees, but I soon inserted my fingers in the crevice of the door and thrust it open.

The house was a single compartment, though I had expected to find it divided into two. In the centre was a table that travelled on stanchions from the roof to the deck. On either side were a couple of bunks. The girl stood near the door. In a bunk to the left of the door lay an old man with white hair. Prostrate on his back, on the deck, with his arms stretched against his ears, was the corpse of a man, well dressed; and in a bunk on the right sat a sailor, who, when he saw me, yelled out and snapped his fingers, making horrible grimaces.

Such in brief the *coup d'œil* of that weird interior as it met my eyes.

I seized the girl by the arm.

"You first," said I. "Come—there is no time to be lost."

But she shrank back, pressing against the door with her hand to prevent me from pulling her, crying in a husky voice, and looking at the old man with the white hair. "My father first!—my father first!"

"You shall all be saved, but you must obey me. Quickly now!" I exclaimed passionately, for a heavy sea at that moment flooded the ship, and a rush of water swamped the house through the open door, and washed the corpse on the deck up into a corner.

Grasping her firmly, I lifted her off her feet, and went staggering to the life-rope, slinging her light body over my shoulder as I went. Assisted by my man, I gained the bow of the wreck, and, hailing the boat, ordered it alongside.

"One of you," cried I, "stand ready to receive this lady when I give the signal."

I then told the man who was with me to jump into the fore-chains, which he instantly did. The wreck lurched heavily to port. "Stand by, my lads!" I shouted. Over she came again, with the water swooping along the main-deck. The boat rose high, and the fore-chains were submerged to the height of the man's knees. "Now!" I called, and lifted the girl over. She was seized by the man in the chains and pushed towards the boat; the fellow standing in the bow of the boat caught her, and at the same moment down sank the boat, and the wreck rolled wearily over. But the girl was safe.

"Hurrah, my lad!" I sung out. "Up with you—there are others remaining;" and I went sprawling along the line to the deck-house, there to encounter another rush of water, which washed as high as my thighs, and fetched me such a thump in the stomach, that I thought I must have died of suffocation.

I was glad to find that the old man had got out of his bunk and was standing at the door.

"Is my poor girl safe, sir?" he exclaimed, with the same huskiness of voice that had grated so unpleasantly in the girl's tone.

"Quite safe—come along."

"Thanks be to Almighty God!" he ejaculated, and burst into tears.

I seized hold of his thin, cold hand, but shifted my fingers to catch him by the coat collar, so as to exert more power over him, and hauled him along the deck, telling my companion to lay hold of the seaman and fetch him away smartly. We managed to escape the water, for the poor old gentleman bestirred himself very nimbly, and I helped him over the fore-chains, and when the boat rose, tumbled him into her without ceremony. I saw the daughter leap towards him and clasp him in her arms, but I was soon again scrambling on to the deck, having heard cries from my man, accompanied with several loud curses, mingled with dreadful yells.

"He's bitten me, sir!" cried my companion, hauling himself away from the deck-house. "He's roaring mad."

"It can't be helped," I answered. "We must get him out."

He saw me pushing along the life-line, plucked up heart, and went with myself through a sousing sea to the door. I caught a glimpse of a white face glaring at me from the interior: in a second a figure shot out, fled with incredible speed towards the bow, and leaped into the sea just where our boat lay.

"They'll pick him up," I exclaimed. "Stop a second;" and I entered the house and stooped over the figure of the man on the deck. I was not familiar with death, and yet I knew it was here. I cannot describe the signs in his face; but such as they were they told me the truth. I noticed a ring upon his finger, and that his clothes were good. His hair was black, and his features well-shaped, though his face had a half-convulsed expression, as if something frightful had appeared to him, and he had died of the sight of it.

"This wreck must be his coffin," I said. "He is a corpse. We can do no more."

We scrambled for the last time along the life-line and got into the fore-chains, but to our consternation saw the boat rowing away from the wreck. However, the fit of rage and terror that possessed me, lasted but a moment or two; for I now saw they were giving chase to the madman, who was swimming steadily away. Two of the men rowed, and the third hung over the bows, ready to grasp the miserable wretch. The *Grosvenor* stood steady, about a mile off, with her mainyards backed; and just as the fellow over the boat's bows caught hold of the swimmer's hair, the ensign was run up on board the ship and dipped three times.

"Bring him along!" I shouted. "They'll be off without us if we don't bear a hand."

They nearly capsized the boat as they dragged the lunatic, streaming like a drowned rat, out of the water; and one of the sailors tumbled him over on his back, and knelt upon him, whilst he took some turns with the boat's painter round his body, arms, and legs. The boat then came alongside, and, watching our opportunity, we jumped into her and shoved off.

I had now leisure to examine the persons whom we had saved.

They—father and daughter as I judged them, by the girl's exclamation on the wreck—sat in the stern-sheets, their hands locked. The old man seemed nearly insensible, leaning backwards with his chin on his breast and his eyes partially closed. I feared he was dying, but could do no good until we reached the *Grosvenor*, as we had no spirits in the boat.

The girl appeared to be about twenty years of age, very fair, her hair of a golden straw colour, which hung wet and streaky down her back and over her shoulders, though a portion of it was

held by a comb. She was deadly pale and her lips blue, and in her fine eyes was such a look of mingled horror and rapture as she cast them around her, first glancing at me, then at the wreck, then at the *Grosvenor*; that the memory of it will last me to my death. Her dress, of some dark material, was soaked with salt water up to her hips, and she shivered and moaned incessantly, though the sun beat so warmly upon us that the thwarts were hot to the hand.

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The mad sailor lay at the bottom of the boat, looking straight into the sky. He was a horrid-looking object with his streaming hair, pasty features, and red beard; his naked shanks and feet protruding through his soaking, clinging trousers, which figured his shin-bones as though they clothed a skeleton. Now and again he would give himself a wild twirl and yelp out fiercely; but he was well-nigh spent with his swim, and on the whole was quiet enough.

I said to the girl, "How long have you been in this dreadful position?"

"Since yesterday morning," she answered in a choking voice painful to hear, and gulping after each word. "We have not had a drop of water to drink since the night before last. He is mad with thirst, for he drank the water on the deck," and she pointed to the man in the bottom of the boat.

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"My God!" I cried to the men; "do you hear her? They have not drunk water for two days! For the love of God, give way!"

They bent their backs to the oars and the boat foamed over the long swell. The wind was astern and helped us. I did not speak again to the poor girl, for it was cruel to make her talk when the words lacerated her throat as though they were pieces of burning iron.

After twenty minutes, which seemed as many hours, we reached the vessel. The crew pressing round the gangway cheered when they saw we had brought people from the wreck. Duckling and the skipper watched us grimly from the poop.

"Now then, my lads," I cried, "up with this lady first. Some of you on deck get water ready, as these people are dying of thirst."

217

In a few moments both the girl and the old man were handed over the gangway. I cut the boat's painter adrift from the ring-bolt so that we could ship the madman without loosening his bonds, and he was hoisted up like a bale of goods. Then four of us got out of the boat, leaving one to drop her under the davits and hook on the falls.

At this moment a horrible scene took place.

The old man, tottering on the arms of two seamen, was being led into the cuddy, followed by the girl, who walked unaided. The madman, in the grasp of the big sailor named Johnson, stood near the gangway, and as I scrambled on deck one of the men was holding a pannikin full of water to his face. The poor wretch was shrinking away from it, with his eyes half out of their sockets; but suddenly tearing his arm with a violent effort from the rope that bound him, he seized the pannikin *and bit clean through the tin*; after which, throwing back his head, he swallowed the whole draught, dashed the pannikin down, his face turned black, and he fell dead on the deck.

218

The big sailor sprang aside with an oath, forced from him by his terror, and from every looker-on there broke a groan. They all shrank away and stood staring with blanched faces. Such a piteous sight as it was, lying doubled up, with the rope pinioning the miserable limbs, the teeth locked, and the right arm up-tossed!

"Aft here and get the quarter-boat hoisted up!" shouted Duckling, advancing on the poop; and seeing the man dead on the deck, he added, "Get a tarpaulin and cover him up, and let him lie on the fore-hatch."

219

"Shall I tell the steward to serve out grog to the men who went with me?" I asked him.

He stared at me contemptuously, and walked away without answering.

"You shall have your grog," said I, addressing one of them who stood near, "though it should be my own allowance." And thoroughly exhausted after my exertions, and wet through, I turned into my cabin to put on some dry clothes.

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CHAPTER VIII.

Whilst I was in my cabin I heard the men hoisting up the quarter-boat, and this was followed by an order from Duckling to man the lee main-braces. The ship, hove too, was off her course; but when she filled, she brought the wreck right abreast of the port-hole in my cabin. I stood watching for some minutes with peculiar emotions, for the recollection of the dead body in the deck-house lent a most impressive significance to the mournful object which rolled from side to side. It comforted me, however, to reflect that it was impossible I could have left anything living on the hull, since nothing could have existed below the deck, and any one above must have been seen by me.

221

The ship, now lying over, shut the wreck out, and I shifted my clothes as speedily as I could, being anxious to hear what Captain Coxon should say to me. I was also curious to see the old man

and girl, and learn what treatment the captain was showing them. I remember it struck me, just at this time, that the girl was in a very awkward position; for here she was on board a vessel without any female to serve her for a companion and lend her clothes, which she would stand seriously in need of, as those she had on her were wringing wet. And even supposing she could make shift with these for a time, she would soon want a change of apparel, which she certainly would not get until we reached Valparaiso, unless the skipper put into some port and landed them. The memory of her refined and pretty face, with the amber air about it, and her wild, soft, piteous blue eyes, haunted me; and I tried to think what could be done to make her comfortable in this matter of dress if the captain refused to go out of his way to set them ashore.

222

Thus thinking, I was pulling on a boot, when there came an awkward knock at the door of the cabin, and in stepped the carpenter, Stevens by name, holding in his hand a bar of iron with a collar at either end, and one collar fastened with a padlock. Close behind the carpenter came Duckling, who let the door close of itself, and who immediately said—

"Captain Coxon's orders are to put you in irons. Carpenter, clap those belayers on his damned shins."

I jumped off the chest on which I was seated, not with the intention of resisting, but of remonstrating; but Duckling, mistaking the action, drew a pistol out of his side-pocket, and presenting it at my head, said, right through his nose, which was the first time I had heard him so speak: "By the Eternal! if you don't let the carpenter do his work, I'll shoot you dead—so mind!"

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"You're a ruffian and a bully!" said I; "but I'll keep my life if only to punish you and your master!"

Saying which, I reseated myself, folded my arms resolutely, and suffered the carpenter to lock the irons on my ankles, keeping my eyes fixed on Duckling with an expression of the utmost scorn and dislike in them.

"Now," said he, "you infernal mutinous hound! I reckon you'll not give us much trouble for the rest of the voyage."

This injurious language was more than my temper could brook. Scarcely knowing what I did, I threw myself against him, caught his throat, and dashed him violently down upon the deck. The pistol exploded in his hand as he fell.

224

"Carpenter," I cried furiously, "open that door!"

The fellow obeyed me instantly, and walked out of the cabin. Duckling lay pretty well stunned upon the deck; but in a few moments he would have been up and at me, and, hampered as I was by the irons, he must have mastered me easily. I shambled over to where he lay, dragged him upright, and pitched him with a crash through the open door against the cuddy table. He struck it heavily and rolled under it, and I then slammed the door and sat down, feeling faint and quite exhausted of breath.

The door had not been closed two minutes when it was partially opened, and a friendly hand (the boatswain's, as I afterwards learnt) placed a pannikin of rum-and-water on the deck, and a voice said, "They'll not let you be here long, sir." The door was then shut again; and very thankful for a refreshment of which I stood seriously in need, I got hold of the pannikin and swallowed the contents.

225

I now tried to reflect upon my situation, but found it impossible to do so, as I could not guess what intentions the captain had against me and what would be the result of my conflict with Duckling. For some while I sat expecting to see the chief mate rush in on me; and, in anticipation of a struggle with a coward who would have me almost at his mercy, I laid hold of a sea-boot, very heavy, with an iron-shod heel, and held it ready to strike at the bully's head should he enter. However, in about a quarter of an hour's time I saw him through my cabin window pass along the main-deck, with a blue lump over his right eye, while the rest of his face shone with soap, which he must have used without stint to rid his features of the blood that had smeared them. Whether the report of the pistol had been heard or not I could not tell; but no notice appeared to be taken of it. I noticed a number of the crew just under the fore-castle conversing in a very earnest manner, and sometimes looking towards my cabin.

226

There was something very gross and brutal in this treatment to which I was subjected, and there was a contempt in it for me, suggested by the skipper sending Duckling to see me in irons, instead of logging me to my face and acting in a shipshape fashion in putting me under arrest, which galled me extremely. The very irons on my legs were not such as are ordinarily used on board ship, and looked as if they had been picked up cheap in some rag and slop shop in South America or in the West Indies, for I think I had seen such things in pictures of truculent negro slaves. I was in some measure supported by the reflection that the crew sympathized with me, and would not suffer me to be cruelly used; but the idea of a mutiny among them gave me no pleasure, for the skipper was sure to swear that I was the ringleader, and Duckling would of course back his statements; and my calling upon the men to help me to put off to the wreck, against the captain's orders, my going thither, and my confinement in irons, would all tell heavily against me in any court of inquiry; so that, as things were, I not only stood the chance of being professionally ruined, but of having to undergo a term of imprisonment ashore.

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These were no very agreeable reflections; and if some rather desperate thoughts came into my head whilst I sat pondering over my misfortunes, the reader will not greatly wonder.

228

I was growing rather faint with hunger, for it was past my usual dinner-hour, and I had done enough work to account for a good appetite.

The captain was eating his dinner in the cuddy; for I not only smelt the cooking, but heard his voice addressing the steward, who was, perhaps, the only man in the ship who showed any kind of liking for him. I tried to hear if the old man or the girl were with him, but caught no other voice. I honestly prayed that the captain would act humanely towards them; but I had my doubts, for he was certainly a cold-blooded, selfish rascal.

By-and-by I heard Duckling's voice, showing that the captain had gone on deck. This man, either wanting the tact of his superior or hating me more bitterly (which I admit was fair, seeing how I had punished him), said in a loud voice to the steward—

"What fodder is that mutinous dog yonder to have?"

The steward spoke low and I did not hear him.

"Serve the skunk right," continued the chief mate. "By glory, if there was only a pair of handcuffs on board they should be on him. How's this lump?"

The steward replied, and Mr. Duckling continued—

"I guess the fellow at the wheel grinned when he saw it. But I'll be raising bigger lumps than this on some of 'em before I'm done. This is the most skulking, snivelling, mutinous ship's crew that ever I sailed with—I'd rather work the vessel with four Lascars; and as to that rat in the hole there, if it wasn't for the colour of the bunting we sail under, I reckon we'd have made an ensign of him at the mizzen-peak some days ago, by the Lord, with the signal halliards round his neck, for he's born to be hanged; and I guess, though he knocked me down when I wasn't looking, I'm strong enough to hoist *him* thirty feet, and let him drop with a run."

All this was said in a loud voice for my edification, but I must own it did not frighten me very greatly. To speak the truth, I thought more of the old man and his daughter than myself; for if they should hear this bragging bully from their cabins, they would form very alarming conclusions as to the character of the persons who had rescued them, and scarcely know, indeed, whether we were not all cut-throats.

Shortly after this, Duckling came out on to the main-deck, and observing me looking through the window, bawled at the top of his voice for the carpenter, who presently came, and Duckling, pointing to my window, gave him some instructions, which he went away to execute. A young ordinary seaman—an Irish lad named Driscoll—was coiling a rope over one of the belaying-pins around the mainmast. Duckling pointed up aloft, and his voice sounded, though I did not hear the order. The lad waited to coil the rest of the rope—a fathom or so—before obeying; whereupon Duckling hit him a blow on the back, slewed him round, caught him by the throat, and backed him savagely against the starboard bulwarks, roaring, in language quite audible to me now—"Up with you, you skulker! I'll teach you to wait when I give an order. Up with you, I say, or I'll pound you to pieces."

At this moment the carpenter approached my window, provided with a hammer and a couple of planks, which he proceeded to nail upon the framework. Duckling watched him with a grin upon his ugly face, the lump over his eye not improving the expression, as you may believe. I was now in comparative darkness; for the port-hole admitted but little light, and, unlike the rest of the cuddy berths, my cabin had no bull's-eye.

I reached the door with a great deal of trouble, for the iron-bar hampered my movements excessively, and found it locked outside; but by whom and when I did not know, for I had not heard the key turned. But I might depend that Duckling had done this with cat-like stealthiness, and that he probably had the key in his pocket.

I was hungry enough to have felt grateful for a biscuit, and had half a mind to sing out to the steward to bring me something to eat, but reflected that my doing so might only provoke an insulting answer from the fellow. With some difficulty I pulled the mattress out of the cot and put it into the bunk, as my pinioned legs would not enable me to climb or spring, and laid down and presently fell asleep.

I slept away the greater part of the afternoon; for when I awoke, the sky, as I saw it through the port-hole, was dark with the shadow of evening. A strong wind was blowing and the ship laying heavily over to it, by which I might know she was carrying a heap of canvas.

I looked over the edge of the bunk, and saw on the deck near the door a tin dish, containing some common ship's biscuit and a can of cold water. I was so hungry that I jumped up eagerly to get the biscuit, by doing which I so tweaked my ankles with the irons, that the blood came from the broken skin. I made shift to reach the biscuit, which proved to be the ship's bread as served to the men, and ate greedily, being indeed famished; but speedily discovered the substantial grounds of complaint the sailors had against the ship's stores; for the biscuit was intolerably mouldy and rotten, and so full of weevils, that nothing but hunger could have induced me to swallow the abomination. I managed to devour a couple of these things, and drank some water; and then pulled out my pipe and began to smoke, caring little about the skipper's objection to this indulgence in the saloon, and heartily wishing he would come to the cabin that I might tell him what I thought of his behaviour.

How long was this state of things going to last with me? Would the crew compel Captain Coxon to put into some near port where I should be handed over to the authorities, or would he proceed direct to Valparaiso? The probability of his touching anywhere was, in my opinion, now smaller than before; as the delays, and inquiry into my conduct and the complaints of the men, would seriously enlarge the period of the voyage. Nor could I imagine that the two persons we had rescued would prevail upon him to go out of his way to land them. As for myself, looking back on

my actions, I did not believe that any court would judge me severely for obliging Coxon to send a boat to the wreck; for I had the evidence of the crew to prove that a human being had been seen signalling to us for help, before I ordered the ship to be hove to, and that therefore my determination to board the wreck had not been speculative, but truly justified by the spectacle of human distress. Still, such anticipations scarcely consoled me for the inconvenience I suffered in my feet being held in irons, and in my being locked up in a gloomy cabin, where such fare as I had already eaten would probably be the food I should get until the voyage out was ended.

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As the evening advanced the wind freshened, and I heard the captain giving orders just over my head, and the hands shortening sail. The skipper was again straining the ship heavily: the creaking and groaning in the cuddy was incessant: and every now and again I heard the boom of a sea against the vessel's side, and the sousing rush of water on deck. But after the men had been at work some time, the vessel laboured less and got upon a more even keel.

Two bells (nine o'clock) had been struck, when I was suddenly attracted by a sound of hammering upon the dead-light in my cabin. I turned my head hastily; but as it was not only dark inside, but dark without, I could discern nothing, and concluded that the noise had been made on the deck overhead.

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After an interval of a minute the hammering was repeated, and now it was impossible for me to doubt that it was caused by something hard, such as the handle of a knife being struck upon the thick glass of the port-hole. I was greatly astonished; but remembering that the main-chains extended away from this port-hole, I easily concluded that some one had got down into them and was knocking to draw my attention.

I hoisted my legs out of the bunk with very great difficulty, and having got my feet upon the deck, drew myself to the port-hole, but with much trouble, it being to windward, and the deck sloping to a considerable angle. Not a glimmer of light penetrated my cabin from the cuddy: and whether the sky outside was clear or not, I only know that the prospect seen through the port-hole, buried in the thickness of the ship's wall, was pitch dark.

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I untwisted the screw that kept the dead-light closed, and it blew open, and a rush of wind, concentrated by the narrowness of the aperture through which it penetrated, blew damp with spray upon my face.

Fearful of my voice being heard in the cuddy—for this was the hour when the spirits were put upon the table, and it was quite likely that Coxon or Duckling might be seated within, drinking alone—I muffled my voice between my hands and asked who was there?

The fellow jammed his face so effectually into the port-hole as to exclude the wind, so that the whisper in which he spoke was quite distinct.

"Me—Stevens, the carpenter. I've come from the crew. But you're to take your solemn oath you'll not split upon us if I tell you what's goin' to happen?"

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"I am not in a position to split," I replied. "But I can make no promises until I know your intentions."

The man was a long time silent. Several times he withdrew his face, as I knew (for I could not see him) by the rush of wind that came in, to shake himself free of the spray that broke over him.

"It's just this," he said, bunging up the port-hole again. "We'd rather take a twelvemonth imprisonment ashore, in the worst jail in England, than work this wessel on the rotten food we're obliged to eat. What we want to know is, will you take charge o' the ship and carry her where we tells yer, if we give you command?"

I was too much startled by this question to reply at once. Influenced by the long term of confinement before me, if Captain Coxon remained in control, by my bitter dislike of him and his bully factotum, by the longing to be free, and the hundred excuses I could frame for co-operating with the crew, my first impulse was to say yes. But there came quickly considerations of the danger of mutiny on board ship, of the sure excesses of men made reckless by liberty and freed from the discipline which, though their passions might protest against it, their still stronger instincts admitted and obeyed.

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"Give us your answer," said the man. "If the chief mate looks over, he'll see me."

"I cannot consent," I replied. "I am as sorry for the crew as I am for myself. But things are better as they are."

"By—!" exclaimed the man in a violent, hoarse whisper, "we don't mean to let 'em be as they are. We've put up with a bit too much as it is. We'll find a way of making you consent—see to that! And if you peach on us we're still too strong for you—so mind your life!"

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Saying which he withdrew his head; and after waiting a short time to see if he remained, I closed the port, and shuffled into my bunk again.

I tried to think how I should act.

If I acquainted the captain with the carpenter's disclosure the men would probably murder me. And though they withheld from bloodshed, my putting the captain on his guard would not save the ship if the men were determined to seize her, because he could not count on more than two men to side with him, and the crew would overpower them immediately.

However, I will not seem more virtuous and upright than I was; and I may therefore say, that after giving this matter some half-hour's thinking, I found that it would suit my purpose better if

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the crew mutinied than if the captain continued in charge, because it might open large opportunities for my future, and relieve me from the disgraceful position in which I was placed by the malice and injustice of my two superiors. The one thing I heartily prayed for was that murder might not be done; but I did not anticipate great violence, as I imagined that the crew had no other object in rebelling than to compel the captain to put into the nearest port to exchange the stores.

The night wore away very slowly, and I counted every bell that was struck. The wind decreased at midnight, and I heard Duckling go into the captain's cabin and rouse him up, the captain evidently having undertaken my duties. Duckling reported the weather during his watch, and said, "The wind is dropping, but it looks dirty to the south'ard. If we lose the breeze we may get it fresh from t'other quarter, and she can't hurt under easy sail until we see what's going to do."

They then went on deck together, and in about ten minutes' time Duckling returned and went into his cabin, closing the door noisily. 243

A little after one o'clock I fell into a dose, but was shortly after awakened by hearing the growl of voices close against my cabin, my apprehensions making my hearing very sensitive, even in sleep.

In a few moments the voices of the men were silenced, and I then heard the tread of footsteps in the cuddy going aft, and some one as he passed tried the handle of my door.

Another long interval of silence followed; and as I did not hear the men who had entered the cuddy return, I wondered where they had stationed themselves, and what they were doing. As to myself, the irons on my legs made me quite helpless.

The time that now passed seemed an eternity, and I was beginning to wonder whether the voices I had heard might not have been Coxon's and the steward's—all was so quiet—when a step sounded overhead, and the captain's voice rang out, "Lay aft, some hands, and brail up the spanker!" 244

Instantly several men ran up the starboard poop-ladder, proving that they must have been stationed close against my cabin, and their heavy feet clattered along the deck, and I heard their voices singing. Scarce were their voices hushed when a shrill whistle, like a sharp human squeal, was raised forwards, and immediately there was a sharp twirl and scuffle of feet on the deck, followed by a groan and a fall. At the same moment a door was forced open in the cuddy, and, as I might judge by what followed, a body of men tumbled into the chief mate's cabin. A growling and yelping of fierce human voices followed. "Haul him out of it by the hair!"—"You blackguard! you'll show fight, will yer! Take that for yourself!"—"Over the eyes next time, Bill! Let me get at the——!" 245

But, as I imagined, the muscular, infuriate chief mate would not fall an easy prey, fighting as he deemed for his life. I heard the thump of bodies swung against the panelling, fierce execrations, the smash of crockery, and the heavy breathing of men engaged in deadly conflict.

It was brief enough in reality, though Duckling seemed to find them work for a good while.

"Don't kill him now! Wait till dere's plenty ob light!" howled a voice, which I knew to be the cook's. And then they came along the cuddy, dragging the body which they had either killed or knocked insensible after them, and got upon the main-deck.

"Poop, ahoy!" shouted one of them. "What cheer up there, mates?" 246

"Right as a trivet!—ready to sling astern!" came the answer directly over my head, followed by some laughter.

As I lay holding my breath, scarcely knowing what was next to befall, the handle of my door was tried, the door pushed, then shaken passionately, after which a voice, in tones which might have emanated from a ghost, exclaimed—

"Mr. Royle, they have killed the captain and Mr. Duckling! For God Almighty's sake, ask them to spare my life! They will listen to you, sir! For God's sake, save me!"

"Who are you?" I answered.

"The steward, sir."

But as he said this one of the men on the quarter-deck shouted, "Where's the steward? He's as bad as the others! He's the one what swore the pork was sweet!" 247

And then I heard the steward steal swiftly away from my cabin door and some men come into the cuddy. They would doubtless have hunted him down there and then, but one of them unconsciously diverted the thoughts of the others by exclaiming—

"There's the second mate in there. Let's have him out of it."

My cabin door was again tried, and a heavy kick administered.

"It's locked, can't you see?" said one of the men.

As it opened into the cuddy it was not to be forced, so one of them exclaimed that he would fetch a mallet and a calking-iron, with which he returned in less than a couple of minutes, and presently the lock was smashed to pieces, and the door fell open.

Both swinging-lamps were alight in the cuddy, and one, being nearly opposite my cabin, streamed fairly into it. I was seated erect in my bunk when the men entered, and I immediately exclaimed, pointing to the irons, "I am glad you have thought of me. Knock those things off, will 248

you?"

I believe there was something in the cool way in which I pronounced these words that as fully persuaded them that I was intent upon the mutiny as any action I could have committed.

"We'll not take long to do that for you," cried the fellow who held the mallet (a formidable weapon, by the way, in such hands!). "Get upon the deck, and I'll swaller this iron if you aren't able to dance a breakdown in a jiffy!"

I dropped out of the bunk, and with two blows the man cut off the staple, and I kicked the irons off.

"Now, my lads," said I, beginning to play the part I had made up my mind to act whilst listening to the onslaught on the captain and Duckling; "what have you done?" 249

The fellow who had knocked off the irons, and now answered me, was named Cornish, a man in my own watch.

"The ship's ourn—that's what we've done," he said.

"The skipper's dead as a nail up there, I doubt," exclaimed another, indicating the poop with a movement of the head; "and if you'll step on to the main-deck you'll see how we've handled Mister Duckling!"

"And what do *you* mean to do?" exclaimed a man, one of the four who had accompanied me to the wreck. "We're masters now, I suppose you know, and so I hope you aren't agin us."

At this moment the carpenter, followed by a few others, came shoving into the cuddy. 250

"Oh, there he is!" he cried.

He grasped me by the arm and led me out of the cabin, and bidding me stand at the end of the table, with my face looking aft, ran to the door, and bawled at the top of his voice, "Into the cuddy, all hands!"

Those who were on the poop came scuffling along, dragging something with them, and presently rose a cry of "one—two—three!" and there was a soft thud upon the main-deck—the body of the captain, in fact, pitched off the poop—and then the men came running in and stood in a crowd on either side the table.

This was a scene I am not likely ever to forget, nor the feelings excited in me by it.

The men were variously dressed, some in yellow sou'westers, some in tight-fitting caps, in coarse shirts, in suits of oil-skin, in liberally patched monkey-jackets. Some of them, with black beards and moustachios and burnt complexions, looked swarthy and sinister enough in the lamplight; some were pale with the devilish spirit that had been aroused in them; every face, not excepting the youngest of the ordinary seamen, wore a passionate, reckless, malignant look. They ran their eyes over the cuddy as strangers would, and one of them took a glass off a swinging tray, and held it high, saying grimly, "By the Lord! we'll have something fit to swaller now! No more starvation and stinking water!" 251

I noticed the boatswain—named Ferroll—the only quiet face in the crowd. He met my eye, and instantly looked down.

"Now, Mr. Royle," said the carpenter, "we're all ekals here, with a fust-rate execootioner among us (pointing to the big sailor, Johnson), as knows, when he's axed, how to choke off individuals as don't make theirselves sootable to our feelin's. What we're all here collected for to discover, is this—are you with us, or agin us?" 252

"With you," I replied, "in everything but murder."

Some of them growled, and the carpenter exclaimed hastily—

"We don't know what you call murder. We aren't used to them sort o' expressions. What's done has happened, ain't it? And I *have* heard tell of accidents, which is the properest word to conwey our thoughts."

He nodded at me significantly.

"Look here," said I. "Just a plain word with you before I am asked any more questions. There's not a man among you who doesn't know that I have been warm on your side ever since I learnt what kind of provisions you were obliged to eat. I have had words with the captain about your stores, and it is as much because of my interference in that matter as because of my determination not to let a woman die upon a miserable wreck, that he clapped me in irons. I don't know what you mean to do with me, but I'll not say I don't care. I do care. I value my life, and in the hope of saving it, I'll tell you this, and it's God's truth—that if you take my life you'll be killing a man who has been your friend at heart, who has sympathized with you in your privations, who has never to his knowledge spoken harshly to you, when he had the power to do so, and who, had he commanded this vessel, would have shifted your provisions long ago." 253

So saying, I folded my arms and gazed fixedly at the carpenter.

They listened to me in silence, and when I had done broke into various exclamations.

"We know all that." 254

"We don't owe *you* no grudge."

"We don't want your life. Just show us what to do—that's what it is."

I appeared to pay no attention to their remarks, but kept my eyes resolutely bent on Stevens, the carpenter, that they might see I accepted him as their mouthpiece, and would deal only with him.

"Well," he began, "all what you say is quite correct, and we've no fault to find with you. What I says to you this evenin' through the port-hole I says now—will you navigate this here wessel for us to the part as we've agreed on? and if you'll do that you can choose officers out of us, and we'll do your bidding as though you was lawful skipper, and trust to you. But I say now, and I says it before all hands here, that if you take us where we don't want to go, or put us in the way of any man-o'-war, or try in any manner to bring us to book for this here job, so help me, Mr. Royle, and that's your name, as mine is William Stevens, and I say it before all hands here, we'll sling you overboard as sartin as there's hair growin' on your head—we will; we'll murder you out an' out. All my mates is a followin' of me—so you'll please mind that!"

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"I hear you," I replied, "and will do your bidding, but on this condition—that having killed the captain, you will swear to me that no more lives shall be sacrificed."

"By Gor, no!" shouted the cook. "Don't swear dat! Wait till by-um-by."

"Be advised by me!" I cried, seizing the fellow's frightful meaning, and dreading the hideous scene it portended. "We have an old man and a young girl on board. Are they safe?"

"Yes," answered several voices; and the cook jabbered, "Yes, yes!" with horrid contortions of the face, under the impression that I had mistaken his interruption.

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"We have the steward and the chief mate?"

"Dat's dey! dat's dey!" screamed the cook. "No mercy upon 'em! Hab no mercy upon us! Him strike me on de jaw and kick me! T'oder one poison us! No mercy!" he howled, and several joined in the howl.

"Look here! I am a single man against many," I said; "but I am not afraid to speak out—because I am an Englishman speaking to Englishmen, with one bloodthirsty yellow savage among you!" There was a shout of laughter. "If you wish it, I will go on my knees to you and implore you not to stain your hands with these men's blood. You have them in your power—you cannot better your position by killing them—be merciful! Mates, how would you kill them?—in cold blood? Is there an Englishman among you who would slaughter a defenceless man? who would stand by and see a defenceless man slaughtered? There is an Almighty God above you, and He is the God of vengeance! Hear me!"

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"We'll let the steward go!" cried a voice; "but we want our revenge upon Duckling, and we'll have it. Damn your sermons!"

And once again the ominous growling of angry men muttering altogether arose; in the midst of which the fellow who was steering left the wheel to sing out through the skylight—

"It's as black as thunder to leeward. Better stand by, or the ship 'll be aback!"

"Now what am I to do?" I exclaimed.

"We give you command. Out with your orders—we'll obey 'em," came the answer.

In a few moments I was on the poop. By the first glance I threw upwards I saw that the ship was already aback.

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"Port your helm—hard a port!" I shouted. "Let go the port-braces fore and aft! Round with the yards smartly!"

Fortunately not only was the first coming of the wind light, but the canvas on the ship was comparatively small. The mainsail, cross-jack, the three royals, two top-gallant sails, spanker, flying and outer jibs were furled, and there was a single reef in the fore and mizzen topsails. The yards swung easily and the sails filled, and not knowing what course to steer, I braced the yards up sharp and kept her close.

The sky to the south looked threatening, and the night was very dark. I ran below to look at the glass, and found a slight fall, but nothing to speak of. This being so, I thought we might hold on with the topsails as they were for the present, and ordered the top-gallant sail to be furled. The men worked with great alacrity, singing out lustily; indeed, it was difficult for me, standing on the poop and giving orders, to realize the experiences of the last hour: and yet I might know, by the strange trembling and inward and painful feeling of faintness which from time to time seized me, that both my moral and physical being had received a terrible shock, and that I should feel the reality more keenly when my excitement was abated and I should have no other occupation than to think.

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The only food I had taken all day was the two ship's biscuits, and feeling the need of some substantial refreshment to relieve me of the sensation of faintness, I left the poop to seek the carpenter, in order to request him to keep watch whilst I went below.

When on the quarter-deck, and looking towards the cuddy, I perceived two figures huddled together just outside the cuddy door. There was plenty of light here from the lamps inside, and I at once saw that the two bodies were those of Duckling and Coxon.

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I stepped up to them. Coxon lay on his back with his face exposed, and Duckling was right across him, breast downwards, his head in the corner and his feet towards me. There was no blood on either of them. Coxon had evidently been struck over the head from behind, and killed instantly; his features were composed, and his grey hairs made him look a reverend object in

death.

Some men on the main-deck watched me looking at the bodies, and when they saw me take Duckling by the arm and turn him on his back, one of them called: "That's right; keep the beggar alive! he's cookee's portion, he is!"

These exclamations attracted the attention of the carpenter, who came aft immediately and found me stooping over Duckling. 261

"He's dead, I reckon," he said.

"Dead, or next door to it," I replied. "Better for him if he is dead. The captain's a corpse, killed quickly enough, by the look of him," I continued, gazing at the white, still face at my feet. "You had better get him carried forward and covered up. Where's the body of the sailor I brought on board?"

"Why, pitched overboard like a dead rat, by orders of this Christian," he answered, giving the captain's body a kick. "He had a good deal of feelin', this pious gentleman. Why do you want him covered up? Let him go overboard now, won't 'ee? Hi, mates!" he called to the men who were looking on. "Here's another witness agin us for the Day o' Judgment! Heave him into the sea, my hearties! We don't want to give him no excuse to soften the truth for our sakes when he's called upon to spin his yarn!" 262

The men flocked round the bodies, and whilst three of them caught up the corpse of the skipper as if it had been a coil of rope, others of them began to handle Duckling.

"Him too?" asked one.

"What do you say, Mr. Royle?" demanded the carpenter.

"It ain't Mr. Royle's consarn—it's cookee's!" cried one of the men. And he began to bawl for "cookee!"

Meantime the fellows who held the captain's body, not relishing their burden, went to leeward; and two of them taking the shoulders and one the feet, they began to swing him, and at a given word, shot him over the bulwarks. They then came back quite unconcernedly, one of them observing that the devil ought to be very much obliged to them for their handsome present. 263

The cook now approached, walked aft by some men who held him by the arms. They were laughing uproariously, which was explained when I saw that the cook was drunk.

"Here's your friend, Mr. Cookee," said Stevens, stirring Duckling with the toe of his boot. "He's waitin' for you to know wot's to become of him."

"Him a berry good genelman," returned the cook, pulling off his cap with drunken gravity, and making a reeling bow to the body. "Me love dis genelman like my own son. Nebber knew tenderer-hearted man. Him gib me a nice blow here," holding his clenched fist to his jaw, "and anoder one here," clapping his hand to his back. Then, after a pause, he kicked the dying or dead man savagely in the head, yelling in a hideous falsetto, "Oh, I'll skin um alive! Oh, I'll pull his eyes out and make um swaller dem! He kick an' strike honest English cook! Oh, my golly! I'll cut off his foot! Gib me a knife, sar," looking around him with a wandering, gleaming eye. "Gib me a knife, I say, an' you see what I do!" 264

One of the ruffians actually gave him a knife.

I grasped the carpenter's arm.

"Mr. Stevens," I exclaimed in his ear, "you'll not allow this! For God's sake, don't let this drunken cannibal disgrace our manhood by such brutal deeds before us! Living or dead, better fling the body overboard! Don't let him be tortured if living; and if dead, is not your revenge complete?"

The carpenter made no answer, and sick with horror and disgust I was turning away, feeling powerless to deal with these wretches, when, the cook already kneeling and baring his arm for I know not what bloody work, Stevens sprang forward and fetched him such a thump under the chin, that he rolled head over heels into the lee-scuppers. 265

The men roared with laughter.

"Now then, overboard with this thing!" the carpenter shouted; "and if cookee wants more wengeance, fling him overboard arter him!"

They seized Duckling as they had seized Coxon, and slung him overboard, just as they had slung the other. Some of them ran to the cook, and it was impossible to judge whether they were in earnest or not when they shrieked out, "Overboard with him, too! We can't separate the friends!" The cook at all events believed they meant no joke, for uttering a prolonged yell of terror, he wriggled with incredible activity out of their hands, and rushed forward like a steam-engine. They did not offer to pursue him; and, ill with these scenes of horror, I called to the carpenter and asked him to step on the poop whilst I went into the cuddy. 266

"What to do there?" he inquired suspiciously.

"To get something to eat. I have had nothing all day but two of the ship's bad biscuits."

"Right," he said. "But, before I go, I'll tell you what's agreed among us. You're to take charge, and sarve with me and the bo'sun, turn and turn about on deck. That's agreeable, ain't it?"

"Quite."

"You're to do all the piloting of the ship, and navigate us to where the ship's company agrees upon."

"I understand."

"We three 'll live aft here, and the ship's company forrards; but all the ship's stores 'll be smothered, and the cuddy provisions sprung, d'ye see? likewise the grog and whatsoever there may be proper to eat and drink. We're all to be ekals, and fare and fare alike, though the crew 'll obey orders as usual. You're to have the skipper's berth, and I'll take yourn; and the bo'sun he'll take Duckling's. That we've all agreed on afore we went to work, and so I thought I'd let you know."

"Well, Mr. Stevens," I replied, "as I told you just now, I'll do your bidding. I'll take the ship to the place you may name; and as I shan't play you false (though I have no notion of your intentions), so I hope you won't play me false. I have begged for the steward's life, and you have promised to spare him. And how are the two persons we saved to be treated?"

"They're to live along with us here. All that's settled, I told yer. But I'm not so sure about the steward. I never made no promise about sparing of him."

"Look here!" I exclaimed sternly. "I am capable of taking this ship to any port you choose to name. There is not another man on board who could do this. I can keep you out of the track of ships, and help you in a number of ways to save your necks. Do you understand me? But I tell you—on my oath—if you murder the steward, if any further act of violence is committed on board this ship, I'll throw up my charge, and you may do your worst. These are my terms, easier to you than to me. What is your answer?"

He reflected a moment and replied, "I'll talk to my mates about it."

"Do so," I said. "Call them aft now. But you had better get on deck, as the ship wants watching. Talk to them on the poop."

He obeyed me literally, calling for the hands to lay aft, and I was left alone.

I went into the steward's pantry, where I found some cold meat and biscuit and a bottle of sherry. These things I carried to the aftermost end of the table. Somehow I did not feel greatly concerned about the debate going on overhead, as I knew the men could not do without me; nor did I believe the general feeling against the steward sufficiently strong to make them willing to sacrifice my services to their revengeful passions.

I fell to the meat and wine as greedily as a starving man, and was eating very heartily, when I felt a light touch on my arm. I turned hastily and confronted the girl whom I had brought away from the wreck. Her hair hung loose over her shoulders, and she was as pale as marble. But her blue eyes were very brilliant, and fired with a resolved and brave expression, and I thought her beautiful as she stood before me in the lamplight with her hair shining about her face.

"Are you Mr. Royle?" she asked, in a low but most clear and sweet voice.

"I am," I replied, rising.

She took my hand and kissed it.

"You have saved my father's life and mine, and I have prayed God to bless you for your noble courage. I have had no opportunity to thank you before. They would not let me see you. The captain said you had mutinied and were in irons. My father wishes to thank you—his heart is so full that he cannot rest—but he is too weak to move. Will you come and see him?"

She made a movement towards the cabin next the pantry.

"Not now," I said. "You should be asleep, resting after your terrible trials."

"How could I sleep?" she exclaimed with a shudder. "I have heard all that has been said. I heard them killing the man in that cabin there."

She clasped her hands convulsively.

"Frightful things have happened," I said, speaking quickly, for I every moment expected the men to come running down the companion-ladder, near which we were conversing; "but the worst has passed. Did not you hear them answer me that you and your father were safe? Go, I beg you, to your cabin and sleep if you can, and be sure that no harm shall befall you whilst I remain in this ship. I have a very difficult part before me, and wish to reflect upon my position. And the sense that *your* security will depend upon my actions," I added, moved by her beauty and the memory of the fate I had rescued her from, "will make me doubly vigilant."

And as she had kissed my hand on meeting me, so now I raised hers to my lips; and obedient to my instructions, she entered her cabin and closed the door.

I stood for some time engrossed, to the exclusion of all other thoughts, by the picture impressed on my mind by the girl's sweet face. It inspired a new kind of energy in me. Whatever qualms my conscience may have suffered from my undertaking to navigate the ship for the satisfaction and safety of a pack of ruffians, merely because I stood in fear of my life, were annihilated by the sight of this girl. The profound necessity enjoined upon me to protect her from the dangers that would inevitably come upon her, should my life be taken, so violently affected me as I stood thinking of her, that my cowardly acquiescence in the basest proposals which the crew could submit, would have been tolerable to my conscience for her lonely and helpless sake.

The voices of the men overhead, talking in excited tones, awoke me to a sense of my situation.

I took another draught of wine, and entered the captain's cabin, wishing to inspect the log-book that I might ascertain the ship's position at noon on the preceding day.

The shadow of the mizzen-mast fell right upon the interior as I opened the cabin door. I looked about me for a lamp, but was suddenly scared by the spectacle of a man crawling on his hands and knees out of a corner.

"Oh, my God!" cried a melancholy voice. "Am I to be killed! Will they murder me, sir? Oh, sir, it is in your power to save me. They'll obey you. I have a wife and child in England, sir. I am a miserable sinner, and not fit to die." 274

And the wretched creature burst into tears, and crawled close to my legs, and twined his arms around them.

"Go back into your corner," I said. "Don't let them hear or see you. I can make no promises, but will do my best to save your life. Back with you now! Be a man, for God's sake! Your whining will only amuse them. Be resolute; and should you have to face them, meet them bravely."

He went crawling back to his corner, and I seeing the log-book open on the table, carried it under the lamp in the cuddy. There I read off the sights of the previous day, replaced the book, and mounted to the poop.

The dawn was breaking in the east, and the sky heavy, though something of its threatening character had left it. There was a smart sea on, but the ship lay pretty steady, owing to the wind having freshened enough to keep the vessel well over. We were making no headway to speak of, the yards being against the masts, and but little canvas set. The fellow steering lounged at the wheel, one arm through the spokes, and his left leg across his right shin, letting all hands know by this free and easy attitude that we were all equals now, and that he was only there to oblige. He was watching the men assembled round the forward saloon skylight, and now and then called out to them. 275

There were eight or nine of the crew there and on the top of the skylight, and in the centre of the throng were squatted the boatswain and the carpenter.

Many of them were smoking, and some of them laid down the law with their forefingers upon the palms of their hands. I saw no signs of the cook, and hoped that the fright the evil-minded scoundrel had undergone would keep him pretty quiet for a time. 276

Not thinking it politic to join the men until they summoned me, I walked to the compass to see how the ship's head lay; whereupon the man steering, out of a habit of respect too strong for him to control, drew himself erect, and looked at the sails, and then at the card, as a man intent upon his work. I made no observation to him, and swept the horizon through my hands, which I hollowed to collect the pale light, but could discover nothing save the rugged outline of waves.

Just then the men saw me, and both the carpenter and the boatswain scrambled off the skylight, and they all came towards me.

A tremor ran through me which I could not control, but strength was given me to suppress all outward manifestation of emotion, and I awaited their approach with a forced tranquillity which, as I afterwards heard, gave the more intelligent and better disposed among them a good opinion of me. 277

The carpenter said, "Most of us are for leaving the steward alone; but there's three of us as says that he showed hisself so spiteful in the way he used to sarve out the rotten stores, and swore to such a lie when he said the pork was sweet, before it went into the coppers, that they're for havin' some kind o' rewenge."

"None of you want his life, do you?"

"Damn his life!" came a growl. "Who'd take what ain't of no use even to him as owns it?"

"Which of you wants revenge?" I asked.

There was a pause; and Fish, projecting his extraordinary head, said, "Well, I'm one as dew." 278

"Suppose," said I, "you were to see this wretched creature grovelling on his hands and knees, weeping and moaning like a woman, licking the deck in his agony of fear, and already half dead with terror. Would not such a miserable sight satisfy your thirst for revenge? What punishment short of death that you can inflict would make him suffer more dreadful tortures than his fear has already caused him? Fish, be a man, and leave this hunted wretch alone."

He muttered something under his breath, though looking, I was glad to see, rather shame-faced, and the boatswain said—

"There's something more, Mr. Royle. He knows where to lay his hands on the cuddy provisions, and if we knock him on the head we shan't be able to find half that'll be wanted. What I woted was that we should make him wait upon us, and let him have nothen but the ship's stores to eat, whilst he sarves us with the cuddy's." 279

"Won't that do?" I exclaimed, addressing the others, at the same time receiving a glance from the boatswain which showed me that I should have an ally in him: as indeed I had expected; for this was the only one of the fore-castle hands who had come from London with us, and I was pretty sure he had joined in the mutiny merely to save his life.

"Oh yes, that'll do!" some of them answered impatiently; and one said, "Wot's the use of jawing about the steward? We want to talk of ourselves. Where's the ship bound to? I don't want to be hanged when I get ashore."

This sensible observation was delivered by Johnson.

"Now then, if you like, we'll come to that," said I, immensely relieved; for I not only knew that the steward's life was safe, but that in their present temper no further act of violence would be perpetrated. "Mr. Stevens, you told me that all your plans were prepared. Am I to have your confidence?"

"Sartinly," replied the fellow, looking around upon the assembled faces fast growing distinguishable in the gathering light. "You're a scholar and can sail the ship for us, and we look to you to get us out o' this mess, for we've treated you well and made you skipper."

"Go ahead," I exclaimed, seating myself in a nonchalant way on one of the gratings abaft the wheel.

"This here mutiny," began the carpenter, after casting about in his mind for words, "is all along o' bad treatment. Had the capten acted fair and proper, we'd ha' acted fair an' proper. He as good as swore that he'd put in for fresh stores, but never altered the ship's course, and we wouldn't starve no longer. So we up and did the business. But we never meant to kill him. We was afraid he'd ha' had pistols on him, and so some of us knocked him down unawears, and knocked too hard, that was all. And t'other one he struggled so, instead of givin' up when he saw we was too many for ten o' the likes of him, that he died of his own doin'; and that's a fact, mates, ain't it?"

"Ay," responded a gruff voice. "He'd ha' gouged my eye out. He had his thumb in my mouth workin' away as if he thought my tooth was my eye. He drew blood with his thumb, and I had to choke it out of my mouth, or he'd ha' tore my tongue out!"

So saying, he expectorated violently.

"To come back to wot I was saying," resumed the carpenter; "it's this. When me and my mates made up our minds to squench the skipper and his bully mate for their wrongful dealings with us, one says that our plan was to run the ship to the North Ameriky shore somewheeres. One says, Floridy way; and another, he says round into the Gulf o' Mexico, within reach o' New Orleans; and another, he says, 'Let's get south, mates, upon the coast of Africa;' and another, he says he's for making the ice, right away north, up near Baffin Land. But none was agreeable to that. We aren't resolved yet, but we're most all for Ameriky, because it's a big place, pretty nigh big enough to hide in."

Some of the men laughed.

"And so," continued the carpenter, "our plan is this: as easy as sayin' your prayers. We'll draw lots and choose upon the coast for you to run us to; and when we're a day's sail of them parts, leavin' you to tell us and to keep us out o' the way of ships, d'ye mind, Mr. Royle?"—with stern significance: I nodded—"some of us gets into the long-boat and some into the quarter-boats, and we pulls for the shore. And wot we do and says when we gets ashore needn't matter, eh, mates? We're shipwrecked mariners, destitoot and forlorn, and every man's for hisself. And so that's our plan."

"Yes, that's our plan," said one: "but it ain't all. You're not putting everything to Mr. Royle, mate."

"Look here, Bill," answered the carpenter savagely. "Either I'm to manage this here business or I'm not. If *you're* for carryin' of it on, good and well—say the word, and then we'll know the time o' day. But either it must be you or it must be I—there ain't room for two voices in one mouth."

"I've got nothen to say," rejoined the man addressed as "Bill," extending his arms and turning his back; "only I thought as you might ha' forgot."

What the carpenter was holding back I could not guess; but I exhibited no curiosity. Neither did I tell them that our course to the "American shores," as they called it, would bring us right in the road of vessels from all parts of the world. My business was to listen and to act as circumstances should dictate, with good judgment, if possible, for the preservation of my own and the lives of the old man and his daughter.

The carpenter now paused to hear what I had to say. Finding this, I exclaimed—

"I know what you want me to do; and the sooner you fix upon a point to start for the better."

"Can't you advise us?" said one of the men. "Give us some place easily fetched."

"I was never on the North American coast," I answered.

"Well, Ameriky ain't the only place in the world," said Fish.

"You'd best not say that when you're there," exclaimed Johnson.

"Most of the hands wants to go ashore in Ameriky, and so that's settled, mates," said the carpenter sharply.

"Let's keep south, anyhow, say I. If we can make New Orleans there's plenty of vessels sailing every day from that port, paying good wages," said Johnson.

"And every man can choose for hisself where he'll sail for," observed Fish.

"Make up your minds," I exclaimed, "and I'll alter the ship's course."

So saying, I got off the grating and walked to the other end of the poop.

I was much easier in my mind now that I had observed the disposition of the men. They were

unquestionably alarmed by what they had done, which was tolerable security against the commission of further outrages. Their project of quitting the ship when near land and making for the shore, where, doubtless, they would represent themselves as shipwrecked seamen, was practicable and struck me as ingenious; for as soon as they got ashore they would disperse, and ship on board fresh vessels, and so defy inquiry even should suspicion be excited, or one of them peach upon his fellows. These I at least assumed to be their plans. But how far they would affect my own safety I could not tell. I doubted if they would let me leave the ship, as they might be sure that on my landing I should hasten, to inform against them. But I would not allow my mind to be troubled with considerations of the future at that time. All my energies were required to deal with the crisis of the moment, and to guard myself against being led by too much confidence in their promises, into any step which might prove fatal to me and those I had promised to protect.

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The dawn was now bright in the east and the wind strong from the southward. The ship was chopping on the tumbling seas with scarcely any way upon her; but the menacing aspect of the sky was fast fading, and there was a promise of fair weather in the clouds, which ranged high and out of the reach of the breeze that was burying the ship's lee channels.

Presently the carpenter called to me, and I went over to the men.

"We're all resolved, Mr. Royle," said he in a pretty civil voice, "and our votes is for New Orleans. Plenty of wessels is wrecked in the Gulf of Mexico, as I've heerd tell; and when we're about fifty miles off, you'll say so, and give us the bearings of the Mississippi, and we'll not trouble you any more."

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"How's her head?" I asked the man at the wheel.

"Sou'-west," he replied.

"Keep her away," I exclaimed, for the weather-leeches were flat.

"What's our true course for New Orleans?" asked the carpenter suspiciously.

"Stop a bit and I'll show you," I answered, and went below to the captain's cabin to get the chart.

"Steward!" I called.

"Yes, sir," replied the miserable whining voice. It was still too dark for me to see the man.

"Make your mind easy—they'll not hurt you," I said.

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He started up and rushed towards me like a madman.

"May God in heaven bless you!" he cried, delirious with joy.

"Hold off!" I exclaimed, keeping him away with my outstretched hand. "Get your wits about you and remain here for the present. Don't let them hear you, and don't show yourself until I call you."

I could have said nothing better to repress his violent manifestations of delight; for he at once went cowering again into the gloom of the corner.

I struck a wax match, and after a short search found the chart of the North Atlantic upon which the ship's course, so far as she had gone up to noon on the preceding day, was pricked off. I took this on deck, spread it on the skylight and showed our whereabouts to the men.

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"Our course," said I, "is south-west and by west."

They bent their faces over the chart, studying it curiously.

"Are you satisfied, Mr. Stevens?" I asked him.

"Oh, I suppose it's all right," answered he.

"Slacken away the lee-braces," I said. "Put your helm up" (to the man at the wheel).

The men went tumbling off the poop to man the braces, and in a few minutes we were making a fair wind.

Both the carpenter and the boatswain remained on the poop.

"Some hands lay aloft and loose the fore and main top-gallant sails!" I called out. And turning to the carpenter: "Mr. Stevens," I said, "I'll navigate this ship for you and your mates to within fifty miles off the mouths of the Mississippi, as you wish; but on the conditions I have already named. Do you remember?"

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"Oh yes," he growled. "We've done enough—too much, I dessay, though not more than the beggars desarved. All that we want is to get out o' this cursed wessel."

"Very well," I said. "But I won't undertake to pilot this ship safely unless my orders are obeyed."

"The men are quite willin' to obey you, so long as you're true to 'em," he rejoined.

"You may do what you like with the cuddy stores; though if you take my advice you will let the steward serve them out in the regular way, that they may last; otherwise you will eat them all up before we reach our journey's end, and have to fall back upon the bad provisions. But I must have control of the spirits."

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"And what allowance do you mean to put us on?" demanded the carpenter.

"I shall be advised by you," said I.

This was turning the tables. He pulled off his cap and scratched his head.

"Three tots a day?" he suggested.

"Very well," I said; "but you'll stop at that?"

"Well, perhaps we can do on three tots a day," he answered, after deliberating.

"And you engage that the steward will be protected against any violence while serving out the men's allowance?"

"Mates!" he suddenly called out to the men who were standing by to sheet home the top-gallant sails; "will three tots o' grog a day keep you alive?"

"Are we to have it all at once?" one of them answered.

"No," I replied; "three times a day."

"Now then, my lads, let's know your minds," cried the boatswain.

A young ordinary seaman answered—"Three ain't enough." But one of the older hands turned upon him, exclaiming, "Why, you bit of a snuffler! where will *you* stow all that rum? Don't go answerin' for your betters, my young scaramouch, or maybe you'll be findin' yourself brought up with a round turn. That'll do!" he called out to us.

"Right you are!" replied the carpenter.

"Sheet home!" I cried, as the sails fell from the top-gallant yards, anxious to clinch this matter of the grog.

And so it rested.

END OF VOL. I.

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Punctuation and spelling were made consistent when a predominant preference was found in the three volumes of this novel, or to remedy simple typographical errors; otherwise they were not changed.

Dialect and other non-standard spellings have not been changed. Examples of unchanged spelling: "befel", "mirrowed", "dose" (for "doze"), "jobbed" (for "jabbed"), "wessel" (for "vessel") "biled" (for "boiled").

Spaces before the contraction "'ll" (for "will") have been retained.

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