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The Last Entry
, by William Clark Russell**

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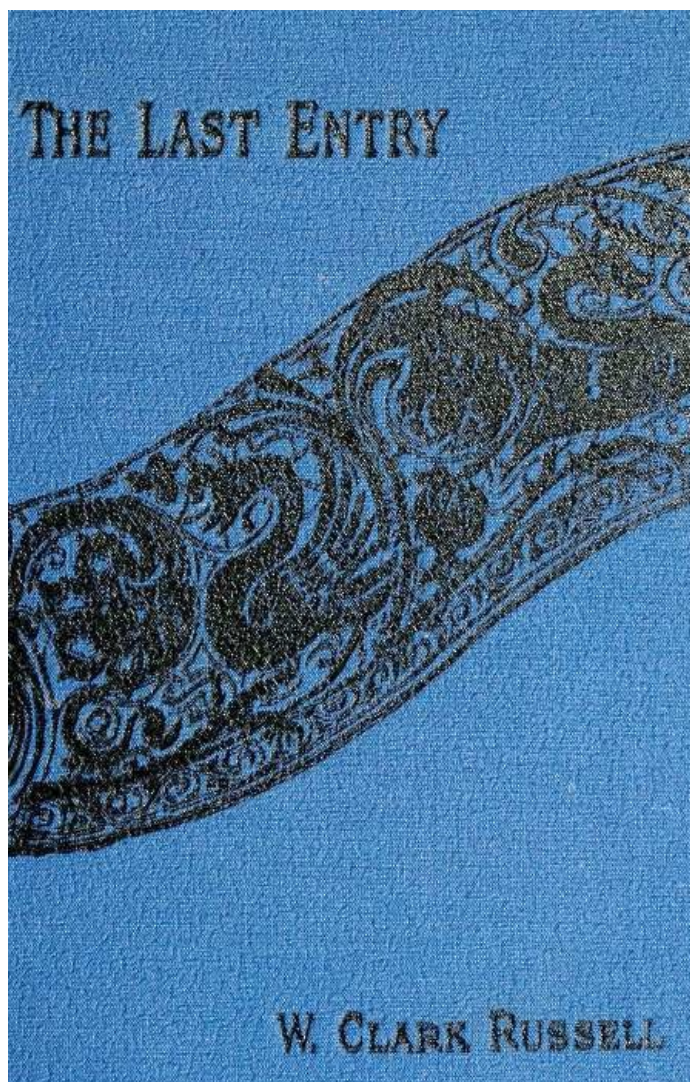
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THE LAST ENTRY

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ON

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"The Last Entry" is a rattling good salt-water yarn, told in the author's usual breezy, exhilarating style.'—*Daily Mail*.

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THE LAST ENTRY

BY

W. CLARK RUSSELL

AUTHOR OF
'THE WRECK OF THE "GROSVENOR,"' 'MY SHIPMATE LOUISE,'
'THE TALE OF THE TEN,' ETC.



A NEW EDITION

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THE LAST ENTRY

[Pg 1]

CHAPTER I. MR. AND MISS VANDERHOLT.

This story belongs to the year 1837, and was regarded by the generations of that and a succeeding time as the most miraculous of all the recorded deliverances from death at sea.

It may be told thus:

Mr. Montagu Vanderholt sat at breakfast with his daughter Violet one morning in September. Vanderholt's house was one of a fine terrace close to Hyde Park. He was a rich man, a retired Cape merchant, and his life had been as chequered as Trelawney's, with nothing of romance and nothing of imagination in it. He was the son of honest parents, of Dutch extraction, and had run away to sea when about twelve years old.

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Nothing under the serious heavens was harsher, more charged with misery, suffering, dirt, and wretchedness, than seafaring in the days when young Vanderholt, with an idiot's cunning, fled to it from his father's comfortable little home. He got a ship, was three years absent, and on his return found both his father and mother dead. He went again to sea, and, fortunately for him, was shipwrecked in the neighbourhood of Simon's Bay. The survivors made their way to Cape Town, and presently young Vanderholt got a job, and afterwards a position. He then became a master, until, after some eight or ten years of heroic perseverance, attended by much good luck, behold Mr. Vanderholt full-blown into a colonial merchant prince. How much he was worth when he made up his mind to settle in England, after the death of his wife, and when he had disposed of his affairs so as to leave himself as free a man as ever he had been when he was a common Jack Swab, really signifies nothing. It is certain he had plenty, and plenty is enough, even for a merchant prince of Dutch extraction.

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Besides Violet, he had two sons, who will not make an appearance on this little brief stage. They are dismissed, therefore, with this brief reference—that both were in the army, and both, at the time of this tale, in India.

Violet was Vanderholt's only daughter, and he loved her exceedingly. She was not beautiful, but she was fair to see, with a pretty figure, and an arch, gay smile. You saw the Dutch blood in her eyes, as you saw it in her father's, whose orbs of vision, indeed, were ridiculously small—scarcely visible in their bed of socket and lash. An English mother had come to Violet's help in this matter. Taking her from top to toe, with her surprising quantity of brown hair, soft complexion, good

mouth, teeth, and figure, Violet Vanderholt was undoubtedly a fine girl.

The room in which they were breakfasting was imposingly furnished. The pictures were many and fine. One in particular took the eye, and detained it. It was hung over the sideboard, which glittered with plate; it represented a schooner, bowed by a sudden blast, coming at you. The white brine, shredded by the shrieking stroke of the squall, hissed shrilly from the cut-water. The life and spirit of the reality was in that fine canvas. The sailors seemed to run as you watched, the gaffs to droop with the handling of their gear. She came rushing in a smother of spume right at you, and, before delight could arise, you had felt a pleasurable shock of surprise that was almost alarm. Such is the effect produced by Cooper's bull as, with bowed head and eyes of fire, and horns of death, it looks to be bounding with the velocity of a locomotive out of the frame.

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Mr. Vanderholt and his daughter conversed for some time on matters of no concern to us who are to follow their fortunes. Presently, after helping himself to his second bloater—for his wealth had neither lessened his appetite nor influenced his choice of dishes: he clung, with true Dutch courage, to solid sausage; he loved new bread, smoking hot; he was wedded to all the several kinds of cured fish, and often drank a pint of beer, instead of coffee or tea, at his morning meal—he took his second herring, and, whilst his gray beard wagged to the movement of his jaws, an expression of pensiveness entered his face as he fastened his gaze upon the picture of the rushing schooner.

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'How beautifully she is painted!' said he. 'It is the greatest of the arts. How with the pen could you make that vessel show as the brush has?'

'It could only be done by suggestion,' said Miss Vanderholt, looking up sideways at the picture. 'It is the hint that submits the pen-and-ink sketch.'

'So that, if a man has never seen a schooner, you might hint and suggest all your life, and the death-bed of that man would still find his mind a blank as to a schooner?'

'True,' said his daughter.

'I am going to tell you what I have made up my mind to do.'

'Yes, and there she is,' interrupted the girl, with a sweep of her hand at the picture. 'And pretty wet they are; and a fine handsome sea is going to run presently, till the yacht shall swoop into the cataracts like a wreck—veiled—strained! She is too small.'

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'You consider one hundred and eighty tons too small? What would Columbus have thought of you? Do you know that Mynheer Vanderdecken is battling with the storms of the Cape of Good Hope at this very hour in something under one hundred and eighty tons?'

'But I really don't think, father, that you need such an extensive change.'

'My doctors are of my opinion. I require nothing less than three months of the sea-breeze, and all the climates that I can pack into that time.'

'And George?' said Miss Vanderholt, her voice a little coloured by vexation. 'He may arrive home and find us absent, and there will be nobody in the world to tell him where we are—whether we are alive or dead, and when we may be expected back.'

'George won't be home till June next,' said Mr. Vanderholt. 'There is no chance of it. Meanwhile, I mean to escape the winter by heading direct for the Equator and back.'

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'I'm afraid it is likely that George will not be able to arrive in England before the end of June,' exclaimed Miss Vanderholt. 'But if he should return sooner, it would drive me mad to hear that he had come and found me absent.'

'We shall be back by February,' said Mr. Vanderholt, in that sort of voice which makes you feel that the man who speaks is used to having his way.

'Shall you take any friends with you?'

'Not even a dog,' answered Mr. Vanderholt.

'Then it will be dull!' exclaimed his daughter. 'Nothing but sea and sky and novels. Why not ask Mr. Allan Kinnaird? He is a very amusing man.'

'I do not agree with you. Kinnaird is amusing for about half an hour. Kinnaird and I never could get on at sea, locked up together as we should be. He is always objecting to what I say, and he listens to my jokes merely with the intention of enlarging upon their points so as to defraud me of the laugh.'

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'Will you carry a doctor?'

'I have thought over that. No; we will ship a medicine chest instead, and a book treating of every disease under the sun. We do not go to sea to be ill. A doctor will be in the way. He will be neither with us nor of us. He might begin to bore you with his attentions, and you would only think of him as a man who believes that he is under an obligation to be agreeable.'

'But the *Mowbray* has not been afloat for two or three years,' said Miss Vanderholt.

'She has been well looked after. I have always liked the boat, and would not sell her, though I

have not used her of late,' said Mr. Vanderholt, leaning back in his chair to contemplate to advantage the beautiful picture over the sideboard. 'She is French built, and about twenty years old. The French are better ship-builders than the English—ininitely more choice in their lines and curves, and so scientific that you seldom hear of a disaster in their experiments. Look at that vessel as she rushes at you. How perfect is her entry! How insinuating the swell of her bow, running into a beautiful roundness and plumpness of sides instead of the up-and-down walls which the British yachtsman, who loves to admire his yacht from the shore, conceives to be the one element which gives a vessel stability! The more they narrow, the more they blunder. You must have stability if you want seaworthiness. And in all the years that I was at sea I never knew a crank ship a fast ship.'

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It was easily seen by the expression of Miss Vanderholt's face that she was thinking of George. Finding her father had ceased to speak, she exclaimed:

'Who will be the captain?'

'I shall ask my friend Fairbanks to recommend a man to me. He, of all the shipowners that I am acquainted with, is certain to know of a good man.'

'Will he belong to the Royal Navy?'

'No.'

'Then, he will not be a gentleman?'

Vanderholt looked at her intently. His face relaxed. He combed down his beard, and said:

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'He will be a sailor; and if he is a sailor, he will be a man. Combine these two things, and you produce an illustration of human existence beyond the achievement of the most illustrious lineage and the most ancient college.'

Miss Vanderholt was used to her father's views, and continued her breakfast with a distant, listening air, which promised no further expression of opinion upon this proposed voyage to the Equator. A stranger listening at that table to Vanderholt would have guessed that he was a man of hot temper, a Dutchman at root in his views and prejudices, not a man, perhaps, of many friends, spite of his wealth. He fixed his little eyes upon his daughter, and, after gazing at her for some time, with a look of anxiety, he said:

'You know, Vi, I should not care to go without you.'

'No, father; nor should I wish to be left alone at home.'

'You will be happy in the old *Mowbray*. We will lay in a stock of good things. We will make a fine holiday jaunt of it. Perhaps I shall be able to show you some of the wonders of the deep. We will teach our crew to sing litanies to break the spell of that demon the waterspout. We will hook on to a whale, and thunder through it with foam to the figure-head, with the velocity of the meteoric storm. We shall be at liberty to shift our course as often as we please, and settle some marine problem for good and all; not the sea-serpent—no. Who would defraud the newspapers of that joke? But I am strongly of opinion that there is a distinct difference between the dugong and the mermaid. The old idiots of the fifteenth century no doubt confounded them; and the mermaid, shocked by the hideous misrepresentation—for think of comparing some golden-haired angel of an English girl with a New Zealand native woman, frightful with the hues of her sky, and horrible with devices of the needle!—I say the disgusted mermaid may have sunk into the ooze, resolved never again to give man a sight of her face. Best of all, Vi, the voyage will do me good, will do you good, and delightfully shorten the time of your waiting for George.'

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'It is the only feeling I have in the matter,' answered the young lady.

And now, having breakfasted, they arose and quitted the table.

Miss Violet Vanderholt, being acquainted with her father's character, and knowing that he rarely changed his mind, went to her room, where in peace she occupied a full hour in writing a long letter to George.

And who was George? One had but to peep over the girl's shoulder to discover. 'My own darling George,' she began; and this sort of thing is commonly accepted as the language of love. Captain George Parry was an officer in the Honourable East India Company's service. When he was last at home he had met Miss Violet, haunted her closely, and exhibited himself in a variety of ways as deeply in love with her. Wonderful to relate, Mr. Montagu Vanderholt took a fancy to the young man, and when Ensign Parry called to ask his leave to consider himself engaged, he was astounded by the cheerful 'Certainly, with pleasure, if you are both satisfied,' which greeted him. A few questions and answers followed. Mr. Vanderholt knew very little about the army, though he had two sons in it. How long would Ensign Parry have to wait for his promotion? How long was the engagement going to last? For his part, he did not like long engagements: they made people ill. Many girls were hurried to their graves by procrastination—that thief of sleep, the ice-cold 'lubbar fiend' that bestrides women's hearts and keeps them shivering.

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The interview terminated to the satisfaction of both gentlemen. In due time, Ensign Parry returned to India, and now, as Captain Parry, he was expected home in June; but in one or two of his letters to Violet he had expressed a hope that he would be able to get home by an earlier date. It had been settled that they should be married soon after his arrival in England. And this

was the posture of affairs as regarded Captain Parry and Miss Vanderholt. The young lady, seating herself, dipped her pen and wrote. [Pg 14]

She wrote fast, and often with a flushed cheek when she underlined, or doubly underlined, a word or a sentence. Her letter consisted mainly of endearing expressions, such as, when read aloud in court after a couple have quarrelled, excite merriment. She informed her sweetheart in this letter that her father had made up his mind to go on a cruise for his health as far as the Equator, in the old *Mowbray*. She was going with him alone. George would know where she was, therefore, until her return to England, which could not be delayed beyond February. She dared not hope that George would arrive before the *Mowbray* reached England. If this should happen, then he might, perhaps, never receive this very letter which she was writing. To provide against this, she said that before she sailed she would write a second letter, and leave it with the housekeeper.

On the afternoon of this same day Mr. Vanderholt entered his carriage and drove into the City. He alighted at the offices of a firm of shipowners in Fenchurch Street, and was immediately confronted by the very person he had called to see. They shook hands. [Pg 15]

'I want ten minutes with you, Fairbanks.'

'As long as you please, Mr. Vanderholt. Always happy to be of service to you.'

It was plain that Mr. Vanderholt was not a skipper or a mate in search of a situation on board one of the ships owned by this firm. They walked through an office full of scribbling clerks; the walls were decorated with pictures of ships in full sail, and odd configurations on glazed yellow cloth, signifying cabin accommodation—first, second, and 'tween decks. They reached a small back-room, and when Mr. Fairbanks closed the door they were private.

Mr. Vanderholt was rendered a little uneasy by Mr. Fairbanks' look of expectation, and began somewhat in a hurry, lest his friend's anticipation should grow.

'It is a very trifling matter I have called to see you about, Fairbanks. It concerns a skipper for my boat, the *Mowbray*. For some time past I have been out of sorts, and have resolved to get clear of England during the winter. I have a fine boat laid up in the Thames. She is 180 tons, and I calculate, counting the cook and the fellow for the cabin, that a skipper, a mate, and eight hands will suffice me. Do you know of a good skipper?' [Pg 16]

Mr. Fairbanks brought his fingers together in an attitude of prayer, and said he thought that by dint of inquiry he might be able to find one.

'What pay?' said he.

'Ten pounds a month,' answered Mr. Vanderholt. 'I want a good man.'

'Do you take any company with you?'

'Only my daughter.'

'Then,' said Mr. Fairbanks, 'the skipper must not drink, and must not swear. He must be a man of cleanly appearance, of considerable experience, and able to hold his own in conversation.'

'So,' said Mr. Vanderholt.

'I believe,' said Mr. Fairbanks, 'that I know the man for you. He had charge of a ship of ours, the *Sandyfoot*. It was but yesterday I nodded to him outside these offices. If you take him you will carry a romance in pilot-cloth to sea with you. This fellow—you will not believe what I am going to tell you after you see him—was in love with a girl. He broke with her in a quarrel, and went to sea, and by a homeward ship wrote to ask her forgiveness and keep her heart whole for him, as he would shortly return. He was swept overboard in a storm, picked up floating on a buoy by a three-masted schooner, and carried to China. On his arrival home, he found his sweetheart had gone out of her mind. She recovered by degrees, under his influence, and they were to be married. They proceeded together to church, and at the altar she went mad again. Of course, the parson refused to officiate, and a few weeks later the poor thing died.' [Pg 17]

'What is the name of our friend?' inquired Mr. Vanderholt, who had listened without much interest to this romantic story.

'Thomas Glew.'

'Originally a nickname, meant to stick,' said Mr. Vanderholt dryly. 'Send him to me. You will oblige me by doing so.' [Pg 18]

'I'll endeavour to find him this afternoon, and you shall see him to-morrow,' answered the other. 'And you really enjoy the prospect of a cruise to the Equator and home?'

'Would I go if I did not?'

'But is not such sailing like running to and fro between wickets when there's nobody bowling?' said Mr. Fairbanks, placing a decanter of old Madeira and a box of cigars on the table.

Mr. Vanderholt brimmed a deep-hearted wineglass, and lighted a cigar, saying betwixt the puffs:

'If there is no good in the pursuit of health, you are right.'

'Well,' said Mr. Fairbanks, 'for my part I never could contemplate a voyage of any sort without associating it with a port and business.'

'Thank the North Star,' said the gentleman of Dutch extraction, 'with me that time has passed!'

'But to think of the Equator as a port of call!' exclaimed Mr. Fairbanks; and they both began to laugh. [Pg 19]

The term 'port of call' set them conversing about trade, how matters went in the City. Mr. Vanderholt talked fluently on all affairs connected with shipping. After enjoying his cigar and his chat, he re-entered his carriage, and was driven away.

Next morning, at about eleven o'clock, he was in his study, writing some letters. His daughter sat with him, reading a newspaper. A man-servant opened the door, and said that a seafaring gentleman was in the 'all, and had called by request. On a silver salver lay Mr. Fairbanks' card, and Mr. Vanderholt, after glancing at the card, told the footman to show Captain Glew in.

There entered soon, with a quick, resolved, quarter-deck stride, a short but powerfully-built man, shell-backed by ocean duties, with a face that might have been cast in light bronze, that might have served as a ship's figure-head in that metal, so roasted had it been in its day, so hard set was it, as though fresh from the pickle of the harness-cask. The flesh of the countenance had that sort of tension which does not admit of much, or perhaps any, play of emotion. The man might expel a laugh from his throat, but was he physically equal to a smile? He held a round hat, and was soberly attired in blue cloth. He looked swiftly and lightly around him, but seemed unmoved by the splendour of the apartment. He sent a keen, gray, seawardly glance at Miss Vanderholt, and fastened his gaze with an expression of attention upon her father. [Pg 20]

Miss Vanderholt viewed him with curiosity and disappointment.

'Captain Glew?' said Mr. Vanderholt.

'That's my name, sir,' answered the captain, in a voice as decisive as his walk and air. 'I was asked to call upon you by Mr. Fairbanks.'

'Right. Sit down. I had a good many years of it myself, but did not reach the quarter-deck,' said Mr. Vanderholt. 'My end was plumb with the fore-top.'

The captain seated himself, but did not smile, nor did he look as if he wanted to.

'Many years at sea, Captain Glew?'

'Thirty, sir.'

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'Did you run away, as I did, from home?'

'No. I was put apprentice by my father, who had charge of a Bethel, and was a man of education.'

'Did Mr. Fairbanks explain what I wanted to see you about?'

'Yes, sir. I believe you'll find me a suitable man. I confess I'd like the job. I know the *Mowbray*.'

Mr. Vanderholt's face lighted up.

'I was off her in a wherry not above a fortnight ago, and we stopped to admire her. I never saw prettier lines.' Here he raised his eyes to the picture over the sideboard, as though observing it for the first time, but his face discovered no marks of enthusiasm or admiration whilst he let his sight rest for a moment on that square of splendid, spirit-moving canvas. 'My uncle was a shipbuilder,' he continued, 'and I have some knowledge of that trade. The finest examples of seaworthy craft are, in my opinion, the Baltimore clippers—some of them, at all events. The *Mowbray* might be the queen of that fleet, sir.'

Mr. Vanderholt glanced at his daughter, as if he should say, 'This is our man.' He then rang the bell. A footman quickly appeared. [Pg 22]

'Wine,' said Mr. Vanderholt.

'Not for me, if you please,' said Captain Glew, lifting his hand, and bowing with a motion that made his refusal emphatic.

'What will you take?' said Mr. Vanderholt.

'Nothing whatever, I thank you, sir.'

'Are you a teetotaler?' said Mr. Vanderholt, signing to the footman to be gone.

'No, sir. I am one of those men who drink only when they are thirsty, and as I am seldom thirsty it follows that I drink little.'

'Do you know anything about fore and aft seamanship?'

Now Captain Glew smiled, but the expression was like a passing spasm.

'I do, sir. I have held command in several types of ships in my time. Seven years ago I had charge for three voyages of a fruiter from the Thames to the Western Islands.'

'That will do,' said Mr. Vanderholt, with an appreciative flourish of his hand, and a laugh of satisfaction. [Pg 23]

'Five years ago, being in distress for a position, and having a wife and two children to maintain, I took command of a three-masted schooner to the Brazils, where I left her and returned in charge of a little barque. I then got a berth in Mr. Fairbanks' employ——'

He was proceeding, but Mr. Vanderholt had heard enough.

'I am quite satisfied,' said he. 'Now let us settle the matter straight off. That is my way of going to work. I'm not for easing away handsomely; I'm for letting go with a run. We shall want a mate, and we shall want a crew. Can I trust you to see to this business?'

'You can, sir.'

'Let the crew be blue-water men. I shall want real sailors aboard the *Mowbray*.'

'There's nothing like them, sir.'

'The craft lies dismantled, as you know. I leave the whole work of her being made ready for sea to you. Employ your own labour. Call upon me as the work proceeds. I shall make you several visits from time to time, for I am a man of leisure.' [Pg 24]

'Does the young lady go with us, sir?'

'Yes.'

'You'll wish her cabin specially fitted?'

'I will see to that myself, Captain Glew.'

'Right, sir. And the voyage, I understand, is to be a cruise in the North Atlantic?'

'It is to be a run to the Equator and home.'

'It seems such an odd place to steer for,' said Miss Vanderholt, breaking the silence for the first time.

'It's as determinable as a rock, anyhow!' exclaimed Mr. Vanderholt. 'I want to be able to report a wonder when we return.' Here his Dutch countenance put on the air of good-humoured cunning with which he usually prefaced a joke. 'There is about a quarter of a mile of Equatorial water which possesses a remarkable property. Sink an object in it, and you draw it up gilt. If we strike this wonderful patch of sea, we will gild the *Mowbray* from waterway to truck; boats, ground-tackle—everything—shall be resplendent, and we shall be the marvel of London as we sail up the Thames.' [Pg 25]

Miss Vanderholt watched Captain Glew, to see how he relished this sort of thing.

The skipper exclaimed austere:

'It's a tract of water written of in books for the marines. It's not to be found at sea, sir.'

'We must strike it, man, so that we may return covered with glory.'

'Patch got any colour, sir?'

'I believe it is a blood-red. A man I once sailed with claimed to have sighted it. He was in the foretop-mast crosstrees, and saw the patch off the bow, and hailed the deck, but he squinted damnably. You can't keep a true course for anything when you squint. The captain missed the patch. No other man saw it; and the sailor, who was a Dane, was, or is, the only man in the world who has ever seen that miraculous bit of Equatorial water.'

He looked at his daughter, clearly enjoying his own imagination; and Captain Glew uttered a hollow laugh, and stood up.

'I will visit the vessel to-morrow, sir, and report. I will bring my papers along with me——' [Pg 26]

'No need,' interrupted Mr. Vanderholt; 'Mr. Fairbanks' introduction is enough.'

The man made a nautical bow to the father and daughter, and was going, when he suddenly stopped to say:

'Are you particular as to the nationalities of the men, sir?'

'English and Dutchmen, in such proportions as may please you,' said Mr. Vanderholt; 'but never a Dago, Captain Glew. I was once stabbed by a Dago.'

'And a Dago would have stabbed me if I hadn't killed him,' said the captain. 'We'll ship no Dagos, sir.'

He made another nautical bow, and departed.

'I like him,' said Mr. Vanderholt, turning in his chair so as to resume his letter-writing; 'but I guess the crew will find him a taut hand.'

'What is a taut hand?' inquired his daughter.

'A man who breeds mutinies,' he answered.

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He looked thoughtful for a few moments, as though visited by some tragic memories; then, taking up his pen, he went on writing his letters.

CHAPTER II. DOWN RIVER.

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On the morning of November 21, 1837, the schooner *Mowbray* lay at anchor abreast of Greenwich. In the fresh westerly wind you found the sun-white sparkle of winter. Buildings, ships, wharves, the further bends of the Reach, stood out with the sharpness and delicacy of ivory work. The movements of the drapery of bunting, the swelling and breathing of passing canvas, were beautiful to see under the hard, blue sky, with its frost-work of gleaming cloud high over Plaistow Level.

The schooner looked exceedingly handsome as she floated at her cable, with the ripples of the blown stream twisting in slender lines of light from the cut-water. These lines flashed in her glossy sides as they trembled past, and her coppered hull was beautified by other lustres than the light of day, as she sat motionless, courting the eye to the tall heights of the delicate mastheads, each of them star-crowned with a shining gilt truck.

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She was handsomer than a yacht, because she lacked the summer precision and fine-weather finish of that sort of craft. The nautical eye does not love fine feathers. The *Mowbray* was a sea-going boat. She had beam for stability, a height of side which promised a dry ship, a spring of bow smack-like with its promise of domination. Her copper shone; she was sheathed to the bends; she carried little or no finery about her decks, but the scantling of everything—the companion, the skylights, the sailors' deck-house, nay, even the caboose forward—might have been that of a ten-gun brig.

The hour was about half-past eleven. A number of seamen, apparelled with some regard to uniformity of attire, lounged in the bows, staring Greenwich way, or at the familiar scene of docks the other side of the river. They looked a rough company of the genuine merchant-sailor type—raggedly hairy, defiant in stare, in fold of arm, resolved in their several postures. They wore round hats and jackets, and the bell-ended, blue-cloth trousers of the Jacks of that day.

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On the quarter-deck walked Captain Glew and the mate who had signed articles for the run, Mr. Tweed. This was a short, hearty, plump man. His grog-blossomed, jovial face suggested a suppressed boisterousness of spirits; you felt that in him lay the voice for the back-parlour of the Free and Easy. The owner of the vessel and party were expected on board shortly, and Tweed had clothed himself with care, in a short, round jacket, with a corner of red silk handkerchief carelessly straying from one side-pocket. His trousers rippled as he walked, and the rest of him consisted of a check shirt and pumps.

'I think he ought to be pleased,' said Captain Glew, coming to a stand at the binnacle, and throwing a look over the little ship and then up aloft; 'nothing handsomer sails out of the Thames this year.'

'She is sweet enough for a pennon,' said Tweed. 'I wish she was mine. I'd like to go a-pirating in a vessel of this sort. No, I wouldn't, either; I'd go a-slaving. A hundred and eighty tons. I reckon you could stow away six hundred blacks in her 'tween decks.'

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'I sometimes wish I'd been born a hundred years sooner,' said Captain Glew. 'I would have been a pirate; the ocean was thick with booty, and you got an estate with very little risk. The dogs came to the gibbet because they never would be satisfied.'

'Piracy gave a sailor a good chance,' said the mate, with a groggy look at the hands lounging forward.

'Here am I grateful for this £30 job,' growled the captain. 'The wife and young uns may now eat and drink for three months, and for three months the thought of to-morrow morning shan't keep me awake. Holy Jemmy! But it's on the quarter-deck where the hearts of stone are wanted. To those fellows forward the getting a ship's as easy as an oath. Do you or I get ships as easily as we swear?'

'No, not by all that I'm worth!' answered Tweed. 'Captain, I have followed the sea for twenty years, and I'll tell you how it stands with me now: in my cabin you'll find a sea-chest; it's painted green—green it should be; it's the colour of my life. In that sea-chest is all that I own in the world, saving a matter of a few pounds stowed away ashore. Twenty years of the sea, and nothing but a bloomed green sea-chest to show for it!' exclaimed Tweed, with so much blood in his face that his grog-blossoms made him look as if he had burst into a dangerous rash.

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Thus these worthies discoursed, as they walked the quarter-deck, awaiting the arrival of Mr. Vanderholt and party. They had been shipmates in prior times, were in some fashion connected, had frequently of late met ashore, and had grown intimate during the time occupied by the refitting of the *Mowbray*. We are not to confound the discipline of this little schooner with that of a great Indiaman. Men who had commanded fruiterers were not commonly distant to their mates

when they afterwards handled small vessels.

Forward the seamen growled in talk indistinguishable to the quarter-deck walkers.

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'What sort of boss is th' ole man going to turn out?' exclaimed one of the seamen, staring aft. 'I don't like his looks. But when once I've signed a vessel's articles I'm for outweath'ring the skipper, if he was the devil himself. He'll get no change out of Joseph Dabb, and it's extraordinary, bullies, that Joseph Dabb should be my name.'

'If there's no eddication in the fok'sle of this vessel, fired if there oughtn't to be enough aft to enable all hands to spell the word "lush,"' said a dark, heavy-browed man, gazing with a deep and surly smile at the plump figure of Tweed, as he walked, rolling about like a butterbox in a seaway, alongside the captain. 'I never see a face in all my time more beautifully decorated. How many pints go to one of them blossoms? We shall be hearing of him singing "We're all a-noddin'" in some middle watch, when there's onusual need for a bright look-out.'

'I was spliced three weeks ago,' exclaimed a red-headed seaman. 'I'm a-missing of Sally, my joys. I feel gallus like going home again.'

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He eyed the land about the West India Docks, and extended his arms, amidst a rumble of laughter and much spitting of yellow froth over the bows.

'I don't expect to see my old 'oman again,' exclaimed a seaman, standing upright with his arms folded. 'If she don't die, she'll make tracks, and, foreseeing of that, I sold off my household furniture yesterday.'

'Ain't ye left her nothing to sit upon?' said the red-headed seaman.

'Yes; a carpenter's knee. D'ye think I'm to be hubbled?' he cried, letting fall his arms, and turning fiercely upon the red-headed man. 'I wondered to find her at home last voyage. She'd have found me a true man. Bruised if I like ship's carpenters, anyhow. I never yet knew a ship's carpenter yer could trust as a man.'

'Stow that!' exclaimed a seaman, leaning over the rail, and merely turning his head to speak.

'*You're* no ship's carpenter,' was the answer. 'This ain't no ship. Present company's always excepted, too, in polite society;' and he began to step the deck with temper.

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'Where's this vessel bound to?' said another man.

'I signed for a cruise,' answered someone.

'Something was said about the Equator,' exclaimed another.

'The Equator's no coast,' said the red-headed man.

'The covey that owns this here craft,' exclaimed the carpenter, who was also the boatswain, 'is a Dutchman. He ain't a Dutchman only—he's a feenansure. Now, I've heard tell that when a Dutchman makes more money than his mind's capable of weighing the idea of, his intellects go wrong. Did ye ever hear of the prices they paid for toolips? I'm the son of a sweep, lads, if some of 'em didn't pay as much as a £100 in good money for a durned stalk not worth a cabbage! They was all rich men as bought them bulbs, and they was all mad; and you lay your last farden's-worth of silver spoons if this here scheme of a voyage to the Equator ain't the caper of a blooming Dutchman who's made so much money that his brains have given under the weight of the idea of his fortune!'

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Just then a large white boat was seen to be approaching the *Mowbray* from the direction of Greenwich, and in a few minutes she was alongside—a boat full of ladies and gentlemen; and Captain Glew stood at the open gangway, cap in hand. The party consisted of Mr. and Miss Vanderholt and a few friends who had accompanied them to Greenwich to see them off. Vanderholt shook hands with his captain, nodded to the mate, and cast a look of approval in the direction of the fore-castle. He seemed in high spirits. His eyes smiled deep in their little sockets, and the fresh and friendly wind blew his beard into twenty expressions of kindly laughter. He was rigged out for the sea. No Minories slop-shop could have furnished him with a salter aspect. The seamen on the fore-castle eyed him, and murmured one to another. They seemed to recognise their own vocation in the man, yet viewed him doubtfully, as dogs watch with suspicion the dog in Punch and Judy.

His daughter was handsomely draped in velvet and fur, and wore a turban-shaped hat that was as good for the deck as for her looks. In a minute there was a little crowd of well-dressed gentlemen and ladies standing on the quarter-deck, gazing around them and aloft, with Mr. Vanderholt laughing with the wind in his beard, and Miss Vi gazing somewhat pensively at the full scene of the schooner.

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It was the right sort of morning for a start for the ocean. The brisk breeze covered the surface of the river with sliding shapes, coming and going. A large Indiaman, newly arrived, with the rust of four months of brine draining down her chain-plate bolts, her sheathing green as grass, with a quivering of weeds here and there, lay off the Docks opposite. Her house-flag blew stately from the lofty masthead; stately and proud, too, she floated, tall and square. She seemed alive, and conscious of victory. The lights of her cabin windows shook through the ripples in long darts of silver. A chorus of thirty stormy throats swept down the wind, and there came out of that

inspiring windlass-song of sailors who had brought their lofty ship home the whole spirit of the ocean into this living, brimming picture of river. [Pg 38]

Mr. Vanderholt's friends walked about the decks of the *Mowbray*, praising the schooner highly.

'He goes alone with his daughter,' said one gentleman to another, 'and touches nowhere. I do not envy her.'

'Don't you remember,' said the other, 'what the German said? "I don't see der use of being seek onless you makes your friends seek mit you."'

They both laughed.

Mr. Vanderholt led the whole party into the cabin, where they found the table clothed for a cold lunch. A steward stood in a corner, waiting for the hour to strike when he should summon the company by a bell. Some baskets of champagne were beside him. It was a roomy cabin, with plenty of accommodation for eight or nine people to sit at table; brightly lighted, handsomely upholstered, painted and gilded as charmingly as a drawing-room. Some little berths aft had been knocked into two, and Violet was very well pleased with the size and comfort of her sea bedroom. She would swing in a cot; the furniture provided her with many more conveniences than she would get ashore in a friend's house. [Pg 39]

Mr. Vanderholt's cabin was plainly equipped. He was going to sea as a sailor; he was bent upon reviving old memories; and his guests laughed when he pointed to a sea-chest, which he said contained nearly the whole of his kit, which chest had also been the one he had used in the last voyage he made as a sailor.

'Do you see those ragged marks?' said he, stooping to run his finger along the edge of the chest, whilst he looked up into the face of a fashionably-dressed lady. 'They were caused by my cutting up plug tobacco. I would not have them filled in. On this chest I have sat and blown strong Cavendish tobacco-smoke into an atmosphere composed almost entirely of carbonic acid gas; I have watched the blue ring burning round the flame of the lamp, and smoked on.'

'Would you be a sailor again?' asked the fashionably-dressed lady.

'Not for a million on *these* terms,' answered Mr. Vanderholt, bringing his fist down, in a sudden passion of recollection, upon the lid of his chest. [Pg 40]

Presently the little bell rang, and they seated themselves. The champagne fizzed, knives and forks rattled on plates, the one steward ran about. Mr. Vanderholt was in high spirits; he drank to his daughter amongst others; no more cordial or hospitable gentleman ever sat at the head of a cabin table.

'The hardest part of a sailor's life,' said a pretty young woman, with black eyes, and a handsome white feather coiled round a large hat, 'must be saying good-bye to the girls, as I think they call them,' exposing a row of milk-white teeth. 'They are absent for months and years; how can you expect constancy?'

'Ha!' exclaimed Mr. Vanderholt. 'But a man may be faithful, even though he should be as much cut off from his girl as if he was buried. Don't you remember what your Richard Steele says? I quote from memory: "The poor fellow who lost his arm last siege will tell you that he feels the fingers that are buried in Flanders ache every cold morning at Chelsea."' [Pg 41]

'I do not see the application,' said one of the gentlemen.

'It is perfectly plain,' said Violet, flushing.

'Vanderholt,' exclaimed one of the guests, 'tell me what has become of that old sailor who used to take a month in making a pair of clews for the captain's cot, or a fancy pair of beackets for the mate's camphor-wood chest.'

'He belonged to the days of leisure,' answered Mr. Vanderholt. 'It is all for speed now, cracking on, carrying away, four months to Bombay, when in my time six months was looked upon as a good voyage.'

Captain Glew, at the invitation of Mr. Vanderholt, sat at the foot of the table.

'The lady,' said he, with an inclination of his head in the direction of the person referred to, 'was speaking just now of constancy amongst sailors. I remember some years ago being aboard a ship in a collision. The other vessel received us, and it turned out that the first seaman who sprang into the ship was the husband of the wife of the captain.' [Pg 42]

'Lor', what a complication!' said somebody.

'The seaman who sprang was supposed to be dead?' said Mr. Vanderholt.

Captain Glew looked at him without smiling. His face, however, was not wanting in a certain arch expression.

'Sailors undergo very many more perils than are written down, or than the world wots of,' said a gentleman. 'I once met a travelling show. Part of it was a man in a cage. Nothing in this or the under world could be more frightful to see than that man. And what had happened to him? He had slept on a bale of cloves, and the cloves, by drawing all the moisture out of him, had left him

a skeleton, with a heart beating under a loose coat of parchment.'

'Poor thing!' said a lady. 'And are cloves so drying? Really! How could the poor creature while away the time in a cage?'

'By showing the crowd how to make clove-hitches, I expect,' said Vanderholt.

Captain Glew rose, and, bowing to the company, went to his cabin, which was a cupboard forward annexed to the pantry. Opposite was the mate's. He reappeared in a minute or two, said something to Mr. Vanderholt, and passed on deck.

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'I wonder you do not touch at Madeira,' said a gentleman.

'I touch at the Line only.'

'Oh, but Miss Vanderholt,' exclaimed the gentleman, 'if you have not seen Madeira, you should compel your father to stop at the island,

""Where the virgins are soft as the roses they twine,
And all, save the spirit of man, is divine.""

'I know nothing about the virgins of that island,' said a gentleman; 'but the men who visit your ship, and the men who salute you when you get ashore, are poisonously hideous. They cling like toads to a bed of glorious growths. The spirit of man is not divine at Madeira.'

'I touch nowhere,' said Mr. Vanderholt. 'When our forefoot cuts the zero of the chart, we shift helm for the homeward run.'

He glanced at a clock in the skylight, made a movement, and simultaneously all stood up, and, standing, they drank a final glass of champagne to the safety of the voyage, to Vanderholt's health, to the return of the charming Violet Vanderholt; then, conducted by the owner of the schooner, the guests went on deck, and in a few minutes took their leave.

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There was much hand-shaking—all the usual assurances of friendship agitated by leave-taking. Nevertheless, when the company were in their boat, going ashore, one of the gentlemen exclaimed:

'I think Vanderholt must be a selfish old cuckoo to carry away his daughter to the ocean, with no other company but his own grumbling self and Captain Glew.'

'I would not be sailing to the Equator in that schooner for a thousand pounds!' said a lady. 'I should have to be run away with to do such a thing;' and she leered sweetly at a gentleman opposite her.

'They are flourishing their handkerchiefs to us,' cried someone.

All stood up in the boat to wave back.

'For Gord's sake, sit down, ladies and gents! You'll be capsizing of us!' bawled the one-eyed bow oar.

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On board the schooner they were getting under weigh. The name of the boatswain—he was also the carpenter—who had shipped to act as second mate whenever his services in this capacity should be required, was Jones. No man blew the boatswain's silver pipe more sweetly. He had sent his lark-like carol to the mastheads, and afar on either hand the streaming river that pure music of the sea thrilled, whilst their guests were making their way ashore.

The *Mowbray* was a small ship, but her deep-water men dealt with her as though she had been a thousand-ton Indiaman. The hearties, in their round jackets, sprang, as an echo of the boatswain's roaring cry, to the windlass handles, and in a moment a voice, broken by years of drink and by hailing the deck from immense heights, broke into that most melancholy chorus, 'Across the Plains of Mexico.'

The cherry-faced mate, Tweed, standing in the bows, soon reported the cable up and down; then sail was made. The eager little ship herself broke her anchor out of the London mud, and to the impulse of her mounting standing jib, staysail, and gaff foresail, was, with a clipper's restlessness of spirit in the whole length of her, swiftly turning her head down-stream, whilst a few hands sang 'Old Stormy, he is dead and gone' at the little windlass, lifting the anchor to the cathead.

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Before the length of Blackwall Reach had been measured, the schooner was clothed, her seamen coiling down, some attending the sheets—everything quiet and comfortable. The captain stood beside the tiller, conning the little vessel. He was qualified as a pilot for the Thames, and boasted that he could smell his way up and down in the dark—and truly perhaps the nose, in some parts of this noble river, would be as good as the lead, or a buoy, to tell a man where he was. Glew caught the eye of Mr. Vanderholt, who, approaching him, said:

'I am very well pleased. You have chosen well. This is a good company of seamen.'

Captain Glew touched his cap, and continued to watch the schooner. She was square-rigged forward, carried topsail, top-gallant-sail, and royal; but there was no good in humbugging with this sort of canvas in a serpentine river that shifts your course for you every two miles by three or

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four points.

Miss Vanderholt stood at the rail viewing the moving picture round about, with a very pensive face. Her eyes often went to a large vessel at anchor ahead. That full-rigged ship made her think of George. In much such a ship, no doubt, George would return. When? In all probability before her own arrival; and how maddening that would be! For, oddly enough, though it was a long time since they had parted, Miss Violet Vanderholt was quite as much in love with Captain George Parry as ever she was on that day when she and her father saw him off in the East India Docks, when she cried, and he hugged her, and when they had spent half an hour up in a corner all alone in talk as impassioned as ever passed between two lovers.

This must convince us that there was something Dutch and solid in the girl's character, for she had had many opportunities to recollect herself and transfer her affection. Though Vanderholt's wealth was not of a size to lead to newspaper paragraphs and to editorial exaggerations, it was, in a quiet way, known and talked about, and people passing his house would look up and nod at it, and say:

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'A rich old cock lives there.'

However, Miss Vi's meditations were presently to be interrupted by a scene not very unfamiliar in the River Thames. The wind was west, and it blew a fresh breeze. The ripples rushing to the whipping carried a little edging of foam. Whatever was under canvas, unless it was a barge, or something running in a mile or two of straight water, leaned in shafts of light. You caught the glance of copper sheathing, the sunshine showered in a rainbow glow upon flashes of brackish foam bursting without the life of brine from shearing bows and gliding sides. The smoke ashore blew away quickly, and the heavens remained a beautiful blue, and the sky over the Plaistow Flats shone like the inside of an oyster-shell with the prismatic hues of a setting of motionless, finely-linked clouds.

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Just as the *Mowbray* passed down Bugsby's Reach, opening the long tract of the Woolwich waters beyond, two collier brigs reaching up the river swept into each other with crackling jibbooms. The schooner's road was blocked; her helm was shifted swift as the swallow curves in flight, and then followed a pause which enabled Miss Vanderholt to gain some little insight into the ways of the deep, and the behaviour and speech of those who go down to it for two or three pounds a month.

The two brigs came together with a crash that might have been heard at London Bridge. They butted bow to bow, then, swinging to, locked themselves helplessly broadside to broadside, and began to float shorewards, with sails and heavy pieces of timber falling from aloft, and men, two or three of them wearing tall hats, and shawls round their throats, rushing about the decks in agonies of pantomime. It was a saying that there was no better school than the North Country Geordie for seamanship. Certainly there was no school in which a man learnt more quickly to swear. The *Mowbray* floated close past, and all could be seen. Nothing is more helpless in this world than two ships thus yoked, steering each other ashore, with an occasional drag, or jerk, or butt, that brings a ton of top-hammer crashing about the ears of the profane on deck.

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'Let go your tawps'l brace, you blooming old fool! Don't you see it's foul of my mainyard-arm?'

'What in flames are you keeping your jib hoisted for? You're paying her right into me!'

'Jumped if we shan't both go ashore if yer don't starboard yer 'ellum. Why don't you let go yer anchor, you rooting hogs?'

'Yes, and tear my smothered bows out because a crew of dairymen don't know how to steer their ship!'

Then, in the midst of this—crash!—off short like a carrot would snap a yard, or down, torn bodily out by its roots, would fall a gaff, amidst yells of:

'You gutter-sots! You're all drunk this holy day! Suffocate yer, you scabs! Let go yer tawps'l halliards! Don't you see they're binding the wessels together by my yard that's gone in the slings?'

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But the *Mowbray* was now on her course; the distance between her and the embracing brigs was fast widening, and articulate oaths had faded into a chorus of indistinguishable shouts. The vessels were doomed. They both drifted ashore abreast of Woolwich, and next day a paper described a fight that was bloody with knives between the two crews, and reported the death of a foolhardy waterman who tried to make peace, clearly with an eye to salvage.

'This,' said Mr. Vanderholt, as the *Mowbray*, rounding into Galleon's Reach, put the brigs out of sight, 'is a sample of the poetry of the sea, Vi. But very few poets have dealt with subjects of this sort. They write of the splendours of the sunset and moon-rise at sea, and such things. Yet, if I were a poet, I would rather choose a subject in those two brigs in the Thames in a collision, going ashore, full of curses, than in all the stars which shine upon the ocean.'

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At five o'clock the *Mowbray* let go her anchor off Gravesend.

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CHAPTER III. 'ALONG OF BILL.'

It was dark when the *Mowbray* brought up. The Gravesend lights trembled windily, and there was a dance of lanterns as of fireflies upon the breast of the stream. Mr. Vanderholt had no intention of going ashore. He had ordered Captain Glew to bring up off Gravesend to avoid the risks of the navigation of the river in a dark night. It is not customary for the skippers of yachts to dine with their owners, but Mr. Vanderholt, who was a seaman at heart, who disliked forms and ceremonies, having made up his mind on the matter, had, after speaking a few words to his daughter, walked up to Captain Glew and expressed a wish that he would eat with them at their table. Glew touched his cap without any expression of surprise or emotion of gratitude. He appeared to receive the courtesy as a command, to accept it as he would an order to get the vessel under weigh or shorten sail.

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At six o'clock the cabin bell was rung to call them to dinner. Mr. Vanderholt and Captain Glew arrived from the deck, Miss Vanderholt from her cabin. The interior was a pretty little picture of hospitality; two handsome lamps shone purely and brightly. The burnished swing-trays reflected the beams of the lamps. The light glanced dart-like in polished bulkhead and mirror, and shone on silver and damask, and fruit and crystal. The steward appeared with a dish of fish.

'I think you have a pretty good cook in this vessel,' said Vanderholt, examining the fish, as he helped his daughter.

'He served his time in liners, and has done a deal of cooking at sea in his day.'

'I hope he will take some trouble to please the men,' said Mr. Vanderholt. 'It is always bad food for the fore-castle, but a bad cook makes bad bad indeed.'

'What do the men get to eat?' asked the young lady.

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'The usual ship-going fare, miss,' answered Glew: 'pork, junk, pease-soup, biscuit, and the like.'

'Who keeps the log of this ship?' said Mr. Vanderholt.

'I shall,' said the captain.

'What is a log?' inquired Miss Vanderholt.

'A book, my dear, in which the chief mate of a ship enters daily her situation, the state of the weather, and such observations as he is capable of making.'

'They are not many, or of a poetical order,' said Glew, with his faint taut smile. 'The nearest romantic stroke that I can recollect was this entry: "A dreadful day. At noon precisely the ship blew up, and nobody was left but William Gibson."'

'I suspect, captain,' said Mr. Vanderholt, 'that you will have met with some romantic traverses in your time?'

'I don't recall any,' answered the captain.

'Why, to put one instance as delicately as I can,' said Mr. Vanderholt, filling a silver tankard till it foamed over with India pale ale; 'that extraordinary affair of some early love.' Miss Vi looked extremely confused, and gazed with entreaty at her father. 'The remarkable story, I mean,' continued Vanderholt, bringing out his mouth and nose covered with froth, 'that Mr. Fairbanks told me.'

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'And what might the story be, sir?' said Captain Glew, looking blankly.

Miss Vanderholt continued to gaze with entreaty, whilst her father repeated the story. Captain Glew drained his wine-glass, and uttered a dismal laugh, in which his face bore no part.

'Why,' said he, 'that yarn's told of old Jim Dyson, old Captain Dyson, who was found dead in his bed three years ago at the sign of the Sot's Hole, down Limehouse way.'

Miss Vanderholt burst out laughing.

'I wonder Mr. Fairbanks should tell that yarn of me,' continued Captain Glew. 'If my wife gets to hear of it—and there's trouble enough in married life without lies——'

'So the bubbles break as quickly as they are blown,' said Mr. Vanderholt. 'But I confess I never would have thought it of you, Captain Glew.'

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After dinner the father and daughter patrolled the deck, warmly wrapped. Mr. Vanderholt smoked an immense pipe that curled from an amber tip at his lips into a richly-bronzed and glowing bowl in his hand. It was early night. The wind was gone, the stream of tide softly shaled along the bends of the schooner in the note of surf washing on shingle heard at a distance. How dismal, flat and gaunt looked the treeless Tilbury shore in that sad light! The very stars shining over it seemed to tremble with the spirit of mud and cold desolation. Shadowy shapes of ships went by, sometimes to a sound of music, as of concertinas and the like; tall phantasmal shapes, lifting spires as delicate as needles to the stars, loomed anear and afar. In the main, silence lay upon that river, with its burden of living freights.

The crew loafed about the schooner's deck forward, and the grumble of their voices came aft, along with the scent of tobacco-smoke. They slept in a deck-house, with three windows of a side, and spikes of light shot from those windows, occasionally glancing on the figure of a passing man, and falling in streams of radiance upon the bulwarks. Besides this deck-house, the schooner owned a small fore-castle, containing three or four bunks.

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'I don't know how it may be with you, Vi,' said Mr. Vanderholt, pressing his daughter's arm affectionately against his side, 'but I give you my word I feel better already.'

'That's a good thing,' exclaimed the young lady. 'I wish George were with us.'

'George is not two men. He can't be in India and here at the same time.'

'He ought to be here, by my side,' said Miss Vanderholt. 'Oh, how delicious the voyage would then be! I should not object to your sailing round the world.'

'Make the youngster give up the army. He's got means of his own, and *you'll* be pretty well off, I hope,' said Mr. Vanderholt. 'If you go out to India I shall be alone, and you'll die of some distemper, engendered by what is there called "a station." No good in titular dignity. The land teems with captains and colonels; and a time may come when a man will be respected because he is not a major-general. It would be different if George was in the Dutch army.'

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He was proceeding, when he suddenly stopped, catching a noise of oars on the bow, and suddenly a long, sharp-stemmed boat, apparently a police boat, shot out of the gloom, and a powerful voice hailed:

'Schooner ahoy!'

'Hallo!' answered Captain Glew, who was leaning over the side, at a respectful distance from the father and daughter, furtively smoking a cheroot.

'I want to come aboard of you.'

In a minute the boat was alongside, and a couple of men sprang over the rail.

'What vessel's this?' said one of the men, who, like his companion, wore a tall, glazed hat, and was swathed to the throat in overcoat and shawls.

'The *Mowbray*, privately owned. What's your business?' said Captain Glew.

'We're Bow Street officers. We're searching the shipping for a man named Simmons. D'ye want to see our warrant?'

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'What's he charged with?' said Mr. Vanderholt, coming with his daughter on his arm from the other side of the deck.

'Murder!' was the answer.

Miss Vanderholt screamed. Her father said instantly:

'Search my ship by all means. I hope the man may not be on board of us. If he is, I do not sail. Captain Glew, render these two officers every assistance.'

The *Mowbray* was a small vessel, and the search did not take long. The hatches were lifted, the hold explored by lantern-light, the deck-house was rummaged, the whole ship's company was mustered and severally examined. It was strange to see those seamen standing in a line, with the runners in their glazed hats flashing the light of their lanterns over their rough, bearded, weather-blackened faces. They had assented very easily to this mustering and examination, for the man was wanted for murder, and the very name will subdue the roughest, and silence those curses of the fore-castle with which the two Bow Street fellows were the sort of people to have been handsomely assailed by this crew, had they bothered the men with a smaller errand.

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They searched the cabins, and, lastly, they entered the little fore-castle in which no man had as yet slept. A hole of a seabedroom was this. You could scarcely stand upright in it. The two men descended the short ladder, and Captain Glew stood atop waiting. The bullies of Bow Street swung their lamps carefully. Suddenly one of them, delivering a low gasp, said: 'Catch hold of this light, Tom.' He dropped on his knees, and grabbed at a leg, the foot of which dimly showed under one of the bunks. He hauled with a will, and out came the body of a man or boy, shrieking like a woman in a fit.

'Don't 'urt me! for God's sake, don't 'urt me, gemmen! I meant no 'arm. It was all along of Bill.'

'Is that a woman you've got down there?' sung out Captain Glew.

'Nothing else, by the holy poker!' answered one of the officers, in a voice that trembled with the temper of disappointment.

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'Yes, I'm a girl, gemmen. It was all along of Bill. Put me ashore, and I promise never to offend again,' cried the unfortunate little woman, sobbing grievously.

Yet, bedraggled as she was, of a raw, uncouth, mixed look, with her trousers and sailor's jacket, and plentiful black hair loosened by dragging, she showed as a saucy, handsome wench, and the spirit of the devil was in her black eyes when she looked at the Bow Street men.

They all went on deck.

'Thunder of heaven!' cried Mr. Vanderholt, in a voice of horror. 'The murderer is on board our ship! They have got him. So,' he cried in a voice deep with resolution, 'our voyage ends. Tomorrow we return home.'

'It's a woman, sir,' said Captain Glew.

'A woman!' shouted Mr. Vanderholt. He quitted his daughter, and strode straight up to the group as they came along, and, putting his face close into the woman's, he exclaimed: 'What are you doing aboard my vessel?'

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'It's all along of Bill!' cried the girl. 'I never meant no 'arm, and I can't tell yer what I done it for.'

'Father,' said Miss Vanderholt, approaching the group, and taking a view of the girl by the sheen that floated round about the lighted skylight, 'don't you think it's just possible that this person who's been in hiding for some time may be a little bit hungry and thirsty? Ask her into the cabin. She will tell us her story.'

'Oh, lady, you is kind!' exclaimed the girl, extending both hands towards Miss Violet, and again beginning to cry bitterly.

'This way, then,' said Mr. Vanderholt.

The Bow Street gentlemen descended with the rest. Whether they imagined a scent of crime in this female stowaway, or whether they distinguished a scent of drink in the cabin atmosphere, cannot, after all these years, be settled with any degree of certainty. They seated themselves, and Mr. Vanderholt offered them drink, and they drank, eyeing the girl with very knowing looks, whilst she told her story in a high, strained voice.

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'What are ye?' began Captain Glew.

'I'm barmaid at the One Bell in Cable Street, nigh the London Docks.'

Here she paused, and looked at Miss Violet. The blood was red in her cheeks, and her eyes were wild and wet with tears. Her aspect, in the clear light of the lamp, was extraordinary. She seemed half a gipsy. Her beauty was coarse and masculine; her hair, black as streaming ink, lay upon her back in a wonderful quantity.

'It was all along of Bill,' she went on.

'Who's this bloomed Bill you've been talking about since you was lugged out of it?' said one of the officers.

'The young man I keeps company with,' she answered. 'We fell out because of a sailor man that's aboard this vessel. Fred Maul his name is, and it 'ud have been good for me this blessed night had they strangled him in the hour of his coming into this blistered world. Why,' she cried, turning upon Miss Violet, who shrank a little from the gathering ferocity of the woman, 'this beast of a Maul comes and 'angs about me, and Bill, he falls jealous. Bill and me 'ad a row over this 'ere Maul. He says to me: "I know the ship he's signed for; yer'd better foller him." "By God!" cries I, mad with feeling that *he* oughtn't to have said it, "say that again, and I'll do it." He says it again.' Here the unfortunate woman raised her voice till the little cabin rang; but though the gentlemen of Bow Street shouted, and though Captain Glew and Mr. Vanderholt sought, with a hundred gestures, to subdue her voice, nothing could soften the hysteric, piercing note. 'He s'ys it ag'in, I s'y, and, going away, the unfeeling devil comes back arter ten minutes, and chucks a bundle on to the counter, and says, with a low sneer: "There's your kit. Now go and foller Bill."'

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'And so here y'are,' said one of the officers. 'A tidy lot, I allow, for a select hevening party. When I saw her boot, fired if I didn't think it was a man.'

The girl bit upon a sandwich, and glared fiercely at the officers while she chewed. Miss Violet, with the merciful heart of her sex, fetched some hairpins from her cabin, and gave them to the girl, who, with a curtsy, and a smile of shame and thanks, turned to a strip of mirror and swiftly coiled her hair upon her head.

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'Go and fetch the young lady's hat,' said Mr. Vanderholt to the steward.

The Bow Street gentlemen, having drunk their glasses of cold brandy and water, got up, saying they must be off.

'Yer'll put me ashore, won't yer?' asked the girl.

'Ay, they'll put you ashore,' said Mr. Vanderholt, slipping a sovereign into the hand of one of them; 'and here's for a knot of gay ribbons for you, miss,' said he, laughing at the figure of the woman, 'when you're clear of this spree, and in petticoats again.'

She thrust the sovereign into her breeches pocket, muttering 'Thank you, sir,' whilst she scowled at the two officers.

'Come along, miss, if you're coming; for we're off,' said one of the men.

The young woman followed them, gazing about her as she went as though she had only just discovered that she was in a very richly-furnished cabin, and in the presence of a gentleman and

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a very finely-dressed, handsome young lady. She wore an expression that was like asking 'Where am I? How did I get here? What's it about?' And then, pausing an instant at the foot of the companion-steps, to look at Miss Violet, and say, 'It was all along of Bill; but he'll get it 'ot when I meet him,' she went up the ladder in the wake of Captain Glew.

'Let them get clear of the schooner,' said Mr. Vanderholt, casting himself upon a sofa. 'They're not what you would call pickings from the sweetest of the social orders.'

'What did she intend?'

'She couldn't have told you. When women of that sort go mad with jealousy, "stand by," as Jack says. She'd have had Maul's life, perhaps, before we were out of the Channel.'

He was interrupted by a great commotion on deck—loud cries of men, mingled with the yells of a woman.

'Stop here, Violet!' cried Mr. Vanderholt; and he rushed up the steps.

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The deck-house door was open. The light of the lantern streamed freely into the air, and illuminated a considerable area of plank, in the midst of which a fight was apparently going on, for it was thence the uproar proceeded. Mr. Vanderholt ran forward, and saw the girl tearing with outstretched claws at one of the men as though she would rend him in pieces. His trouble was to get away. He butted and dodged behind his elbow, shouting: 'S'elp me Bob, Polly, it worn't no fault o' mine!' And then she would shriek out: 'Yer drove me to it! It was along o' you, and not Bill, you sink——' And here she would nearly tear his ear off; and then she got at his hair, whilst the man, never offering to hit her, danced in the light, shouting with pain, and swearing that he had had nothing to do with it.

'Stop it!' roared Captain Glew. 'Is a gentleman's yacht to be disgraced by a stowaway spitfire? Help her into the boat, Mr. Officers;' and plunging, they bore the girl out of her entangled embrace of Maul, and in a few minutes they were over the side, and gone.

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The crew followed Maul into the deck-house, and a grunt of laughter went along with them.

'What have you been a-doing to her?' says one.

'Where's my 'at?' said Maul.

'What do it feel like, Frederick?' sung out a sailor named Legg. 'As if you was married?'

'Never mind *her*. I'm a-thinking of what I've left behind me, my joys,' exclaimed a seaman.

'I'm durned mighty glad I sold off all my furniture,' said the deep-throated Jack who had on an early occasion made a statement on this subject.

Father and daughter sat in the cabin till half-past ten. Miss Violet was then sleepy, and went to bed. When she left her berth in the morning the schooner was under weigh, storming through Sea Reach, with half a gale of wind astern of her, and a thunderstorm of hell's own hue lancing the land beyond Canvey Island with lightning that fell in showers of fiery bayonets. It was a majestic, sublime, terrible storm. The girl, standing in the companion-way, was fascinated. The sun peeped at a corner of this purple-black bank of vapour, off which rags of tempest, gilded by his radiance, were blowing sheer across the wind, whilst for miles the edge of the electric mass was a line of glorious light. It was as though a bed of fire lay on top, with the molten stuff darting in flames through the swollen belly; and the thunder roared in rattling broadsides.

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The noble, dangerous scene of sky, however, was soon far astern; and the schooner sped on, carving out a grass-green comber with her chisel-like stem, and leaving the tail of a comet blowing in froth behind her. And now did nothing noticeable happen for some days. They met with heavy weather in the Channel. The wind darkened with snow, and the *Mowbray*, under small canvas, ratched, panting over the crazy, choppy sea behind the Goodwins for a board that should open her a free run down the English coast. Miss Violet was rather sea-sick. Strange to say, her father was rather sea-sick, too.

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'This motion,' he growled to Captain Glew, whilst he grasped a decanter of brandy by the neck, 'is not an honest heave. I am a good sailor in seas where the head and the stomach swing together, but when the stomach leaps at the head, and the head darts back from the stomach, leaving a sensation of brains in one's very toes, I give up.'

And so saying, he swallowed a glass of brandy, and lay down.

It was now that Miss Vi felt the want of a maid, or, at all events, of a stewardess to attend upon her. But Vanderholt had been dogged and Dutch in this matter when they had talked about the voyage at home. He would have no women, he said; they would be going forward among the men, and breeding trouble. Was it not good for Violet that she should learn to help herself? Could not she do her own hair? Then let her cut it off; it would be growing whilst they were away. These trifles illustrated Mr. Vanderholt's eccentricities as a rich man, and Violet's submissiveness as an only daughter.

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However, the fine girl was not so ill but that she could manage for herself. Her nausea had left her, whilst her father still lay grunting, incapable of smoking, and gray as his beard. She waited upon him, and stood upright with ease upon a bounding deck by his side, holding on to nothing but her own hands. He rolled a languid eye of admiration over her.

'I did not bargain for this,' said he, 'or, as God is my witness, we would have joined the hooker at Plymouth.'

'Where are we now?'

'In the Chops, where the Channel always shows its teeth,' answered Mr. Vanderholt, with an ashy grin of nausea.

Vanderholt need not have been ashamed. Nelson, whilst rolling in the Downs, wrote with pathetic irritability to his Emma of his incessant sickness. A man has stepped ashore after a voyage to Australia. Would not you suppose him seasoned? Yet, on crossing the Channel in one of the small steamers, he was more violently sick than the most prostrate of the Frenchmen who lay in cloaks, with tureens by their sides, helpless about the decks.

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'There is the Bay of Biscay to come,' said Miss Violet, with a lurking hope that, if her father's sickness continued, he would order Captain Glew to steer for home again.

'Yes, it is not far off, and I hope it may blow a hurricane when we get there, for then I shall be all right. I like a tall sea. Man and boy, I never could stand these rugged little Channel tumblers. Call for the steward, my dear. I want some tea.'

The old gentleman was not very accurate in his description of the state of the ocean, nevertheless. A large and liberal sea was running steadfast, in charging hills of green, which crumbled into foam. The torn scud flew fast. Every hollow was the wide and seething valley of Atlantic waters; and as the hull of the schooner sank into the trough, you might catch in the noise of expiring spray, in the explosion of coloured bubbles, winking like stars in beds of froth, a sound of martial music.

The *Mowbray* was making splendid weather of it. The wind was right abeam. She took the seas in steady lifts and falls. Regularly as the beat of a pulse, the hull would disappear. She seemed a foundered craft, till, in a minute, up she'd soar, with marble-hard breasts of canvas, leaping like some creation or possession of the deep to the height of a surge, bursting the flickering green peak into smoke, which blew away in rainbows whenever the sun rolled out of some solemn-sailing cloud under which the scud was scattering like smoke.

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It was half-past eleven o'clock in the morning. Captain Glew, coming below for his sextant, looked in on Mr. Vanderholt, and exchanged a few sentences with him touching affairs aboard. The schooner had been liberally provisioned with fresh meat and loaves of bread for the fore-castle use, and, so far, the men had sat down to a fresh mess every day. But carcasses and quarters, ribs and heads, and rumps must, unless they are pickled, soon take a character to call 'avast,' even to a sailor's appetite. Indeed, all the fresh meat was gone. It had been eaten up.

It was the dinner-hour aboard the *Mowbray*—at sea, before the mast, everybody used to sit down and eat his dinner by the sun, at the same time, no matter in what ocean he floated—and three or four men were gathered about the door of the little caboose, waiting to carry the kids into the deck-house.

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A hairy, tattooed lump of a man, named Simon Toole, after snuffing a bit, exclaimed:

'If it's to be pay-soup, maties, at the rate of this smell, then I'll tell yer a story it reminds me of. Micky M'Carthy was able seaman on board a brigantine. She foundered in mid-ocean. They'd just time to chuck something to eat and drink into her, and there they was, afloat under a broiling sun. By-'n-by, wan of thim, feeling thirsty, goes for a drink, and what d'ye think they found they had shipped for water, which was all the drink, by gob, they had? Casther-oil, bullies! It was Micky's doing. He had mustook breakers of oil for breakers of water, and then, all hands feeling thirsty, they nearly kilt him.'

'Lads,' said a man named Dabb, 'now there's no fresh beef left, I'm a-going to feel hungry.'

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'That's nater,' exclaimed Toole; 'knock, and there ain't no room. It's always t'other ways about in this world. What couldn't I sit down and ate? Everything, bedad, but the stuff they're going to give me.'

'The capt'n looks plump,' said Dabb darkly, looking aft at Captain Glew, who stood with a sextant upon the quarter. 'He's fed so well that I'm gorged if he's left any room for a smile in his face.'

'I knew a skipper,' said the cook, lounging half out of the galley-door, and plunging into the conversation a little irrelevantly, 'who used to talk to his ship and his masts as if they was alive. He'd look up at his maintaws'l, and say: "D'ye think you could stand it if I shook a single reef out of yer? Why, then, all right"; and then he'd bawl out the order to the men. Next he'd step back right aft, paying no heed to the fellow at the wheel, and looking aloft, would say to his mizzen taws'l, "I think a reef can come out of you, too. Does the mast feel equal to the strain, d'ye think? Why, then, my lads, jump aloft, and shake a reef out of the mizzen taws'l." He was a queer dawg,' continued the cook—'fat as a slug, and as long in seeing a thing as a balloon's in falling.'

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Seeing the captain looking, he slunk back to his coppers.

Presently the pea-soup and pork were ready, the kids were filled, and the hands went to dinner. They sat on sea-chests, the kids were upon the deck, and the sailors plunged their sheath-knives into the pale, fat lumps of meat, and took what they wanted, a few using tin dishes, and some ship's biscuit, as trenchers.

'Blast me!' after a grim silence, presently exclaims James Jones, who had shipped as boatswain and carpenter, 'if I don't think the Dutchman has sneaked us aboard on the cheap. This here's no food for a man.'

He held aloft a morsel of pork, and squinted up at it.

'Yer taste'll grow,' said a sailor, with a sullen laugh. 'The flavour of roast beef ain't out of your mouth yet, Jim.'

'He'll be a mean cuss,' said the boatswain, continuing to squint dangerously at the piece of pork, 'if it's to be no better than this.' [Pg 78]

'Here's the yarn of the meanest thing that ever was read of in books,' said a seaman named Mike Scott. 'A man once said to me: "When I was a boy, I stood at my father's gate, with a kitten on my shoulder. A man on horseback stops and says: 'I likes to see little boys kind to animals. Here's a farden for ye, sonny.'" And with that he gives him a button, and then rides off. Who was it, d'ye think? Why, the Dook o' Vellington.'

'Not a vord agin the Dook. He's my godfather,' said a man.

'I'm a-going to complain of this meat,' said the boatswain, starting up.

Retaining the piece on the end of his knife, he stepped out of the house, and walked aft.

Captain Glew saw him coming, yet did not look towards him. On the contrary, he began to take sights. Yet, as though he carried a slip of looking-glass in the side of his nose, he saw the man approaching, and he did not want to see that the boatswain held, on a level with his face, a piece of meat at the end of his knife, to guess that his errand was thunder-charged with the old-fashioned fore-castle growl. The captain's face was incapable of any play of expression. It was hard beyond the holding of any further meaning the man's spirit or heart could put into it. But his eyes could look all the abominations of a tyrannical soul; and when he perceived the boatswain approaching, his right eye gazed with a devilish malice at the sun through the little telescope attached to his sextant. [Pg 79]

Many minutes passed before he heeded the man, who had drawn close and stood waiting to be noticed. A huddle of heads, all looking in one direction, with but one leg exposed, as though the crew had been changed into one of those many-headed giants you read of in fairy tales, embellished the deck-house door. The red-faced mate stood near the helm. Presently, the captain, with his eye still gummed to his sextant, seemed to see the man.

'What d'yer want, Jones?'

'I'd like yer to taste this piece of meat, sir. It isn't fit food for men.'

Captain Glew slowly let his sextant sink from his eye, and exclaimed: [Pg 80]

'Jones, I shipped you for a respectable, quiet sailor. This is a gentleman's yacht. Don't disturb our quiet by anything in the South Spainer or Cape Horn way.'

'Yacht or no yacht, cap'n, this is strong meat, killed diseased; the sorter stuff, if consumed, to lay the whole ship's company low with the sickness the beast died of. Smell of it.'

He offered the knife, with the pork on it, to the captain.

'The fault is in the cooking,' said the captain; 'it always is; it always will be. Go and growl to Allan.'

'Is the rest of the pork to be like this?' said Jones, taking the dollop off the point of his knife, and seeming to weigh it in the palm of his gigantic, tar-stained hand.

'Go forward and finish your dinner, Jones, and leave me to get an observation,' said Captain Glew, with a very forbidding glance.

He applied his sextant once more to his eye, walking a little way aft.

The boatswain stood looking from him to the piece of pork, and from the piece of pork to him; then saying, 'There goes my dinner,' he jerked the pale, rather bluish lump over the side, and rolled forward. [Pg 81]

CHAPTER IV. CAPTAIN MARY LIND.

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Next day they broached a cask of beef for the fore-castle. The meat proved fairly sweet, and that and a kidful of currant-dumplings kept the men quiet. But on the following day the bad pork was served out again. Captain Glew refused to hear the boatswain on the subject, and those of the men who could not swallow the meat made shift for a meal with pea-soup and ship's biscuit.

Not a word of this trouble, which Captain Glew must have known was charged with one of the deadliest of all ocean menaces, reached Mr. Vanderholt.

'I'll not have him worried,' said Glew to the mate. 'If you sent them a Mansion House tuck-out, the fiends would growl, tell you it wasn't Galapagos turtle, and that they'd hooked better salmon out of cans. I'm responsible for the stores. I knew what I was about when I ordered them. Surely you know Humph Lyons, the ships' chandler in Dock Street, Limehouse? He's shipped for me before, and he's likewise shipped for my owners, and I've never heard a murmur against him.'

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'Was that the Lyons an action was brought against for selling condemned Admiralty stores as good food for merchant sailors?' said Mr. Tweed, with a grin.

'It was his brother,' said Captain Glew. 'A man can't be responsible for his relations.'

'As to relations,' said Mr. Tweed, 'a man may try his darned hardest to be all that's right, and in conformity with the law and piety, and still find himself adrift at the end. I remember a skipper saying to me: "It's all very well to say, 'Honour thy father and thy mother,' but I knew a man who all his life did his fired best to honour his father, and when his mother lay dying she told him, with the tears running over her cheeks, that the man he'd been a-honouring all his life had never been his father at all!'"

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Here the groggy little man set up so loud a laugh that Captain Glew walked away, and the conversation came to an end.

The days passed. The *Mowbray* broke the seas of the Bay clothed to her royal yard. Blue sky was over her, and sunshine bright as that of the English June lighted up the rolling ocean. By this time Mr. Vanderholt was perfectly recovered, and had ceased to apologize to Captain Glew for being sea-sick. He smoked his long pipe. He stalked the deck arm-in-arm with his daughter. He repeatedly asked her and Captain Glew how they thought he was looking; and Captain Glew swore that in all his life he had never seen any gentleman pick up so surprisingly fast.

'I'm quite sure,' the captain said, 'Miss Vanderholt will agree with me, sir, when I say that you're looking ten years younger this same day than at the hour of your starting.'

Miss Violet smiled, and Vanderholt stroked his beard, and grinned till his eyes faded into little wrinkles.

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One fine hot morning, when the *Mowbray* was far to the southward of the Madeira parallels, Mr. Vanderholt and his daughter came on deck from the breakfast-table, and seated themselves under the shelter of a short awning. The young lady held a novel. Mr. Vanderholt smoked his immense and richly-coloured pipe. Captain Glew passed them in short to-and-fro look-out excursions; and forward the little ship carried a busy face, with seamen at work on the hundred jobs which, fair or foul, a vessel exacts from her crew at sea. A soft wind blew. The sky was capacious with the clarity of the horizon, and wondrous lofty with light cloud, resembling froth that dries in curls upon a beach.

A ship was in sight on the starboard quarter, going away north-west, under square yards. Her spires trembled in the moist, rich distance, as though they were rays of starlight, twisting, burning, dying. She had been too far off to signal, nor did Mr. Vanderholt seem particularly anxious that the safety and whereabouts of his little ship should be reported at home.

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'Who is troubling his head about us, do you think?' he had said to his daughter on one occasion when this question of reporting had arisen between him and Glew. 'I am not insured. No man in the city is concerned for me. And of our friends, how many are thinking of us?'

And he held up two fingers with a satirical smile, as though he should say, 'D'ye think two are thinking of us?'

'If George returns before we do,' Miss Vi had said in reply, 'I should like him to know that all was well with us down to the date on which we were last heard of.'

'We'll signal steam,' had been old Vanderholt's answer. 'Anything blown along by canvas will not arrive at home very much earlier than we shall.'

Now, on this morning—this fine hot morning—they sat together in very comfortable deck-chairs, one trying to read a novel, the other finding his tobacco delicious in the open air. Presently, directing her eyes at some men who sat at work stitching upon a sail near the galley, Miss Vanderholt said:

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'How could any man be a sailor! How could you have survived such a horrible life! See how hard those men are kept at work all day; and at night they have to watch, wet or dry, for four hours at a time.'

'Ay; and the colder it is, and the damper it is, and the more abominable in a general way the whole precious weather is, the harder they have to watch,' answered Vanderholt.

'Have sailors no amusements?' inquired his daughter.

'How do sailors amuse themselves, Glew?' called Mr. Vanderholt.

And the man, arresting his look-out walk, stood up before father and daughter.

'By growling, sir,' answered Glew.

Miss Vanderholt did not like the expression that entered Captain Glew's eyes when he made that

answer.

'A happy, well-disciplined crew are the jolliest company of men in the world,' said Mr. Vanderholt. 'They have plenty to eat, no rent to pay, dollars for the girls at the end of the voyage, and they behold the wonders of the world at the cost of the ship-owner—poor fellow! For diversions, think—they dance in the dog-watch, they sing songs and tell stories, they play at cards, they fight——'

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'A little, sir,' said Captain Glew.

'We made a sport of fighting in our time,' said Vanderholt. 'We'd take two men, and nail them face to face on a sea-chest, with long spikes driven through the stern of their trousers. It was good sport.'

He opened his mouth to let out a cloud, smiling at some fore-castle recollections, which perhaps caused him to regret that his daughter was present, for he found Glew a good listener.

'Sailors take some pleasure in cards,' said Captain Glew. 'I remember, when I was second-mate of a ship, having occasion to go forward. It was night, a dead calm; a frightful thunderstorm was about us; the lightning was hissing like snakes all over everything that was metal aloft, and every crash of thunder was like the splitting of the heavens by God's own hand in wrath. I took a peep down the fore-castle, and in the midst of this tremendous commotion, which was fit to subdue the heart of the stoutest, sat four sailors at a chest, playing at cards, a lighted candle in a bottle in the midst of them, all so intent on the game that they heard and saw nothing.'

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'Sail-ho!' at this moment sang out a fellow aloft, on the little top-gallant yard.

'Where away?' shouted Glew, with the sharp of his hand to his mouth.

'Right ahead, sir!' cried down the seaman, in a sort of chant.

'If she's going to England you shall make our number, Glew—for George's sake,' said Mr. Vanderholt, looking at his daughter.

Just then the boatswain hailed the sailor on the top-gallant yard, and gave him some directions.

'That Jones is a fine-looking man,' said Mr. Vanderholt; 'such as he should never want a ship. What's his nation?'

'London, sir.'

'A mighty nation!' exclaimed Miss Violet.

'Which does not believe in a God,' said Vanderholt, 'though it worships a Madonna called Our Lady of Threadneedle Street.'

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'There's many a pilgrim always bound to that shrine,' said Captain Glew, trying to smile.

'I am of Dutch extraction,' continued Mr. Vanderholt; 'but never dropped the letter H, nor found the V's and W's difficult. I have out-generated that trouble of the foreigner. But why is it that the Cockney should drop his H? You speak of London. Think of the number of H's which are dropped in it every day!'

'George once made a pun,' exclaimed Miss Vanderholt. 'We were talking of a certain young lady, and I said: "Do you observe that she drops her H's?" "Her sister does worse," he answered. "Address her and she drops her eyes."'

Captain Glew again tried to smile. Mr. Vanderholt, expelling a great cloud of smoke, burst in:

'Yes; and I'll tell you what those girls' father once said to me at an evening party. He took me aside, and said: "Did you ever 'ear of that fine riddle in rhyme supposed to have been written by Lord Byron, though it's attributed to a lady? I'll tell it you," and my friend, with a grave face, began:

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""'Twas whispered in 'eaven; 'twas muttered in 'ell"—

and so he went on to the end. "Well," says he, "what is it?" "I give it up," says I. "The letter H," says he.'

'Did you ever see a funeral at sea, father?' inquired Miss Vanderholt, watching the ship ahead, that was growing larger and whiter.

'Scores, my blessing; much too many. We shipped a heavy cargo at Bombay, and amongst it was cholera. I can still hear, in that dead calm of twelve days, the recurrent, sullen plunge of the shotted corpse.'

'The worst of being buried is, that you don't know what they're saying about you,' said Captain Glew. 'That's true, whether ashore or whether at sea. As the corpse goes along in the car, it might like to know what sort of a following it had, how the people who'd been thought friends had turned out. Yet, I dare say,' he went on, 'that if a man could get up and listen a bit, and take a look round, he'd be glad to sneak back.'

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'Yes; if he had to hear his will read in a room full of relations,' said Miss Violet.

'I have often thought this,' said Mr. Vanderholt: 'that a man who is a genius and famous should provide by his will for a quiet funeral; for, by doing so, he guards against the risk of neglect.'

This was a touch above Glew. Mr. Vanderholt rose, and went to the rail to knock out the ashes of his pipe into the sea. Miss Violet began to read, and the captain fell to walking the deck.

The ship ahead grew rapidly. It was first like the half of the crescent moon leaning and shining, then it swelled into cotton-white canvas and a green hull. But the sun ate up the wind at noon. The vessels were then two miles apart, and it was not until about three in the afternoon that they were wafted by cat's-paws within speaking distance. She was a little barque, dingy with long travel. Her copper was green. Her figure-head was a romantic imagination. It represented a nymph, with her black hair fairly concealing her shape, extending her arms in a posture of ecstasy at a large gilt star that was fixed within a foot or two of her hands. Her canvas shone like satin, and at her mizzen-peak end languidly swung the Stripes and Stars, a very large flag, looking brand-new. A number of men, some of them coloured, lay over the fore-castle-rail, indolently watching the *Mowbray*. The barque had a little poop, and upon it, with one foot resting on a hen-coop and one hand grasping a backstay, stood the most extraordinary figure Mr. Vanderholt had ever beheld.

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It resembled a man dressed in what, in former ages, were known as petticoat-breeches. Their plenty made them look like a frock. Inspecting this figure through a binocular glass, Mr. Vanderholt perceived that the rest of its garb consisted of a white shirt, a silk handkerchief, tied in a sailor's knot under a wide turned-down collar, a braided jacket, blue, and a cap with a naval peak, much after the pattern that is worn by yachting men.

A short, square man stood at the wheel, that blazed in a brass circle to the sun, and beside him stood another man, remarkable for nothing but a long goatlike beard, and a blue cap, tasselled, pointed, and overhanging, such as mutinous smacksmen wear in Italian opera.

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'A queer ship's company!' exclaimed Mr. Vanderholt to Glew. 'In all your going a-fishing did you ever see the like of such a sailor-man as that chap yonder in the trousers?'

Captain Glew's reply was arrested by a hail from the little barque.

'Ho!' shrilled the strange figure in breeches. 'The schooner ahoy! What schooner are you?'

'The *Mowbray*, of London, on a cruise. What ship are you?'

'The *Wife's Hope*, from Calcutta to New York! Eighty days out! Jute and linseed! We're short of sugar: can you loan me some?'

All this was delivered in the voice of a bantam-cock, delirious with continuous triumphant clarioning.

'The *Wife's Hope*,' said Mr. Vanderholt, turning to his daughter. 'Here's some Yankee notion.'

'If that figure's not a woman,' answered Violet, 'it does not speak with the voice of a man.'

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After a brief consultation with Mr. Vanderholt, Captain Glew shouted:

'I think we can let you have some sugar—a cask of moist, and some lump, to help you along to the next ship. We'll carry it aboard for you.'

The figure in breeches flourished its hand in a gesture of delight, and then began to walk the short poop with superior stately strides, constantly directing glances at the yacht. The *Mowbray* carried three good boats, and the boat amidships was the long-boat; this was promptly got over the side. They broke out a cask of moist sugar and a case of lump; and a crew having entered her, Mr. and Miss Vanderholt were steered by Mr. Tweed to the *Wife's Hope* over the glazed heave of the deep-blue afternoon swell.

Very hot it was. The sunshine tingled in the water, and the trembling fire rose roasting to the face.

'Do you think we shall be welcome, father?' said Miss Vanderholt, a little nervously.

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'We are here to see the wonders of the deep,' answered Mr. Vanderholt, 'whether they welcome us or not; and yonder figure seems to me to be one of the greatest wonders in the world.'

'It is a woman, sir,' said Mr. Tweed.

'A female ship-master,' exclaimed Mr. Vanderholt. 'The *Wife's Hope*! It should be the *Husband's Despair*.'

Miss Violet was gazing at the receding shape of the *Mowbray*. The schooner lightly leaned with the swell, darting glances of flame as she swayed. Tender, blue fingers of shadow, like an outstretched hand in front of the sun, overran her sails, and the swing of her canvas was a miracle of milk-white light and violet shade against the hot liquid blue of the afternoon sky.

'A vessel like that is like a horse,' said Violet: 'you want to pat her side, to whisper encouraging words to her, to thank her for the noble, sweeping pace she has carried you at. How little she looks, and how lonely!'

They were fast approaching the barque. The petticoat-trousered figure, seeing that company was coming, had ordered a ladder to be thrown over the side, and she—for a woman it was—stood in the open gangway to receive the visitors.

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'Have you brought what we asked you for?' she cried, the strain in her voice lifting it to a shriek.

Tweed answered with one of those tumbling gesticulations—a peculiar drunken, rounding fall of the arm and dropping of the head—which with sailors stand for 'yes.'

'Jump aloft, a hand,' screamed the lady skipper, 'and make fast a whip to the yard-arm! I'll want that sugar carefully hoisted!'

The boat drove alongside, and Mr. and Miss Vanderholt ascended the short ladder. Now that they stood close, they found that by no possibility could her garb make a man of the captain, with her large fine eyes and delicate features, though sunburnt to deformity. She was a tall woman, with a lofty, commanding air, which was not to be neutralized by anything diverting in the suggestions of her apparel. She looked hard at Miss Violet, and ran her eyes over her dress; her sex spoke in that, spite of her cropped head and abundant breeks.

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'I have brought a cask of moist sugar, and a case of broken lump,' said Mr. Vanderholt, lifting his hat; 'and, madam, if you are in command of this vessel, it gives me a very singular satisfaction to make your acquaintance.'

'Don't call me "madam," I beg, sir!' exclaimed the other, showing a white set of teeth in a cordial smile, full of spirit. 'I am Captain Lind.'

'Captain Lind, then,' said Mr. Vanderholt, again lifting his hat, whilst his eyes disappeared in a grin full of wrinkles.

'You are the owner of that yacht, I reckon?' said Captain Lind; and Miss Vanderholt noticed the American accent in the skipper's speech.

'Ay, captain, that's my yacht, and this is my daughter,' answered Vanderholt, continuing to grin with all his might, whilst he looked first at Captain Lind, and then aloft, and then along the decks.

'What do I owe you for that sugar?' said Captain Lind.

'Our visit fully discharges your obligations, captain. There is enough, maybe, to keep you sweet till you get more.'

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'Well, I thank you,' said the lady skipper; 'and when I have seen that cask safely inboards, we'll go into the cabin and drink a cup of tea.'

Mr. Vanderholt pulled out his watch, then, hailing Glew, said that he and Miss Vanderholt would remain another half-hour on board the barque.

'Don't let the vessels slide far apart, Glew!' he roared. 'Tweed, whilst we're below keep a bright look-out on the weather.'

The mate of the *Mowbray* touched his cap.

Miss Vanderholt stared with amazement at Captain Lind. A woman in charge of a ship! A woman qualified to handle the complicated machinery of the gear and sails of a barque of no mean tonnage, as tonnage then went! Did the men obey her? Wasn't she afraid of her sailors? And Miss Violet turned to inspect the seamen who were getting the sugar aboard in the gangway, whilst others lay on the rail lazily staring at the *Mowbray* from the fore-castle-head. A rough lot they looked—rougher even than the *Mowbray's* crew, by virtue, no doubt, of their apparel, which was showing very much like the end of a long voyage. They carried sheath-knives on their hips, straw hats or Scotch caps on their heads; their naked breasts disclosed the wool upon them through rents in the flying wide dungaree shirt. And a woman had command of these fellows, had held them obedient, and brought them and the ship in safety to that part of the ocean in which the *Mowbray* had encountered them! Who had ever heard of such a thing? It was a fact worth going to sea to realize. 'How George will laugh and doubt when I tell him!' Miss Vanderholt thought, as she looked with wonder, deepening ever, at the amazing figure built up of petticoat-trousers and blue jacket, very plentifully braided.

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When the sugar was on board, Captain Lind, calling to the man in the opera-cap, said:

'See that cask safely stowed. This is a chance that mightn't happen again 'twixt here and New York; and I tell you, mister,' said she, turning to Mr. Vanderholt, 'that I have missed the sugar in my cup of tea. I have a sweet tooth. Who is that gent?' she continued, looking at Mr. Tweed.

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'He is the mate of my schooner,' answered Mr. Vanderholt.

'Then, see here, Mr. Prunes,' she cried, with a womanly yell that broadened Tweed's mouth from ear to ear; 'whilst we're at tea below, you'll see that this gentleman has some refreshment. He can ask for what he likes, and if we've got it, he can have it. Send the boy aft, Mr. Prunes.'

All this was addressed to the tasselled seaman who was apparently the mate of the ship.

Captain Lind then conducted Mr. Vanderholt and his daughter below into the cabin—a little interior, rude in comparison with the *Mowbray's* cabin, yet comfortable and breezy with the panting of the heel of a windsail, as the swing of the barque swelled the mouth of the tube aloft.

There were two little cabins aft, and two little cabins forward, and a little square table amidships. A small black boy arrived. [Pg 102]

'Bring tea and biscuit, and tell Mr. Prunes to give you some lump sugar. Don't eat none. Now spring! Hurrah!'

The lad, with a grin, leapt up the ladder, and the soles of his naked feet glimmered like bars of yellow soap as he disappeared.

'I never heard before of a lady taking command of a ship,' said Mr. Vanderholt.

Captain Lind pulled her cap off, and disclosed a head of rich brown hair, cut short, and divided in the middle.

'Well,' she answered, stretching forth her hand as an invitation to Miss Violet to seat herself, 'I'm not what is called in your country a lady. I'm just a plain Amurrican woman. Of course you've never heard of such a thing as a woman in charge of a ship. Are you an Englishman, sir?'

'Why, yes. My name is foreign—Vanderholt; but I am an Englishman.'

'Names don't signify now in the nationalities of folks,' exclaimed Captain Lind, smiling at Miss Violet. 'Look at Amurrica. They're coming fast, and when they settle they call themselves Amurricans. I can tell you, sir, there are very few Amurricans in Amurrica. Who's the Amurrican of to-day? Is he Mr. O'Brien, or is he Herr Von Dunks?' [Pg 103]

'You asked me if I was an Englishman,' said Mr. Vanderholt, who was greatly entertained by the singular figure this strange, fine, original woman presented, as she sat at table, talking, and waiting for a cup of tea.

'Yes; because if you're an Englishman you'll be a century astern of us in Amurrica. We had to show you the road in nearly everything of consequence. We gave you steam,' said the lady, coolly making way for the negro boy, who just then arrived with tea—a japanned tray with an old silver teapot upon it and a bowl of broken lump sugar.

The captain instantly put one of these lumps into her mouth, and continued to talk and suck while she poured out the milkless tea, and shoved a plate of white biscuit towards Miss Vanderholt.

'We gave you steam, sir, and electricity. We taught you ship-building; for, until the Amurricans began to build, shapeliness and speed weren't known to the world. We offer you the double topsail. You'll take twenty years to consider it,' she said, leaning back in her chair with a sneer, while she lifted her saucer and teacup and began to sip in a ladylike way. [Pg 104]

'I had no idea that we were so much in your debt,' said Mr. Vanderholt. 'But I tell you what: if you can induce the ladies of Great Britain to study navigation, and take charge of ships, after the example you are setting, there are a great many husbands who will be everlastingly obliged to you for indicating a new source of income for the family, and a sure chance for peace at home.'

'You don't reckon, p'r'aps, that we Amurricans gave you electricity?' said the lady skipper, who seemed to find something suspicious in Mr. Vanderholt's answer. 'Who flew the kite? Who brought fire from the skies so that a man might know what to do with it?'

Vanderholt, holding his countenance behind his beard, respectfully bowed and sipped at his cup. [Pg 105]

'Are there other female captains like yourself in your country?' asked Miss Vanderholt.

'Two,' she answered; 'there may be more. I'm a third, certainly. Stop till I spin the yarn. My father was a sea-captain, and when I was a girl carried me with him on several voyages. My husband was the master of a ship, and I always went to sea with him, and could discharge his duties as well as he, and sometimes better. He died, and left me a childless widow. But I was not poor. What with my father, and my husband, and here and there a legacy, I had got to own a few thousand dollars, which I didn't quite know what to do with, for I couldn't get value enough out of the money to live upon.'

Mr. Vanderholt pricked up his ears. Any reference to dollars and interest engaged him. He listened, and forgot he was at sea.

'Till one day,' continued Captain Lind, 'being at New York—I wasn't then living in that city—I happened to pick up the *New York Hatchet*, and, after reading it a bit, came across this passage ___' [Pg 106]

She left the table and entered an after-berth. Mr. Vanderholt exchanged looks with his daughter. Captain Lind returned, holding an old newspaper. She seated herself, and, popping another lump of sugar into her mouth, sucked, with a grave face, whilst she opened the paper. Then, when the sugar was gone, she read aloud:

"Mrs. Sarah Davis, of New York, has just brilliantly passed her examination for a certificate as shipmaster and pilot, and, on receiving her certificate, will, it is announced, take the command of the yacht *Emerald*. This lady is, it is said, not the first of her sex who has been in command of a vessel. Mrs. Mary Miller, of New Orleans, obtained a master's certificate a few years ago, and is now captain of the full-rigged merchant-ship *Saline*."

'When I read this, an idea came into my head, and I wasn't long in making up my mind. There's

no obligation in my country to take out a master's certificate, any more than there is in yours; but I was determined to let 'em know I was fit to command a ship, and I presented myself, and received some handsome compliments on a quality of all-round knowledge sights in excess of what the average captain carries to the ocean with him. This is my third voyage in the *Wife's Hope*.' [Pg 107]

'Why the *Wife's Hope*?' exclaimed Mr. Vanderholt. 'You told me you were a widow.'

'I named her the *Wife's Hope*,' answered Captain Lind, 'that she might encourage married women cussed with drinking, loafing, idling, gambling, worthless husbands, to direct their attention to a noble pursuit which would carry them leagues clear of the troubles of home, put money in their pockets, enable them to see the world and life, and help them,' said she, putting another lump of sugar into her mouth, 'to acquire that spirit of independence without which woman must always be meaner than the plantation slave, and her case a gone sight more hopeless.'

This little speech was delivered with some dignity. Mr. Vanderholt was impressed, and ran his eyes over her figure, and looked at her face with a countenance of earnest respect. The sugar in her mouth did not impair the stateliness of her manner and utterance. [Pg 108]

'It would be more respectable and quiet than a divorce,' the captain went on. 'You'd find no bad husband going to sea with his wife. The cuss wouldn't have the liver for it.'

'The star of your figure-head,' said Miss Violet, 'I suppose, is the art of seamanship, and the figure stretching her hand towards it symbolizes woman rapturously greeting a new calling?'

'You've hit it down to the heels,' answered Captain Lind. 'It was my notion. Quite a pome, ain't it? Were you pleased with it as you came along?'

'We were delighted,' said Mr. Vanderholt. 'I said to my daughter, or, if I did not say it, it was in my mind to speak it, "There is in that barque a strong original genius." America should distinguish you, captain.'

The captain bowed and smiled, and pushed the sugar-bowl away, that she might not be tempted by its contents. [Pg 109]

'Aren't you afraid of your sailors?' asked Miss Vanderholt.

'Afraid!' echoed the captain, bridling. 'What is there in sailors to be afraid of? I have revolvers, and I know how to load and shoot, and I should no more hesitate to send a ball through a mutinous seaman's nut than put one of them lumps into my mouth. Don't you ever be afraid of any man, miss. Why man bosses woman's jest a question of muscle. My crew soon learnt the art of jumping to the music of my voice. I'm a little shrill—don't reckon that I sink my sex in these clothes—and it may be that sailors, being accustomed mainly to voices deep with drink and hollow with vice, run the more nimbly for being called to in their mother's tender notes. Will you have a cigar, sir?'

And, without awaiting Mr. Vanderholt's reply, she entered a cabin, and, after a short absence, returned with a box of cigars, a couple of loaded revolvers, and two long, dangerous knives.

'They need no better discipline whenever it comes to it,' said she, helping herself to another lump of sugar. 'Take a cigar, sir?' [Pg 110]

Meanwhile, on deck the mate of the *Mowbray* conversed with the mate of the *Wife's Hope*. Mr. Tweed had asked for no other refreshment than a glass of rum and cold water. He stood sucking a pipe in the gangway, ready for the appearance of Mr. Vanderholt and his daughter on deck, and beside him was Mr. Prunes. The first dog-watch had begun; it had seemed, however, to Mr. Tweed that it was all dog-watch with the crew of the *Wife's Hope*; they only appeared to lounge a little more now that one of them had struck eight times on the fore-castle bell. The sun was still high, but his splendour was deepening, and the lights which sparkled about the decks of the barque and in her sides were rich; she floated in the silence upon the dark-blue sea, with the whole lazy spirit of the hour in the sleepy droop of her canvas and the indolent roll of her hull.

'That's a fine schooner of yours,' said Mr. Prunes to Mr. Tweed. 'It's like having the Wight aboard to see her. Bound to the Equator, eh? And what are you going to load there?' [Pg 111]

He pulled his long goatee, with a laugh that struck a shudder through his cap.

'This seems a pretty comfortable old barkey,' said Tweed, slowly looking round him. 'Eighty days in finding your way here? Well, yer might have done worse,' he added, with a look aloft. 'Doomed if I could keep my face when I saw your skipper! It isn't that all that's becoming in a female don't unite in her; it's her sex that makes me laugh.'

'I shall be blamed glad when the voyage is ended,' said Prunes, pulling off his cap, and wiping his forehead with it; and now Mr. Tweed was not a little astonished to remark that this seaman wore his hair in a net. 'I signed more for a lark than for a berth. They told me that the *Wife's Hope* was in want of a chief mate. She was in Calcutta, and I hadn't been long out of 'orspital. I knew she was commanded by a woman, and reckoned upon being treated as captain, in fact, though *she* might call herself the old man. Never was a chap more mistaken. If she hasn't held her own as master of this vessel from the moment the pilot left us, I'll swallow that pipe.'

'D'ye tell me she understands all about the manœuvring of a ship?' said Tweed. [Pg 112]

'There's no man out of the Thames or Mersey who's got a trick above her, blow high, blow low, bet all you're a-going to take up!' exclaimed Prunes. 'See her put this craft about! It's yachting for nice discernment. I never knew any master keep his weather-eye lifting as this female do. She can smell what's coming along. She's reefed down when the sky's been blue as it is, all hands have been growling and laughing at her, and a quarter of an hour later the barque's been on her beam-ends, and the sea just one yell o' froth!'

'Doomed if it 'ud be a believable thing, if it couldn't be seen,' said Tweed. 'What made t'other mate leave the ship?'

'The same as'll make me glad to get to New York,' answered Mr. Prunes, putting on his cap, and caressing the tassel, whilst his eyes met in a squint of earnestness in the grog-flowered countenance of Mr. Tweed. He paused, and seemed to reflect. [Pg 113]

'What is it?' said Mr. Tweed.

Mr. Prunes began to nod at him, and then said in a low, confidential voice, and a glance aft at the companion-hatch:

'She's in want of that sort of mate which ashore they calls a husband.'

'Ha!' said Mr. Tweed; 'and it drove the other chap out of a good berth?'

'Well, there was a many quarrels, I believe, afore they got to Calcutta. Thinking that I might stand the better with her, seeing that I'm middling young, and that the sea hasn't robbed me of all that I owe to my mother, who was the handsomest woman in Shadwell, I kept dark about my 'ome, and to this bloomed hour she don't know that I've got a wife and three young uns awaiting my return in the little house I left 'em in at Stepney.'

'I'd up and tell her the truth, if I were you,' said Tweed.

A gleam of cunning twinkled in Mr. Prunes's eyes.

'I've been pretty comfortable for eighty days,' said he, 'under an error. There's no call now to correct it, seeing that the end of the voyage isn't fur off.' [Pg 114]

Whilst he spoke, Captain Lind and Mr. and Miss Vanderholt were coming on deck. The captain sang out in a shrill, bantam-like voice, that caused Prunes to glance somewhat sheepishly at Tweed:

'The lady and gentleman are going aboard their schooner! See their boat all ready!'

Then, springing on to the rail with wonderful activity, she hailed the *Mowbray*, and asked Captain Glew for his latitude and longitude. This she received, and entered upon a piece of paper with a face of triumph. Then, turning to Mr. Vanderholt, she exclaimed:

'See here, sir! A mile out, and the error may be his.'

'I am lost in admiration, I assure you,' said Vanderholt. 'I would rather have met this barque than the *Flying Dutchman*. It will be far more interesting to me to talk about than an apparition. It is really, captain, an extraordinary departure! I wish you prosperity, I am sure, ma'am.'

He bowed low. The captain of the *Wife's Hope* then shook hands cordially with Miss Vanderholt. Tweed got into the boat, and the party returned to the *Mowbray*. Just before sunset a breeze came right along the red, shortening shaft of glory, as though it blew out of the sun. Both vessels immediately trimmed for their respective courses, and in an hour's time the *Wife's Hope* had vanished in the starlit dusk of the evening. [Pg 115]

CHAPTER V. ON THE EVE.

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It was five days later, and in that time the *Mowbray* had drawn four hundred miles closer to the Equator, still leaving a wide expanse of water to be measured. The weather had been of a constant tropic beauty. The heave of the Atlantic swell had the wide and solemn indolence of the South Pacific fold.

Mr. Vanderholt's face was crimson with the sea. He certainly looked extremely well; so, too, did his daughter. The sun had caught her, spite of a diligent use of her parasol and swift flights from his scorching eye to the shelter of the awning. It had delicately spangled the fair flesh of her face with some golden freckles, which somehow gave an archness to her looks, and a whiter flash to her teeth, when the play of her lips exposed them. [Pg 117]

This fifth day following the meeting with the *Wife's Hope* had glowed through a cloudless splendour of sky into a glorious sunset, and a promise of cool heavens, full of rich stars, with the Southern Cross—

'Memorial revered by a thousand storms!—'

low down over the jib-boom end.

Mr. Vanderholt came on deck when the sun was gone, though all the west was swimming in the fast waning crimson. A number of stars sparkled in the east. Mr. Vanderholt looked at them with delight, for they reminded him of the twinkling of the sky in windy summer trees.

A pleasant air of wind was blowing. Now that the sun was gone, the breeze seemed to fan over the bulwark-rail with the fragrance of a land of flowers. It was a sweetness that made you think of the Arabian gale of the poet, but the African land was leagues and leagues distant, and that sweet breath, therefore, was old Ocean's own.

The schooner, with every stitch upon her, saving the foretopmast studding-sail, to the setting of which Mr. Vanderholt had an objection, glided through the gathering dusk to the music of broken waters. Miss Vanderholt sat in the cabin, under the lamp. She was reading, and appeared to be interested. Mr. Vanderholt filled his pipe from a pouch whose size corresponded with the bowl it was to feed, and whilst he did this he looked about him. [Pg 118]

Glew stood between him and the lingering scarlet, and his body, black as indigo, rose and fell. What was the matter? It seemed to Mr. Vanderholt that an unnatural stillness was in the little vessel. He still preserved the fore-castle faculties, and carried the eye, whilst he could bend the ear, of a sailor. Eight bells had been struck. The second dog-watch was therefore over. The watch below would, or would not, have gone to bed.

All this Mr. Vanderholt knew; but so bright, flushed, and sweet a night, after the roasting and blinding glories of the day, might well prove a temptation to the hands whose turn it was to take rest till midnight to linger to converse and suck out yet another pipe of tobacco. [Pg 119]

But the silence forward was so deep that Vanderholt, hearkening with his forefinger pressed upon his bowl of unlighted tobacco, thought it ominous. At intervals somebody away in the bows would speak. The voice was a growl, and it would be answered by a growl, and it seemed to the owner of the *Mowbray* that, whoever it might be that broke the silence in his little ship, made utterance with the throat of a sleeping mastiff.

Mr. Vanderholt lighted his pipe, seated himself, and called to Captain Glew, who immediately crossed the deck.

'The men seem very quiet, Glew.'

'And a good job too, sir. This is a yacht, and we've got a lady aboard.'

'Ay, ay, man, that's so. But, yacht or no yacht, lady or no lady, surely I'm the last man to be opposed to a little harmless dog-watch jollity whenever my sailors have a mind to it.'

The man at the helm was not far off, and Vanderholt spoke low.

'They're a crew that want keeping under,' said Captain Glew. 'They're not used to pleasure-sailing of this sort. I singled them out myself, and had good hopes of them, and there's no fault to be found with them as seamen. This light cruising job is fast spoiling them. They need the heavy work of a full-rigged ship.' [Pg 120]

'If they find the job an easy one, then I suppose they're satisfied?' said Mr. Vanderholt.

'I'm very much afraid that there's no kind treatment, and no easy job under the sun, that's going to satisfy an English sailor,' said Captain Glew.

'You're hard upon the calling, Glew. You're talking to a man who has had to work hard and fare hard.'

'Sir, if you'd been in command, you'd know that I speak the truth.'

'Aren't you rather a taut hand, Glew? Not that I object to a strict discipline on board ship; but there is a manner of talking to sailors.... I've heard of a captain who never would address a sailor if he could help it, but if he had anything to give him he'd put it down upon the deck and kick it at him.' [Pg 121]

'And I've heard of sailors, sir, who've scuttled their ship, broken the captain's heart by ruining the voyage, and made a widow of his wife by sending him adrift in an open boat. I've had charge of seamen, and I know their natures, and I'm sorry that you should think I'm a taut hand, sir.'

'Understand me,' said Vanderholt soothingly: 'you are, perhaps, a taut hand, but I do not say unnecessarily taut. Frankly, I do not think the men love you.'

'What's a sailor's love like?' said Captain Glew.

Here Miss Vanderholt came on deck. Captain Glew placed a chair for her beside her father.

'What a heavenly sweet and silent night!' exclaimed the young lady. 'Is that a ship on fire down there?'

'It's the moon rising, miss,' exclaimed Captain Glew.

Her upper limb floated blood-red on the sea-line like a glowing ember. She sailed up, large, swollen, stately, the face rusty, as though the luminary had been a mighty casting in the African [Pg 122]

sands, and was now sent aloft red-hot by some thrust of giant shoulders. At her coming the wind freshened in a damp gust, the schooner strained, and the sound arose of water broken quickly into froth.

'Glew and I have been talking about the men, Vi,' said Mr. Vanderholt, after contemplating for a few minutes the hot lunar dawn.

'They don't look a very happy crew,' answered Miss Vanderholt; 'but heat will make people sullen. The sailors have to work in the sun, and, after all, there is very little money for them to receive apiece when they reach home.'

Vanderholt laughed, and said:

'Quite as much as they shall get out of my pocket. Four pounds and five pounds a month, Vi. Why, I've been signing on, when a fine young man, for two pounds five, and glad to get it.'

'Are the crew dissatisfied?' inquired Miss Violet.

'Well, I don't mind owing to you, Mr. Vanderholt,' said the captain, 'that they've been trying to make a trouble about the stores. But I wouldn't allow it.' [Pg 123]

He stopped short, with a vibratory note in his voice, as though a piece of catgut had been twanged.

'The stores ought to be good,' said Mr. Vanderholt. 'The cheque that was made payable to Mr. Lyons was a liberal one.'

'Do they grumble at one thing more than another?' said Miss Vanderholt.

'Oh, first it's the pork, then it's the beef; they'll work their way right through till they come to the pickles,' said Glew, with a short, nervous laugh.

'This is the first time I've heard that the men are dissatisfied,' exclaimed Mr. Vanderholt.

'What is the good of worrying you with fo'c's'le troubles, sir? You're on a cruise for your health, and the worries of the ship should be mine, not yours.'

'It is well meant, Glew,' said Vanderholt, a little uneasily. 'They are a rough body of men, mind. I was long fed on pork and beef, and my palate has memory enough to distinguish, I think. Tell Allan to-morrow to cook samples of both kinds, and I will lunch off them.' [Pg 124]

This being said, Mr. Vanderholt smoked for awhile in silence. The question of pork and beef and sailors' grievances is uninteresting at all times, and peculiarly uninviting on a fine moonlight night. The subject was dropped. Captain Glew moved off, and father and daughter sat alone in the moonlight.

The atmosphere was now misty with the silver of the satellite; she was nearly a full moon, and rained her glory most abundantly. She made a fairy vision of the *Mowbray*, etherealizing her into a fabric of white vapour and fountain-like lines as she leaned, purring at her cutwater, from the delicate wind.

'I don't think Glew treats the men well,' said Miss Vanderholt, turning her knuckles to the moon to see the diamonds in her rings sparkle. 'He is restrained when I'm on deck; I judge him by the demeanour of the crew.'

'They are not yachtmen; they are not fresh-watermen. I, too, have eyes in my head, and I'll not condemn Glew off-hand for being what the Americans call a "hard case,"' answered Mr. Vanderholt. 'They are rough fellows, got out of low sailors' boarding-houses. I know the breed—the right sort of men for a jaunt of this kind—and I'm very well satisfied with them. But they have the look of growlers, and the man Jones, who should be the most trustworthy of the lot, has the very best genius for putting on a surly, dangerous face, and posturing in the mutineer style when hotly called to of any sea-dog that I can recall. So, Vi, I'm not for interfering with the duties of the captain.' [Pg 125]

He smoked, and his little eyes dwelt upon the face of the beautiful moon.

'If the sea,' said he musingly, 'were a silver shield it could not flash more brightly. How mysterious does the moon make the world of waters! They speak of the awe bred of darkness—the awe, the uncertainty—yes, I have known it; but how much more must this lighted ocean stir one's spiritual pulses than if it were a bed of darkness!'

'You are certainly better,' said Miss Violet; 'you are seldom poetical at home.' [Pg 126]

'No man who has been to sea can help being a poet,' said the old gentleman complacently, smoothing his beard. 'He beholds many strange appearances; he dreams strangely. Mysterious fancies thicken upon the drowsy vision of his lonely midnight look-out, and with him *then* it is as the great poet sublimely sings:

"But shapes that come not at an earthly call,
Will not depart when mortal voices bid;
Lords of the visionary eye, whose lid,
Once raised, remains aghast, and will not fall."

He relighted his pipe, and smiled at the moon, and seemed very well pleased with the acuteness of his memory.

'Those are noble lines,' said the girl.

'They are Wordsworth's. Ach! What delight that man has given me.'

'How much pleasanter it is,' said Miss Violet, 'on a glorious night like this to talk of poetry, and the visionary shapes of the sea, than of sailors' beef and pork!'

'You would not think so if you had been stuck here for ten days on a raft.'

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'Well,' exclaimed the girl, heaving a sigh, 'the Equator is not very far off now, and then we shall turn and go home.'

'I hope that our forefoot will cut the Line by the 25th,' answered Mr. Vanderholt. 'We shall be home in February, brown, and in the best of spirits.'

'And George will have started—will be coming.'

They talked for a little while about this gentleman. It was ten o'clock before they quitted the deck. A man struck four bells on the fore-castle. Immediately a figure arose from the deep shadow cast by the deck-house on the planks, and went aft to relieve the helm. Captain Glew stood on the yacht's quarter, and was as visible in the moonshine as though the bright dawn had broken. There was a muttering about the course at the helm, and then the man who had been relieved took a step or two forward, looking at the captain.

'What are you staring at?' said Glew.

The man, continuing to walk but slowly, persisted in staring, so that his head revolved.

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'What are you staring at?' repeated Glew, in a soft but threatening voice.

The skylight and companion-way were wide open; he had no wish that his note of temper should penetrate.

'Mayn't a man use his eyesight aboard this bloody ship?' said the seaman, coming to a halt.

'Go forward!' exclaimed the captain, stiffening himself at the rail.

The man seemed to hesitate, then went slowly towards the fore-castle, audibly muttering. This man's name was Joseph Dabb.

When he was close to the deck-house, a sailor, who was squatting in the shadow of it, exclaimed gruffly:

'What was he a-saying of?'

'Asked me what I was a-staring at because I was looking at him.'

'S'elp me, all angels!' exclaimed the squatting figure, after spitting right across the deck, 'if I don't feel sometimes like cutting the scab's heart out of him! We're not men in *his* sight. We're muck. He thinks of us as muck, and he talks of us as muck. He speaks to us as if we was muck, and it's muck he's shipped aboard this vessel for us muck to eat.'

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He stood up, and the whites of his eyes glistened in the reflected moonlight that whitened off the edges of the stay-foresail, as he turned his gaze aft, where the figure of the captain walked. A man came out of the deck-house and joined the company. Immediately after, a fourth man approached from the fore-castle, and stood listening.

'They've been a-yarning about us half my trick,' said Dabb. 'The captain said this pleasuring was a-spoiling of us.'

All four united in a low, dismal laugh, which would have been a loud, defiant, mirthless roar but for the sleepers in the deck-house, hard by which they were talking. Sleep is counted a sacred thing at sea.

'Ay,' exclaimed one of the men, who proved to be Mike Scott, 'you lay a man's going to be spoilt by the pleasuring that's to be done under *him*. What was said, Joe?'

'That blarsted Dutchman talks in his beard. That and his pipe smothered up his voice. I couldn't hear him. T'other was more clear. He spoke of sailors as had scuttled their ships, as had broke the cap'n's heart by ruinating his voyage, and made a widder of his wife by sending him adrift. T'other speaks, and then the cap'n says, "What's a sailor's love like?"'

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Silence followed.

'What do he mean by "a sailor's love"?' exclaimed the third man, Maul. 'Is it a belaying-pin or a

handspike? You'll find he's a-trying to excite a disgust against us sailors in the mind of that old Dutchman, so that he may make a difficulty about paying us at the end of the voyage.'

'Ow d'ye know,' said Dabb, 'that it ain't the Dutchman who's put the skipper up to ill-treating of us, reckoning upon sailing into the Thames with some of us in irons? D'ye mean to say——'

'Whisper, you crow!'

'D'ye mean to say,' continued the man, lowering his voice, 'that the stores were shipped without the Dutchman knowing of their character? I'm a-beginning to smell blue hell in this business.'

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All this while the moon shone sweetly and piercingly. A divine peace was upon the sea, and the light noises of the wind were as fresh as dew on grass, with the sound as of the plashing of many fountains. In the cabin they talked of poetry—and one of the sailors forward was for cutting the captain's heart out!

The little royal and top-gallant sail were half aback; the luffs of the jibs were trembling.

'Trim sail!' shouted Captain Glew; and he continued to bawl as he walked slowly forwards: 'Brace forward the topsail-yard! Ease away the weather braces! Get a drag on your jib-sheets!' And it was clear, by the manner in which he delivered these orders to the men, that he had been watching and thinking of them all the time they had been talking about him.

All was quiet after this. The moon rolled down into the sea, the shadow of the earth slipped off the eastern horizon, and the schooner floated into another tropical morning, wide and high with cloudless splendour. Nothing was in sight.

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The date was December 15, 1837.

At half-past eleven, the steward, a man named Gordon, who had been shipped for cabin duty, but who had sailed on many occasions as an able seaman, so that his sympathies were wholly with the fore-castle, went to the harness-cask, and, unlocking it, picked over some pieces of meat, brine-whitened, and carried two cubes of the flesh forward to the cook.

'What's this for?' says Allan. 'Here's stink enough. The pork's measly bad to-day!'

'Samples for the cabin table,' said the steward, Gordon, dabbing the flabby offal down on the dresser.

'Ho!' says the cook. 'They'd best be cooked separate, I suppose. The stench'll break the young lady's heart if they're boiled in them coppers.'

'Cook 'em as you like. That's your business,' said Gordon. 'It's for one o'clock.'

'Who's going to eat 'em?'

'How big's a man's windpipe?' asked Gordon. The cook eyed him. 'Would about that lump,' said Gordon, snatching up a knife and slightly scoring a corner off one of the pieces, 'fit a man's windpipe?'

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'Ah! would it?' muttered the cook. 'And if you'll let me guess whose pipe it is you're a-thinking of, I wouldn't mind telling you that I'm game—s'elp me God!—to ram it down with this—a clean job!'

And seizing a long, black, sharp-ended poker, he flourished it at Gordon's mouth, poising it as though he meant to do for the steward.

Gordon rounded out of the little caboose with a laugh.

Mr. Tweed walked the weather side of the quarter-deck; his sextant lay upon the skylight cover. The seaman named Legg was at the helm. His figure, airily clad in duck and calico and wide straw hat, stood out like a painted figure of marble, as it slightly rose and slightly fell against the hot pale-blue sky in the north.

Miss Vanderholt was seated in a deck-chair under the awning, beside a quarter-boat. A book lay upon her lap, but her hands were clasped upon it, and her eyes were bent upon the sea. She viewed it listlessly. The monotony of that eternal girdle was growing shocking. It seemed to bind up her very soul. She thought to herself: 'They speak of the freedom of the sea. But doesn't its sense of freedom come only when motion is swift, when the roar of the white water is strong, and when one's home is not very far off?'

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It was the men's dinner-hour. Miss Violet had often, during the warm weather, from her comfortable quarter-deck chair, observed a couple of men a little before noon stagger with sweating faces out of the galley, bearing in their hands a sort of wooden washing-tub, which sent up a great deal of steam. This she knew was the crew's dinner.

She had sometimes wondered how they ate: whether they spread a table-cloth; whether they planted a cruet-stand in their midst, and placed knives and forks on either hand, for the hearts to cut and come again. Who carved? She supposed that the boatswain took the head of the table.

She had never felt so curious, however, in this matter as to ask questions, and as, moreover, she had not caught so much as a glimpse of the interior of the crew's dwelling-house, she had figured into conviction a comfortable little sea-parlour in which the men dined just as she and Glew and the mate and her father dined.

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'After all,' she mused, keeping her hands clasped upon her open book, with her eyes fastened upon the sailors' house, 'it is the monotony of the sea that repels. It must have its good side. Plenty to eat and drink, and, as father says, most of the wonders of the world—islands, harbours, inland scenes of beauty—to be visited at the cost of others.'

Whilst she thus moralized, she beheld a head with a very savage and malicious look upon its face in the deck-house door. The figure of the man was exposed to the waist, and two great hands grasped for support each side of the opening. It was the head of the boatswain of the schooner, James Jones, carpenter and second mate—but as second mate he had never been called upon to serve. He was uncovered, and his hair was wild. His expression was devilish. Though at some distance from the man, the young lady could clearly distinguish a look of fury upon the seaman's face, as though he had just slain a shipmate, and was in the act of leaping on deck.

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He stood in the doorway, and continued to stare aft. Miss Vanderholt glanced uneasily at the skylight. She waited for her father and Captain Glew to appear. The captain was bound to arrive in a minute or two, for already Mr. Tweed, who had glanced at the boatswain without appearing to see anything unusual in the man's fixed, half-in and half-out posture, and dark, endevilled face, had picked up his sextant, and was ogling the sun.

Mr. Vanderholt was the first of the two to come on deck. His daughter called to him softly, and said:

'Father, did you ever see, in all your life, such a wicked expression as that man wears?'

'What man?' exclaimed Mr. Vanderholt, lancing his teeth with a silver toothpick, and gazing along the decks with an expression of bland benevolence.

'That man there, in the door of the galley,' said the girl. 'He's been standing like that for the last three or four minutes, hatless, looking aft, with that face of fury, as if they'd tied him in the doorway and were goading him.'

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'I certainly see a man lounging in the doorway,' said Mr. Vanderholt, who was a little short-sighted. 'Does he look angry?'

He spoke somewhat uneasily, and turned his head to see if the captain was on deck. Glew at that moment rose through the hatch, armed with his sextant. Vanderholt went up to him, and said:

'There is a man leaning in the door of the caboose—now I look again I see it is the boatswain—whose face my daughter tells me is formidable with temper. I do not clearly see all that way off. I hope it will mean no fresh trouble about the stores. Let them know I have ordered pieces of the pork and beef to be boiled for our mid-day meal.'

Whilst he was speaking, Glew's eyes were fixed upon the boatswain, who, at the moment that Vanderholt ceased, withdrew. Glew's attitude was immediately and insensibly charged with malice and danger, with passions quickly growing and contending, by the odd, crouching air he carried, whilst he had watched the boatswain and listened to his employer.

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'That Jones,' he said, 'is the right sort of fore-castle scoundrel to breed a mutiny, and if he troubles me to-day we must have him out of it, Mr. Vanderholt, in the approved old method. Mr. Tweed, can you lay your hands readily upon a set of irons for that fellow?'

The mate answered:

'The carpenter has charge of the irons, sir, and the carpenter is, unfortunately, the boatswain himself.'

'Go forward,' said Captain Glew, 'and ask the man to give you a set of irons.'

'Stop!' exclaimed Mr. Vanderholt, glancing at the helmsman, whose eyes were upon Glew, and who was clearly a listener. 'We must have no talk of irons in this vessel, until something has been done to warrant their introduction.'

'If there should come a difficulty,' was the captain's answer, 'we may find it impossible to get forward so as to procure the irons. I like to be beforehand.'

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'I'll not have it!' said Mr. Vanderholt, with warmth.

Captain Glew simply said, 'Ay, ay, sir,' and turned his face to the sun, with his sextant lifted.

Now it was that the boatswain reappeared, still without his hat, his head very shaggy, his shirt-sleeves rolled above his elbows, disclosing the muscles of a carthorse. He sprang, in a single bound, through the door of the deck-house, grasping his mess-kid. The seaman Dabb followed; he, too, grasped a mess-kid. Then the rest of the crew appeared—Gordon, Allan, Toole, Scott, Maul.

'Now, bullies, are we ready?' exclaimed Jones, in a voice of thunder; and he put the kid upon the deck. Dabb did likewise.

'Hurrah for a hot male of mate for the cabin!' shouted Simon Toole.

The boatswain and Dabb, each man in his boots, kicked. They kicked at the kids with all their might, and the wooden vessels rushed aft to the very feet of Captain Glew and Vanderholt, scattering their precious contents of pork and pea-soup over the smooth planks. Never was an

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uglier affront offered to the master of a ship. Never had mutinous insolence been carried to a greater height. Captain Glew turned white as milk, but not with fear. Well for him had he felt fear. Mr. Vanderholt was ashy pale. He called to his daughter to go below. She sprang up, but, instead of going below, went and stood right aft, beside the helmsman, to whom she said:

'What do those men want?'

'Their rights!' he answered, with a diabolical leer.

The frightened girl made a quick step to the companion-hatch, and stood beside the cover; she was afraid to go below.

CHAPTER VI. THE MURDERS.

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'What's the meaning of this atrocious conduct, men?' shouted Mr. Vanderholt. 'I am sorry if anything's wrong with you. I am an old sailor——'

He was interrupted by Captain Glew roaring out: 'Tweed, help me to put that scoundrel in irons!' And he rushed forward, Tweed following.

'Oh, my God!' cried Mr. Vanderholt; 'stay your hands, men! This is my ship! I am master here! I'll see your wrongs righted!'

'There'll be murder!' shrieked Miss Vanderholt.

'Go below, for Christ's sake!' roared the distracted man; and, catching hold of his daughter's arm, he dragged her down the steps into the cabin.

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'No man in this ship puts me in irons,' said the boatswain, showing his teeth, as he squared up at Captain Glew, with his immensely thick arms covered with hair, arrows and crucifixes. 'I've been wanting the killing of you this many a day, you rat! and, as you men hear me, by the living Lord, I'll kill him if he lays a finger upon me!'

For a few minutes Captain Glew paused, waiting for Mr. Tweed, who had disappeared. He stood one man to seven; his nostrils were dilated; his eyes were on fire; his skin was a ghastly white; and his fingers worked like those of one who plays a piano. His breath flew from him in sharp, quite audible hissings. He was the incarnation of wrath fiendish above anything human, and in that pause those of the men who met his gaze seemed to quail.

Mr. Vanderholt came running from the companion-hatch. His right hand was in the pocket of his coat.

'What is it, men?' he bawled. 'I am an old sailor, and was a man at sea when you were boys. Is your pork bad? Is the rest of your food bad?'

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'Go and gut yourself!' roared Dabb. 'If that cuckoo had the victualling of this ship, you had the paying of him; and was there ever a Dutchman that didn't know good food from bad by the price of it?'

He was proceeding. Gordon, standing alongside, clipped the dog over the back of his neck, and silenced him.

Mr. Vanderholt swayed speechless on the slightly heaving deck of his vessel. He was petrified. He stared at the insolent villain; he couldn't credit his senses.

Indeed, it was shocking that that fine old gentleman, with his full gray beard, his dignified bearing, his knowledge of life and letters, his years, his great fortune, should be thus addressed by a brute of the sea, a scab, a wen of the ocean, who ashore, in liquor, was, of course, the swaggering, yelping terror of women and little children.

Mr. Tweed came along from the forecandle, grasping an iron bar with rings upon it. The moment the men saw him, three or four—Scott, Toole, Allan, and another—flung themselves upon him. The irons were sent whizzing overboard, the man himself was felled to the deck. He rose in a minute, breathless and mad.

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'But you *shall* come aft. Help me, Tweed!' And the captain, crying this out in a voice frightful to hear with its tension of passion, flung himself upon the boatswain.

'The man who moves—the man who interferes with the captain, I'll shoot!' shouted Vanderholt, pulling out a revolver, a six-barrelled engine of those days, from his pocket, and taking aim at the crew.

Tweed had sprung upon the boatswain, and now three madmen were wrestling. A fourth rushed in; he was Simon Toole. He yelled like a savage as he leapt upon the heaving and writhing group.

'Stand back, or I'll shoot you!' shouted Mr. Vanderholt. 'I have six men's lives here.'

He saw Toole seize Captain Glew by the throat, and taking aim at the man, he pulled the trigger.

The flash, the report, was followed by a dying groan, and Tweed, with both hands lifted and clenched, fell, shot through the head. [Pg 145]

At this moment an iron belaying-pin^[1] struck Mr. Vanderholt across the face. It was Maul who hurled it. He flung it with the rage and meaning of murder, standing not a couple of fathoms away from the unhappy gentleman, who dropped like a running man when he falls dead from heart disease.

'You murderous curs!' groaned Captain Glew, falling upon one knee with his hand to his side.

For a little while they stood raging; their shouts were hoarse and insane. Legg bawled to them from the helm, and they answered him. You would have thought that they were breeding some fresh hellish scene of bloodshed amongst themselves, so flushed, wild, clamorous was the mob of them, every man trying to drown the other's voice.

'It was his doing!' said Jones, pointing to the figure of the dying captain. 'I never wanted it!' [Pg 146]

'Anyhow, we're not responsible for *him*,' said Allan, nodding at the body of the mate. 'Who floored the Dutchman?'

'I did!' yelled Maul.

'He's a killed man,' said Scott, stooping to look at him.

'Water,' whispered Captain Glew.

Toole's eyes were on the captain at the instant, and the ruffian saw the man's lips move.

'He's spakin'!' he exclaimed, with a face of sudden horror, backing two or three steps.

Dabb put his ear to the dying man's mouth.

'He asks for water,' said the seaman; and he sprang to the scuttle-butt and filled a pannikin which stood handily by the side of the dipper, and, lifting Captain Glew's head, he poured some of the cool drink into his mouth.

'Drag me out of the sun,' muttered the captain.

'Mike, len's a hand,' called Dabb; and quite gently these two seamen, who were just now devils, carried the captain aft into the shelter of the awning, where they left him to lie and expire, with the Union Jack rolled up as a pillow. [Pg 147]

'I never wanted it! I never wanted it!' suddenly broke out the boatswain, in a deep groaning voice. 'This is a swinging matter. What's to be done? It's damnation to our souls. Why couldn't ye have let the old Dutchman be?'

'His pistol was full cock on you, Jim, when I let fly,' answered Maul. 'He's only stunned. Hasn't a man a right to fight for his life? Look at them barrels!' he added, pointing to the revolver.

'Here comes his daughter,' exclaimed Gordon.

Miss Vanderholt was standing in the companion-way. She wore a straw hat, and her eyes, under the shadow of the brim and under the fluff of hair about her brow, looked twice their usual size—strained, unwinking, blind, with sudden, dreadful amazement, but brilliant as light also with horror and terror.

She came out of the hatch slowly. Legg, at the helm, with a note of commiseration, said: [Pg 148]

'He's only been knocked down. He shouldn't have got messing about with firearms amongst a mob of angry men.'

She did not hear him, or, if she did, she did not heed him.

She went straight to her father, making a low wailing or moaning noise as she walked. The boatswain exclaimed:

'No harm was intended to him, miss. 'Twas him that shot Mr. Tweed.'

She stooped, moaning, but so as to be scarcely audible, and looked closely into her father's face. He lay on his back, staring with white eyes, half-closed, at the sky. He had fallen as though shot through the heart. A great, livid weal, dreadful to see, blackened and lifted his brow. A little blood that had trickled from one ear lay glazed close beside the gray hair of his whiskers.

'Is he dead?' she asked, looking round at the men, and speaking in a voice sunk with fear.

'Let's carry him aft to his cabin. It's not right the young lady should see him lying there,' said Gordon. [Pg 149]

Thereupon, Gordon, Allan, and Jones picked the body up and bore him aft, followed by Miss Vanderholt, who often staggered as she walked. They got him into a cabin, and put him down upon a sofa.

'An ugly job!' said one of the seamen.

'Who did it?' the girl asked.

The men made no answer.

'Oh, father!' she cried, trembling violently; then, dropping upon her knees beside him, she began to free his throat. 'He may only be stunned,' she said. 'What is to be done? Shall I bathe his face?'

'If he's only stunned, I allow he'll come to all right, if he's left alone,' said Gordon.

'You'll please to recollect this,' said one of the men: 'he comes rushing along, with a pistol to shoot us with, and the motive was to strike the revolver out of his hand before he could send a second shot. It was him that killed the mate;' and the speaker wheeled on his naked feet, and went to the companion ladder. He was almost immediately followed by the others.

The girl was alone with her dead father. But was he dead? He looked so. Yet the lifeless looks of one in a swoon or in a fit may easily pass as marks of death. She ran to his cabin, and fetched a bowl, into which she splashed cold water from a decanter, and for a quarter of an hour she ceaselessly bathed his face and head. He never stirred. Not the least sigh escaped him. She could not find his pulse, though she sought for it, with trembling fingers, about his wrists. His hands were growing cold, and they lay very dead and heavy in hers, and still she thought, still she hoped, she prayed.

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'It may be the same as a fit, or a swoon. He has been stunned. If I sit here patiently, I may see signs of life, and he will come to.'

But, if he should be dead? What would they do with the schooner? What would they do with her? Terrors shook her; they wrenched her heart, and she wrung her hands in agony.

If her father was dead, and she quite understood that Captain Glew and Mr. Tweed were dead, though she but vaguely understood that her father had shot the mate, and that Captain Glew had been assassinated—if he was dead, she was alone in the schooner with eight seamen, who had made outlaws and reckless criminals of themselves by the murders done that morning.

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Meanwhile, on deck, the men were quieting down. Their rude, unreasoning passions were paling. Consternation was beginning to work in them. They had gone fearfully and tragically far beyond the unformed wrathful fancies which were in them when they kicked the mess-kids aft, and when the Irishman howled at the sight.

The mate lay dead, with a dark purple hole in his forehead, upon the deck, abreast of the little square of main hatch. Aft, with his head pillowed on the rolled-up ensign, was the corpse of the captain. These were sights, coupled with the thought of the dead man below, to drive the keenest power of realization of what had happened that day into the mind of an idiot, and there was no idiot in that schooner.

Legg had been relieved at the wheel by Scott.

The *Mowbray*, all this while, was sailing a dead south course for the Equator—her queer destination—royally clothed; her white breasts of canvas were swelled with the blue gushing of the wind; her jibs yearned at their sheets as they rose and sank in a play of soft shadow, with the airy rise and the seething stoop of the bows.

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'There's too much gone and happened this all-fired day,' said Allan, folding his naked, burnt arms on his breast, and leaning against the side of his little caboose whilst he eyed askew the body of the mate. 'What's to be done?'

The men came and stood about him.

'It was like forcing of a man's hand,' exclaimed the boatswain. 'I was never in a mess of this sort afore. But, curse catch me, if an angel could have stood him—an angel from the skies!' he shouted, lifting up his two great hands, with a wild melodramatic gesture, to the heavens. 'I couldn't tell you why, but there was hate of us as sailor-men in the very turn of the rooter's body as he walked the deck. There's but one remedy for the likes of him, but it's hard upon sailors;' and he smeared the sweat off his brow, which had taken a scowl dark as thunder.

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'I saw that there bleeding old Dutchman a-covering of you, Jim,' said Maul, pointing to the revolver which yet lay upon the deck. 'There was no mistaking the meaning in his face. I'd pulled out the pin ready for whatever was to come along, and, say what yer will, yer owe me your life.'

'What's to be done?' said the cook. 'All this here moralizing ain't going to help us. Are them bodies to be left to lie there till they turn?'

'Don't be in such a smothering hurry!' exclaimed Legg. 'How are ye to know they're gone home? Ere's Bill for chucking of two warm bodies overboard. Feel their pulses, or try their breath with a piece of glass, or, maybe, you'll be murdering of them over again.'

'Don't talk of murdering!' said the boatswain savagely. 'That man there was killed by Mr. Vanderholt.'

'Where are we sailing to?' says Gordon.

'Why!' exclaimed Dabb, sending a pair of drink-stained eyes slowly travelling over the little ship, 'I'm dumped, mates, if there's e'er a navigator in the vessel!'

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At this juncture Toole and Jones stepped to the body of the mate, and carried him to the side of

the captain, whose form they bent over. The boatswain went down upon his knees, and looked with a face of hate and horror at the countenance of the dead man. This was a picture to handsomely symbolize one large, old, red tradition of the Merchant Service. Are there any Glews left? So long as they remain in command, so long will they prove the solvers of the so-called mysteries of the ocean—the abandoned ship, the boat-load of men whose statements differ, the stranded body with the wound in its throat.

'These men are dead,' says the boatswain, standing up. 'No use in letting 'em lie here to shock the female, should she come on deck. Get 'em covered up, and we'll bury 'em this afternoon.'

Toole fetched a small tarpaulin, and hid the bodies.

'How's the Dutchman getting on, I wonder?' said the boatswain.

He went to the open skylight, and looked down. He saw the figure of Mr. Vanderholt lying stiff in death on a sofa locker; his daughter sat beside him, inclined forwards, resting her chin on her hands, herself, whilst the boatswain watched, as stirless as the dead. [Pg 155]

The seaman stepped back, and walked forward slowly. The sailors, Scott excepted, were gathered about the deck-house door, holding a council upon their condition and prospects. There was the hurry of nerve in their speech, and again one or another would look ahead, or on either bow. The boatswain, shoving in amongst them, said in his deep voice:

'I'm for getting something to eat. I want my dinner.'

'And I'm for getting something to drink,' said Toole.

The boatswain picked up Mr. Vanderholt's revolver, and, whilst he examined it, before pocketing it, he said:

'There's no chance of my bossing you, lads. I'll never do more than advise you. But let me give you this counsel: of course there'll be drink for the cabin somewhere aft. We're entitled to our allowance of rum, anyhow, and if we add a bottle or two of the cabin stuff to that allowance, who's a-going to miss it? That's not counsel, you say—no, but *this* is: don't none of you go and get drunk. I vow to God the first man that falls insensible I'll chuck overboard. We're murderers and pirates—d'ye know that?' he roared, with a ferocious look at the men—a look that might have convinced shrewder perceptions than those about him that he was going mad—and we're to take care, if we don't want to swing, that we're not found out. Can ye guess what swinging's like? Many's the time I've thought of it—of the gray, wet morning, and their coming in to fetch you to be hanged, and their making your arms fast astern, with a parson walking in front reading about death; then the standing upon the trap-door, and the crowds of faces—my God!—all looking at you, and, worst of all, the awful feeling that a man must have when the cap's drawn down, and he stands awaiting!' [Pg 156]

'There's no call to keep on, Jim,' said Dabb; 'we don't want to be hanged, and we don't mean to do it. And who's a-going to fall down dead drunk, and act the beast, as you says, a-seeing how it stands with us?' [Pg 157]

'Let's get something to eat,' said the boatswain. 'Jim,' said he, turning to Gordon, 'you know the ropes aft. Bring something for'ard from the Dutchman's pantry fit for the men to sit down to.'

'Am I to bring any drink?' says Gordon.

'What have they got down there?' asked Maul.

'There's some cases of bottled ale.'

'Bring eight bottles for'ards,' said the boatswain. 'Joe, go you along and lend him a hand.'

Gordon and Dabb walked aft, and disappeared down the companion-hatch. The others trudged about their deck-house door, passing and repassing each other in short look-out walks, their heads sunk, their backs bowed, and their hands plunged deep in their breeches pockets.

After some time, Gordon and the other arrived with their arms full of bottles of beer and preserved meats, and delicate cabin eatables out of the pantry. It was broiling hot. Mike Scott at the helm bawled to them to bring him a bottle. He swilled the foaming draught down out of a pannikin in a sort of dance of ecstasy. [Pg 158]

'What's the young woman a-doing of?' asked the boatswain, following Gordon into the deck-house.

'She was sitting by her father's body when we entered. She jumps up as if she'd been stabbed, and says in a little shriek: "What do you men want?" I answered in the kindest voice I've got: "We're not here to hurt you, miss. The men are hungry, and want food, and I've come to fetch 'em some—food and a little beer. What can I get for you, miss?" says I. "This is the luncheon-hour. Let me spread the table for you." She shook, and held out her hands as though shoving me away. How could she sit down and eat with him lying there? Indeed, it went against me to name it, Jim. It was flung cruelly hard. I never see such a forehead as the poor old bloke's got.'

'By the vart of me oath, then,' exclaimed Toole—for now all hands had swarmed into the deck-house—'Maul took aim at the pistol, and never meant to kill him!' [Pg 159]

They were hungry and thirsty, a rough, red-handed mob of seamen. They sat down upon their chests, and ate and drank, one taking a plateful of food to the helmsman, and whilst they dined they discoursed upon what was to be done.

Occasionally the boatswain would step out and look around. The wind was slack, the fiery eye of heaven was eating it up, and the sea waved in dull shades of satin and silver in winding dyes of faint violet and glassy brightness, as though a current ran; it sheeted with colours faint with tropic heat into the now visionary distance where sea and sky were blent.

'What are we to do with this vessel, and how are we to manage for ourselves?' said the boatswain, who sat on a chest with a tin of preserved meat between his knees. 'That's the question.'

'Ain't this moist stuff veal and 'am?' Whatever it is, it's blooming nice,' said a sailor.

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'Joe, knock the 'ead off this 'ere bottle for me; you've got the knack.'

'Isn't there no port to which we could carry this craft and dispose of her, and then disperse?' said Allan, the cook. 'She might go for a song, for me. We only want our wages.'

'Where's the port without a fired consul?' said Maul. 'I'll tell ye what 'd happen: they'd ask questions, a file of soldiers 'ud come aboard, us men 'ud be marched off into a fortress, and lie in cells fourteen or twenty foot under the sea. There our beards would grow, our bones would wear out our shirts, and all the music ye'd get, mates, would be the clank of chains.'

'No port for me!' said Toole. 'I'm for kaping on the say, and being found in a situation of distress.'

'We must agree to one yarn, and stick to it. What about the lady?' said Dabb.

'Do she know what's happened?' said Maul. 'How it came about, I mean? Then she couldn't say nothing agin our yarn.'

'Tell'e what, my lads,' said the boatswain, looking thoughtfully around him, 'I'm not at all sure that the right tack don't lie in our up and telling the truth, explaining how we was exasperated, and proving that the deaths was accidental.'

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'You're a-going to prove nothing accidental out of that bloke's knife,' said Dabb, with a dry, uncomfortable laugh, nodding at Toole.

'As good an accident as Maul's murtherous belaying-pin, and be damned to ye!' exclaimed the Irishman. 'Brothers, I'm thinking Joe there would have me be the only hanged man of this company. Is that because I'm a furriner?'

His eyes, fiercely squinting, met in Dabb's hot face. The seamen began to cut up tobacco, and then they lurched to the galley to light their pipes. The boatswain, pipe in mouth, stood in the waist, looking round him and aloft.

The little ship lay nearly becalmed. The sails swayed idly, fanning sweet draughts athwartships. The boatswain walked to the binnacle, and said, after looking at the card:

'There's no call now, Mike, to keep her heading for the Equator. I'm for giving my stern to this here boiling.'

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'What's settled?' said Scott.

'Nothing.'

'I don't see,' said the man irritably, 'how anything's to be settled in this here roasting heat, and them two bodies side by side there. Him in the cabin's alone enough to take the curl out of a man's spirit. To think of him, with half a fathom of death, blue as ink, across his brow, and himself a-walking these very decks but just a little while gone! Three! It's too many!'

'One was the Dutchman's job,' answered the boatswain. 'But see here! Are ye afraid?'

'Afraid o' what?'

'Well, only that you're talking as if the ghosts of them bodies had jockeyed the yard-arms of your mind, and was close reefing your intellect.'

'I don't like dead bodies,' said Scott; 'and of all the dead bodies a-going,' he added, with a countenance of gloomy ferocity, 'the least I like is murdered bodies. Why don't ye get 'em cleared out overboard, Jim, and sweeten the little hooker? Do human blood smell? Something that my nose never tasted afore came along not long since in a breath o' wind.'

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The boatswain went to the tarpaulin, pulled it aside, and examined the two dead faces.

'Dead they are,' said he, with a shiver of sick disgust.

He walked forward, and presently a few of the men came to the tarpaulin, carrying hammocks, twine, sinkers for the clews. They made despatch. Captain Glew, blind with death, threatened them as malevolently as in life, with his upper lip lifted and stiffened, exposing a snarling grin of fangs. The other poor wretch lay composed; the grog-blossoms had faded. His cheek was as pale as moonlight, and the expression was a smile.

Before stitching up the bodies, they emptied the pockets. Captain Glew had a silver watch and chain, a leather pocket-book, a silver-mounted, wooden pipe, a bunch of keys, and other odds and ends. The mate likewise owned a watch and a hair chain, tipped with gold—a woman's gift, no doubt.

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'These things shall be put into their cabins,' said the boatswain. 'He's left a widow and young uns.'

'Are we going to bury 'em in their clothes?' said Toole.

'Holes and all,' answered Legg, with a significant glance at the sheath-knife on the Irishman's hip.

In a few minutes the two bodies made their last plunge, amidst the silence of the seamen, some of whom, nevertheless, continued to smoke, and the bubbles which flashed to the surface were as lasting a memorial of the dead twain's resting-place as any gravestone which could have been erected ashore for dogs to smell at.

A light air from the south-west was coming along, over the burnished heave, in a delicate blue film, with feelers and crawlers of the draught tarnishing the water in front of the breeze-line in catspaws.

'Shall we stick this vessel's head north?' said the boatswain, and now all hands came together in the gangway close beside the bulwark-rail, whence the bodies had sped; there was to be a discussion over every suggestion.

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'If we go north, where's it to carry us to?' said Gordon.

'Out of this heat, anyhow,' answered the boatswain.

'We ought to make up our minds,' said the cook, with an uneasy look at the sea. 'We're just that sort of craft which is sure to excite notice. "Hallo," they sings out, "a yacht all this way down here!" and they comes sheering alongside to hail and take a look.'

'I'm not for going any further to the s'uth'ard,' said the boatswain doggedly.

After a great deal of talk, during which the galley was repeatedly visited for pipe-lights, they agreed to head the vessel north, if for no other reason than that of temperature. So the helm was put hard up, and the little vessel wore. When the ropes had been coiled down and the decks cleared, the boatswain called Gordon and Scott, who by this hour was relieved at the helm. These two men seemed the most respectable of the clan, perhaps the fittest for the mission the boatswain had now in his mind.

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'Mates,' said he, dropping his words between hard sucks at an inch of sooty pipe, 'there's a difficulty in the cabin that's got to be made an end of. The Dutchman must be buried. Now, the three of us had better go below, with sail-cloth and twine, and stitch him up to the satisfaction of his daughter. I'd give this hand,' said he, holding up a paw as big as a boxing-glove, 'if he hadn't been killed. He had meant to get his dinner off our junk and pork to-day. It was the captain kept him in ignorance of our condition.'

'He'd have shot as many of us as there was balls in his pistol,' said Scott.

'You're right,' said the boatswain, as though he found something to rally him in that thought. 'Let's get what's wanted, my lads, and make an end.'

The dead man was alone when they entered the cabin. The ghastly hue of the blow that had killed him was fading. One hand lay upon his beard, and he seemed in thought.

'Quick, now,' says the boatswain, 'whilst the lady's out of sight.'

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They emptied his pockets, putting everything they found upon the table, then quickly fell to swathing and stitching. In the midst of this work Gordon violently started, and cried out, muttering, 'Lor', how she took me!' Miss Vanderholt stood near him. She was painfully white, and her eyes were swollen almost to concealment. Yet anyone capable of interpreting human expression must have found a subtle token of resolution in her features, shadowy marks of firmness, as though the countenance was struggling to take its presentment from the spirit. This might be visible sooner to the eye of sympathy than to the vision of the head.

'Are you going to bury him?' she exclaimed, in a low, trembling voice.

'Yes, miss,' said the boatswain, rearing himself, and backing and looking at her.

'Is there no one who can read a prayer from the service over him?' said the girl.

The men looked at one another, shaking their heads, and then the boatswain said:

'Tell 'e what, lads: we'll stitch the poor gentleman up ready, and leave him a-bit, whilst the lady says a prayer by his side. It'll do him more good than any prayer that's a-going to come from us, whether we reads it, or whether we imagines it.'

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Miss Vanderholt took a step to her father and kissed him, then, weeping silently, went to the foremost end of the cabin, and stood waiting.

FOOTNOTE:

[1] A belaying-pin is a bar of wood or metal. It fits in a rail, and is used for making a rope fast to. When of wood it is heavy enough, when of metal deadly as a weapon or a missile.

CHAPTER VII. CAPTAIN PARRY.

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On the night of December 20, in the same year of the mutiny of the *Mowbray*, a large full-rigged ship, homeward bound, was, to the north of the Equator, stealing silently through the dusk. The hour was about half-past nine. The moon rode high and shone gloriously, and the edge of the plain of ocean came in two sweeps of ebony to the clasp of splendour under the satellite. The ship lifted a cloud of sail to the stars. The night-wind was lightly breathing, and every cloth was asleep, stirless as alabaster mouldings, curving from each yard-arm, and climbing with the whiteness of the moon into three spires.

This ship was the *Alfred*, but not the famous Thames East Indiaman of that name. She was about sixteen hundred tons, with an abundant crew, a captain and four mates. She was carrying a valuable cargo and a number of passengers from India to London, and once only had she halted—at Simon's Bay, where she put a lieutenant of Marines and fifteen men ashore, and then proceeded, after filling her fresh-water casks. She was a flush-decked ship, and when you stood at the wheel your eye ran along a spacious length of deck, rounding with the exquisite art of the shipwright into flaring bows which sank into the true clipper lines, high above the keen and coppered forefoot.

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A number of ladies and gentlemen sat and moved about the decks. The awnings were furled, and the moonshine glistened upon these people, and sparkled in the jewellery of the ladies, and silvered the whiskers of the gentlemen. On the weather side of the long quarter-deck walked the commander of the ship, Captain Barrington. A lady's hand was tucked under his arm, and he frequently looked to windward whilst he talked. To leeward paced the mate, and a little distance forward, in the deep shadows of the main-rigging, stood a group of midshipmen.

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Right aft, upon the taffrail, sat three gentlemen. One smoked a pipe, the others cheroots. Captain Barrington permitted his guests—as he, with facetious politeness, called his passengers—to smoke upon the quarter-deck after five bells in the first watch. A considerable surface of grating stretched betwixt these three gentlemen and the wheel. The wheel was something forward of the grating, and the helmsman, therefore, absorbed in the business of keeping the ship to her course, could hear little more than the rumble of the tones of the gentlemen who conversed on the taffrail.

'I say, Parry,' said one of the gentlemen, who was, indeed, no less a personage than the surgeon of the ship, casting his eyes up at the moon, and tasting his tobacco, with slow enjoyment, in the discharge of each little cloud of it; 'did it ever occur to you to consider that all the great processes of this world—that all creation, in short, is based on circles?'

'Why do you address yourself to me?' said Captain Parry. 'What do I know about circles?'

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'Behold yonder moon,' continued the doctor, pointing with the stem of his pipe to the luminary, beautiful with her greenish tinge, so sparkingly and brilliantly edged, too, so marvellously clear-cut, that you might then realize, if you never did before, the miracle of her self-poised flight through the domain of violet ether. 'She is a circle,' said the doctor. 'So is the sun. So are the stars. The flight of our system through space, if not a circle, is nearly so—enough to justify my theory that, when the Great Hand launched Creation, the design was one of circles.'

'Oh, blow that!' said one of the gentlemen. 'Parry, hand us a cheroot.'

'Whatever brings God closer to us is good,' said the doctor. 'This theory of construction proves the existence of a genius like to man's in the Great Spirit, and we can be in sympathy with it.'

'The breeze seems scanting,' said Captain Parry. 'If this voyage goes on lasting, I shall be like the sailor who, when he was washed ashore on a desert island in his shirt, complained that he certainly did feel the want of a few necessaries.'

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'A man going home to be married ought not to be becalmed,' said the doctor.

'How do you like the idea of being married, Parry?' said the third gentleman, who was one Lieutenant Piercy.

Captain Parry viewed the beautiful moon in silence.

'Until I got married myself,' said the Doctor, 'I used to express marriage by what I consider an excellent image. A man marrying is like unto a ship that grounds on a bar and beats over, where she lies unable to get out; so other ships passing behold her riding, royal yards across, and the bar thick under the bows.'

Captain Parry continued to view the moon.

'A man for comfort,' said Piercy, 'should marry a roomy woman. You know what I mean—a woman who'll give him plenty of geographical and intellectual room to move in. He's still contained in her, d'ye see, still in sympathy, still sacramentally one, yet he's got plenty of room,' he drawled. 'I remember some idiots who berthed a number of horses on board ship, and allowed no room for the toss of their heads. It's room that a chap wants in marriage.'

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'Isn't that something white ahead there?' said Parry, pointing into the starry visionary distance, right over the bow.

The others seemed to look.

'Something white should be a ghost,' said Piercy. 'I wonder if ghosts walk the sea as they do churchyards?'

'The most terrifying ghost that, to my mind, ever appeared,' said the doctor, 'must have been the spirit of the Prince of Saxony. He came in complete steel, suddenly, upon his unhappy relative, who had idly pronounced his name, never dreaming to see him, and said: "Karl, Karl, was wollst du mit mich?" Is it the German that makes this question awful?'

'The worst of all ghosts,' said Captain Parry, who had been straining his eyes at the elusive gleam ahead, 'are the phantasies of the sick eye.'

'Right,' said the doctor.

'When I was ill some years ago in India, I had been reading Boswell's "Life of Johnson," and every night at a certain hour a miniature figure of Dr. Johnson would sit upon the mantelpiece and play the spinet. I knew the old cock hadn't a note of music in his soul. His head wagged like a simmering cauliflower. I was in a mortal funk whilst he played, but was too weak to throw anything at him. When the vision first appeared, I thought it might have been a large bottle. The mantelpiece was cleared, and still old Sam came and played upon the spinet for five nights running.'

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'The most inconvenient of all ghosts is the living ghost,' said Lieutenant Piercy. 'An Irish sergeant told me that, before he left Ireland, he lent an uncle five pounds. On returning, after fourteen years, he called upon his uncle, and asked him for the money. "Och, shure," said the man, "haven't I spent the double of it in masses for yez?''

'Talking of ghosts,' said the doctor, 'what do you say, gentlemen, to this psychological touch? A young man—call him Brown—after years of deliberation, seriously considers that he has been born into the wrong family. He is wholly out of sympathy with his relations. He is superior to them. He loves music, the fine arts, literature, and so on. His sisters are vulgar, his father a cad. The young man, feeling convinced that a serious mistake has happened, goes forth to search for his own family. He finds them at last, a cultivated circle of people, and they all seem to know that he belongs to them. Strangely enough, young Brown meets in this family with one of the sons, a young fellow of his own age—call him Jones. Jones laments to Brown that he is entirely out of sympathy with his family. They are superior to him. He likes vulgar songs, the diverting company of ostlers and billiard-markers. He objects to young ladies. He prefers shop-girls. The point is clear,' said the doctor. 'These young men were born into the wrong families. Brown hinted to Jones that he would meet with the right parties at the Browns', and Jones was received by the Browns with that instinctive perception of his claims as a member of the family which had characterized the meeting between Brown and the Jones's.'

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'Brown is a snob and Jones an ass,' said Parry.

Here the chief officer came right aft, and looked into the binnacle. As the cheeks are sucked in, so the sails hollowed to the sudden emptiness of the atmosphere along with the slight floating roll of the whole fabric. A low thunder fore and aft broke from the masts.

'I'm sick of that noise!' exclaimed Lieutenant Piercy. 'The cockroaches dance to it. The kitchen offal that the cook threw overboard yesterday delights in it, and dwells alongside, a loving listener. I say, Mr. Mulready,' he called to the mate, 'when are you going to give us a whole gale over the taffrail—something that shall come roaring down upon the ship in a cloudless thunder of wind?'

'Ha, sir, when?' answered the mate, a dry man.

Captain Parry, with a slight yawn, stood up, stretched his arms, stepped across the grating, and sprang upon the deck, then stood looking over the bulwark-rail at the distant icy gleam on the bow.

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'The heat seems to have baked the life out of Parry,' said Lieutenant Piercy, 'or is it that his spirits sink as he approaches home, knowing what lies before him?'

'A man should feel himself a poor creature,' exclaimed the doctor, 'when he understands that a fit of despondency, a mood of unspeakable depression, reaching even unto tears, may be caused, not by the affections—oh no!—but by a little piece of celery, or half a pickled walnut.'

'I am thirsty,' said Piercy; 'come below, doctor, and have a drink.'

Four bells were struck. The ladies disappeared. Five bells—then most of the gentlemen vanished. Six bells, and now the ship seemed clothed in sleep and silence. At intervals faint catspaws

stirred, none of which were neglected by the mate of the watch, who, regardless of the smothered curses of the seamen, hoarsely roared orders for the braces to be manned. Thus, stealthily, the ship floated through the midnight sea, flooded with moonshine.

Then came the dawn, the resurrection of the day, trailing its ghastly shroud across the face of the eastern sky. The watch of the mate came round again at eight bells—four o'clock—and when the day broke it found him on deck, standing at the rail, and peering ahead. [Pg 179]

'Bring me the glass,' said he to a midshipman.

Some three points on the bow of the ship lay a schooner. She had all cloths showing, saving her little top-gallant sail and royal. She was certainly not under command, and yet she did not seem derelict. Mr. Mulready levelled the ship's glass. What was she?

Scarcely a yacht, yet of yacht-like finish and delicacy. The faint breeze trembled in her moon-white canvas. She lay head to wind, and the long pulse of ocean swell, in lifting and sinking her, exposed her sheathing in flashes, and submitted to the eye of Mr. Mulready the handsomest sea-going model he had ever looked at.

'Something wrong there,' thought he, carefully covering her with his glass, and intently examining her for any signs of life, for smoke in the caboose chimney, for a head peering in sickness over the bulwark rail. [Pg 180]

About a mile and a half separated the two vessels, and it had taken the *Alfred* nearly the whole night long to measure the space betwixt the gleam over the bows and the spot of waters whence it had first been sighted by Captain Parry.

The chief mate could do nothing without the captain; but, whilst the crew were washing down the decks, often pausing for a breath or two in their scrubbing to glance at the graceful, helpless, lonely fabric that was now drawing abeam, Captain Barrington stepped through the companion-hatch. His sight immediately went to the schooner.

'What vessel have we there?' he exclaimed, and he picked up the telescope that lay upon the skylight. 'She is abandoned, sir,' said he to his chief mate.

'She looks too beautiful for ill-luck,' answered the mate. 'The man who moulded her knew his art.'

'What's she doing all this way down here?' said Captain Barrington, talking with the telescope at his eye. 'She's a gentleman's pleasure-boat. Has she been sacked, and her crew and pleasure-party murdered? Brace the foretopsail aback. I'll send a boat aboard.' [Pg 181]

The ship came to a stand, with a lazy sigh of the light breeze in her canvas, the yards of the fore creaking on parrel and truss as they came round to the drag of hauling sailors. A boat was manned, lowered, and despatched in charge of the third officer, an intelligent young gentleman of the name of Blundell.

'Thoroughly overhaul her,' the captain had said. 'If she is derelict, bring away the log-book and papers.'

And as the boat swept towards the schooner the skipper turned to Mr. Mulready and exclaimed:

'If she be abandoned, I'll put a crew aboard, and we'll sail home together. There is value in that little ship, sir, and she is too handsome a craft to be allowed to wash about down here.'

Some of the male passengers arrived for their customary bath in the head. Do not believe the bath-room of the metal palace of this day comparable as a luxury to the old head-pump. [Pg 182]

You stripped, you sprang on to a grating betwixt the head-boards, and an ordinary seaman went to work. The gushing blue brine sank to your marrow. It gushed in cold sweetness through and through you. You gazed down, and saw the clear blue profound out of which the sparkling coil that hissed over your body was being drawn. It was the one delight of the tropics, the one joy that haply sometimes checked the profanities in the passengers' mouths when they came on deck and found the ship motionless.

One of the first to come on deck to taste the sweetness of the head-pump was Captain Parry. The instant he rose through the hatch his eye caught sight of the schooner. He stood awhile staring; someone coming up behind him forced him to move out of the hatch. He stepped out, still with his eyes glued to the schooner, and advancing, that his vision might clear the quarter-boat, he again came to a stand, staring. [Pg 183]

He was a tall, well-built young man, about eight-and-twenty years of age, close-shaven and dark, and there was something Roman and heroic in the cast of his countenance. He was airily clothed for the bath, and watched the schooner with a towel or two dangling in his grasp.

By this time the boat had reached the side of the apparently abandoned vessel, and the third officer might with the naked eye easily have been seen to spring aboard, followed by a seaman. He stood awhile taking a view of the decks, then disappeared.

'Captain Barrington,' exclaimed Captain Parry, wheeling suddenly upon the skipper of the ship as he approached him, 'is anything known of that vessel?'

'I have just sent a boat to board her,' answered the captain.

'Will you allow me to use that glass?'

He took the telescope from the captain's hands, and resting the tubes on the bulwark rail, gazed thirstily. There was something of astonishment—indeed, of amazement—in his face when he turned to Captain Barrington. [Pg 184]

'I don't think I can be mistaken,' he exclaimed in a low voice, talking to the captain, but looking at the schooner. 'It is the same figure-head, exactly the same rig, the same size, so far as the eye can measure her at this distance. She has a deck-house for her sailors, and her paintwork is the same. It will be extraordinary!'

He fetched his breath in a half-gasp.

'Do you know that vessel, d'ye say, Captain Parry?' asked old Barrington, looking with curiosity and interest at the fine young fellow.

'I would swear that she is the *Mowbray*,' answered Captain Parry, picking up the glass afresh, and continuing to talk. 'She was purchased by Mr. Vanderholt, who made a yacht of her, and, when I was last in England, I went a short cruise in her along with Mr. Vanderholt and his daughter, the lady to whom—to whom— Good God! the longer I look, the more I am satisfied. No name is painted on her; you will find her name in the boats. What, under heaven, brings her here, lying abandoned? Yes, oh yes! I'd pick her out if she were in a fleet of five hundred sail.' [Pg 185]

'It may be as you say,' exclaimed Captain Barrington. 'It is a very remarkable meeting. But we can be sure of nothing until the third officer returns.'

A few passengers, attracted by this conversation, had drawn close. You heard murmurs of excitement. A voyage at sea, in the old days of tacks and sheets, was a tedious affair, in spite of flirtation, cards, the simple diversions of the dance on the quarter-deck, the heaving of the quoit, the bets on the run. Even a floating bottle was a something to cause a stir. It broke the dull continuity of the day. A sail was a Godsend. And here now, after many weeks of tedious ocean travel, here now had suddenly uprisen, all at once, coming down a-beam out of the darkness of the midnight, so to speak, an ocean mystery that would be fraught with an inexpressible significance if Captain Parry's conjecture proved accurate.

To this gentleman, for whom the head pump had magically ceased to have existence, the time of waiting and suspense was frantically long. Lieutenant Piercy came and stood beside him. [Pg 186]

'But, supposing it is the *Mowbray*,' said the young officer: 'her presence in this sea needn't concern your friends. The vessel may have been sold. They may have been carrying her to some distant port. If it is fever, the dead will be found; if mutiny—' Here Lieutenant Piercy stopped, puzzled.

'I don't think Vanderholt would sell her,' exclaimed Parry. 'He was proud merely of her possession, though he did not often go afloat. How amazing to see her lying there! Of course it is the *Mowbray*,' he exclaimed, again levelling the glass. 'She used to carry a long-boat, and that's gone. If her people have left her, they went away in it.'

'She's certainly abandoned,' said Piercy, 'or something living would have shown itself by this time.'

'Why the deuce doesn't that fellow Blundell return?' muttered Parry, in an agony of impatience.

But, even as he spoke, the figure of the mate might have been observed to drop over the schooner's side into the boat. The oars swept the brine into steam. The boat hissed alongside, and the third mate stepped on board. All the people of the saloon or cabin had by this time heard the news; they knew that an abandoned schooner, which was an ocean mystery, lay close by, and they had made great haste to dress themselves, inasmuch that a large number of them were on deck. They elbowed round the third mate, and the commander, and Captain Parry, to hear the ship's officer's report. [Pg 187]

'She is the *Mowbray*, sir, of, and from, London. I can't find any papers. Here's her log-book, sir. The last entry is in a female hand. The vessel was apparently on a pleasure cruise.'

'Let me look at that book,' said Captain Parry.

He turned the pages till he came to the last entry, then began to read, now and then swaying himself, then making a step in recoil. All saw by his face and his motions, by his strange gestures, by the wild looks he would sometimes cast from the page to the schooner, that what he read was carrying the bitterness of death to his heart. Meanwhile the captain was questioning the third officer. [Pg 188]

'There's nothing alive on board?'

'Nothing, sir. I searched everywhere.'

'No dead bodies?'

'None, sir.'

'Did you discover nothing to enable us to make a guess at what's become of her people?'

'Everything is in its place, sir. The log-book was left conspicuously open on the table of the cabin,

that had, doubtless, been occupied by the captain.'

'Will you kindly accompany me below, Captain Barrington?' said Captain Parry, who was so extremely agitated and distressed that he could barely utter the words.

The passengers made room. Every face bore marks of pity and astonishment. They had heard that the last entry was in a female hand, and they had also heard—indeed, they could see—that yonder schooner was abandoned.

Captain Parry followed the commander of the ship down the companion-steps into a bright, handsomely-furnished saloon; thence they passed into an after-cabin, the door of which Captain Barrington shut. A large, old-fashioned stern window provided a spacious view of the sea. The light came off the water in a cloud of splendour, and glowed and throbbled upon the nautical brass instruments upon the table, and sparkled in a glazed framed likeness of Mrs. Barrington.

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'The entry here,' exclaimed Captain Parry, trembling with excitement, and the twenty contending passions within him, 'is in the handwriting of the young lady to whom I am—to whom I was—to whom I am to be married on my arrival in England. She is Miss Violet Vanderholt. You perceive,' he said, pointing with a shaking forefinger, 'that she writes her name. The story she tells is of a diabolical mutiny. It took place on December 15. This entry is dated the 18th; to-day is the 20th. The *Mowbray* has, therefore, been abandoned two days only, perhaps not a day, for though this last entry is dated the 18th, the crew need not necessarily have abandoned the schooner till yesterday, or even this morning.'

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'It is certain,' said Captain Barrington, 'that the hands, together with the young lady, were on board the schooner on the 18th.'

'Quite certain, sir; but here is her story. Pray read it aloud to me; I did not fully master it.'

Captain Parry, with a shaking hand, gave the log-book to his companion. It was of the usual form of log-book, with a good wide space for 'Remarks' on the right-hand side of each page. Captain Barrington, a white-haired man of fifty-five, with scarlet cheeks, glanced over a few of the earlier entries. He saw that the log had been kept down to December 14, afterwards the entry was in a female hand, strong, sure, but somewhat small:

'I have ascertained that none of the men can read. I am writing an account of what has befallen us, hoping, since the men talk of leaving her and taking me with them, that this yacht may be met with, and this log-book discovered. I heartily pray any into whose hands this book may fall that he will publish my narrative to the world, so that my father's fate and my own may be made known to Captain George Parry, H.E.I.C.'s Service, to whom I am engaged to be married.'

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The commander looked at Parry with brows arched by astonishment and sailorly concern. The officer brought his hands together in a convulsive gesture, and turned his eyes with a look of despair upon the sea, framed in the window.

'My father was Mr. Montagu Vanderholt, a well-known Cape merchant. We resided at ——— Terrace, Hyde Park, London. I, Violet Vanderholt, am his only daughter. He thought that a sea-trip would do him good. He asked me to accompany him. I was his only companion, and we set sail from the Thames, November 1, in this year. The master was Captain Glew. He treated the crew harshly, and excited their hate, though he was cautious in his behaviour when I was on deck, so that I never could say he spoke to a man barbarously. But the dreadful tragedy of this voyage was occasioned by the bad food supplied to the sailors. This was undoubtedly Captain Glew's fault. He had been commissioned to victual the vessel, and was responsible for her stores, and I fear he knew that what he bought was not wholesome for men to eat, though the charges my poor father was at should have given the men the very best quality of food. They complained to Glew, but not to my father. Captain Glew never hinted that the men were murmuring, and the mutiny was sprung upon us with dreadful suddenness. The captain and the mate seized the boatswain, and a man stabbed the captain in the side, and mortally wounded him. My father dragged me below, and, rushing into his cabin for a pistol, returned on deck to cow the men with the weapon. They did not heed him, and he fired, and, as I have since been told, and must believe, shot the mate, Mr. Tweed, accidentally through the head. Mr. Vanderholt was killed by an iron bar, flung with murderous violence. They afterwards feigned that this bar was thrown with the intention of dashing the pistol from my father's hand. This is all that I have to relate.

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'I am writing this at ten o'clock on the morning of the 18th. I cannot imagine what the men intend. I asked the boatswain, who has treated me with great civility throughout, to tell me what they mean to do. This very morning I repeated the question. He answered he could not say. The men were undecided. Some were for going away in the boat, and taking their chance of being picked up, and some for remaining in the vessel. I gathered from his manner that these were few. What are they to do with the schooner if they stick to her? They might, indeed, wreck her off some island where they could represent themselves as shipwrecked men. I know that they regard me as a witness against them, and that my life is in great danger, and the merciful God alone knows what is to become of me. It is nearly——'

Here the entry ended.

The commander of the ship looked at Captain Parry.

'The hand of Providence is in this,' said the scarlet-faced man, very soberly and seriously.

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'They cannot be far off!' exclaimed Captain Parry, stepping to the stern window with an air of distraction, and staring out at the sea.

'It is a clock-calm,' said the commander, 'and if anything which moves by canvas has received the crew, we may presume that she lies as helpless as we, not far distant.'

'But what excuse could they make,' said Captain Parry, 'to be transferred from so staunch a little ship as the *Mowbray*?'

'They might say that they were without a navigator.'

'Wouldn't another vessel put a navigator on board so fine a craft and send her home, sooner than leave her to go to pieces? In that case we should not have found her here.'

'There's nothing to be done at sea, sir, by arguing and speculating,' said Captain Barrington, still preserving his very serious manner, as though, indeed, he had found something to awe him in the circumstance of a girl writing, so to speak, in the heart of the Atlantic, with particular reference to her lover, and that lover reading her words there. 'It is as likely as not,' he continued, 'that they have gone away in the long-boat. It is clear, from the narrative, that the majority were in favour of that measure. These are quiet waters, and the men have reason to hope that they will be picked up soon, in which case they can tell their own story.'

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'But Miss Vanderholt?' exclaimed Captain Parry. 'She can bear witness against them. What will they do with her?'

'Ha!' exclaimed the commander, fetching a deep breath. 'It is certain, anyhow, that she is not in the schooner.'

CHAPTER VIII. IN SEARCH.

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In the year of this story Old Leisure was still going to sea. He flourished as pleasantly upon the ocean as amidst the hens and dunghills, the milkmaids and dairies, of the Poyser farmyard. He brought his main-topsail to the mast without reluctance when there was anything to be seen or talked to; he went on board the stranger, and dined with him; invited the stranger in return; then leisurely proceeded. There was no prompt despatch, to speak of, no urgency. The wind was the prevailing condition of the immense distances which the wooden keel traversed. Old Leisure kept his eye to windward, and hauled out his bowlines; but it was a time of ambling, of dozing, and of whistling for winds until too much came.

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Only in such a time as this now dealt with could we conceive a large, full-rigged ship, homeward bound from India, full of impatient hearts, hove-to, with a derelict schooner within easy hail, and the commander taking plenty of time to reason about her with a gentleman who was infinitely concerned in her unexpected, astounding apparition and log-book narrative.

'The thought of Miss Vanderholt being at the mercy of a crew of mutinous ruffians is unbearable!' exclaimed Captain Parry. 'What is to be done? Advise me, in the name of God, captain! You know—you know—I have told you she was to be my wife. You are an old sailor. For God's sake, counsel me!'

'If I could be sure that they had made off in their boat, and were still afloat in her,' answered the captain, 'I should know how to advise you. But if they have been received on board a ship, then I don't see what can be done. For in what direction may that ship be heading? Enough if your young lady should be safe, sir. Supposing her to be on board a ship, I have no doubt of your hearing good news of her, in course of time, after your arrival in England.'

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He opened the cabin-door, and called to one of the stewards.

'My compliments to the chief officer, and ask him to come to me.'

Mr. Mulready quickly presented himself.

'We have some notion,' said Captain Barrington, addressing his mate, whilst he laid his hand upon the log of the *Mowbray*, 'that the crew of the schooner may have left her in their boat, taking the young lady with them. Send a couple of hands—don't trouble the young gentlemen,' said he, with a supercilious smile, vanishing almost as it appeared upon his firm lips, 'but a couple of sharp hands to the royal mastheads. Give one of them this glass.' He handed Mr. Mulready a binocular. 'Let the other take the ship's telescope aloft. I want the sea carefully swept. Make them understand that they must creep in their search to the very verge, for how far off is a boat visible? But they might sight the gleam of her lugsail.'

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Mr. Mulready took the glasses, and went swiftly out.

Captain Parry stood at the open window, listening to what was passing, straining his sight also with consuming passions of dread, blind desire, helpless wrath, at the star-blue line of the sea that swept the brilliance of the heavens within little more than a league. The captain of the ship went to a locker, and took out a chart of the Atlantic. He spread it, and called to Captain Parry.

The officer turned, and eagerly stepped to the chart. He saw zigzag prickings or lines upon the white sheet, as though somebody had been trying to represent flashes of lightning. Each line terminated in a little dotted circle. These were the 'runs.' But, then, these were also the Doldrums, and the motive power of that ship, the *Alfred*, lay in the breeze that, in the Doldrums, blows in the delicate catspaw that scarcely has power to run a shiver into the glazed breast.

'This was our situation at noon yesterday,' said the commander, putting his finger upon the northernmost little circle. 'There is no land for leagues, as you may observe.' [Pg 200]

'What are those rocks?' observed Captain Parry, peering.

'St. Paul's Island—a horrible hornet's nest of black fangs, entirely out of the boat's reach. I am not sure that I ever heard of a boat effecting a landing. Anyone cast ashore there must perish. There is nothing to eat or drink. It is the desolation of hell!' added the commander, with a note of religious fervour in his speech; 'and a dreadful surf like a nightmare of storm raves day and night round those rocks.'

'What is to be done?' said Captain Parry, lifting himself erect from the chart. 'If they are in a boat they cannot be far distant. They have not long left the schooner, but every stroke of the oar carries them further away, and renders the search more hopeless.'

'The search?' exclaimed the commander, in a note of inquiry and surprise.

'I don't mean in this ship, of course,' said the officer, speaking with agitation and very quickly. 'A clipper schooner lies close at hand. If you will lend me a navigator and a few hands, we will sweep the sea, taking this mark,' he continued, putting his finger upon the chart, 'as our base, and hunting with masthead look-outs, and fierce fires burning by night, in circles whose circumference or diameter I should leave to the judgment of the mate in charge.' [Pg 201]

The commander began to slowly pace his cabin. Once he paused, and gazed with a face of earnest gravity at the sea that came brimming to the counter in a sheet of winding lines, the light swathes of the tropic calm, the oily gleam, the trouble of some stream of current twinkling in diamonds.

Captain Parry eyed him with anxiety. He dreaded a discussion that might kill the hope that had suddenly been born in him. A tap on the door caused the commander to start.

Mr. Mulready entered.

'The masthead men have been working hard with their glasses, sir, and report nothing in sight.'

'How is the schooner?'

'Forlorn, but safe, sir.'

'Take a boat and go aboard, and make a further thorough examination of her, and overhaul her stores—all as smartly as may be, sir. This gentleman has an idea, and I don't know but that it might prove practicable,' said the commander. And, as Mr. Mulready left the cabin, the captain of the ship turned to Parry, and asked him to follow him on deck. [Pg 202]

On the commander emerging, the third mate approached and touched his cap, and exclaimed:

'When I said there was no living thing aboard that schooner, sir, I should have reported a small coop full of cocks and hens, all alive, and very hungry and thirsty. I fed them with some rice I found in the galley, and poured a quantity of water into their trough.'

He saluted, and marched off.

'In the face of Miss Vanderholt's last entry,' said the captain to Parry, 'we don't want live cocks and hens to tell us that that vessel has been recently abandoned.'

She lay softly lifting upon the light swell, a beautiful, helpless fabric. The shudders which ran through her canvas were like the distress of something living. She had slewed somewhat, bringing her jibbooms to bear upon the ship. In the blind, hopeless way of abandoned craft, she was posture-making for help. [Pg 203]

The excitement aboard the *Alfred* was very great indeed. The mastheading of the men, the pictures of their little bodies high in the heavens, sweeping the deep with binocular and telescope, had immensely stimulated the passions of curiosity and wonder.

What did the captain expect the sailors to see upon that vast girdle of brine, that rolled flawless to the glorious stroke of the sun? It was known that the young lady who had been on board the schooner was betrothed to Captain Parry. Could romance be carried beyond this? The ladies fluttered in talk, the gentlemen growled.

'I'm keeping a diary,' said a major, with great, dyed, well-curled whiskers, to the surgeon of the ship, 'of this voyage home, as I did of the voyage out, and I shall probably publish it, sir. But this incident will not be credited. Sages in their day have believed in ghosts, and laughed to scorn a report of earthquakes.' [Pg 204]

'I do not see why this incident should not be believed,' said the doctor.

'It is too probable—for the sea, sir. If you want a sea-fact to be accepted, state that which a sailor

will know to be impossible.'

'Parry looks as haggard as if he had been up for a week of nights,' said the doctor.

Many eyes were fixed upon him as he stood beside the master of the ship, viewing the schooner and talking. The ship forward was a gem of an ocean piece, with the smoke of her galley-chimney going straight up, the sailors—it was their breakfast-time—lounging in the cool of the shade of the jibs, with hook-pots and biscuits, and pipes of tobacco: and the great foresail, white as milk, floated motionless from its long yard.

Some soldiers in white clothes were seated upon the booms, in the wake of the draught which would stir from that vast square of sail when the weak swell of the sea put a faint pulse of life into it. The sky was sublimely lofty, with the light-blue brilliance of the tropic zone; not a cloud to depress it to the sight, and all the air was gone.

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Captain Barrington and Captain Parry stood together at the mizzen shrouds, looking at the schooner, conversing, and waiting for the return of the mate. The passengers very respectfully gave them a wide berth.

'No,' says Captain Barrington presently; 'I shall have no objection, sir. I am to be influenced by humanity in this business. My owners cannot and will not object,' he added, as if thinking aloud. 'We shall be saving a valuable yacht. Mr. Blundell is a very efficient young officer, quite experienced enough to take charge, and he will receive certain instructions from me, sir, for we must define the area of sea to be searched, and the time to be taken.'

He looked at the schooner thoughtfully.

'She is under two hundred tons,' said he. 'Mr. Blundell and four men and a boy should suffice; I can spare no more.'

'I am no sailor, but I can pull and haul,' said Captain Parry. 'I can do a man's bit. What time would you limit us to?'

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'I should wish to be a little elastic. There's no wind here to depend upon,' answered the commander. 'I will see Mr. Blundell in my cabin after breakfast, and explain my ideas.'

Presently the breakfast-bell rang. The captain and the passengers went below. Captain Parry asked that a biscuit and a cup of tea should be brought to him on deck. He gazed round upon the spacious sea, and the tranquillity of it soothed and calmed his inward, hidden, fuming impatience.

He knew that the stagnation that held the *Alfred* motionless would keep the boat so, unless the men rowed, which was not very conceivable, for sailors do not commonly row when the distance they have to traverse runs into hundreds of miles. If they had been taken aboard a ship, she, too, must be lying becalmed.

Yet one black dread ever haunted Captain Parry's fancies. He was going to seek the boat. Had Miss Vanderholt accompanied the men? Would they carry with them a living witness to their piracy and murders? Had not she been murdered before the schooner was abandoned?

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It was ten o'clock when the mate returned from the *Mowbray*. All this while the sea remained satin-smooth. The sun, soaring high, burnt fiercely; the paint bubbled in blisters, the pitch ran in soft-soap, and the whole light of the schooner's canvas poured under her in quivering sheets of quicksilver.

Mr. Mulready was dark with dirt and sweat, and looked like a man who has passed a week in stowing a ship's hold. Captain Parry stood in the gangway to receive him, and the mate's immediate inquiry was for the commander. He was closeted with Mr. Blundell.

'What news can you give me?' said the military officer, grasping the dry-minded mate by the arm, and looking beseechingly into his face.

'There's just plenty of stores and fresh water,' answered Mr. Mulready, 'enough to last a small crew six months. Her after-hold is rich in the eating line. There are about two dozen cocks and hens.'

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'I don't mean *that!*' exclaimed Parry wildly. 'Did you find no hint of the fate of the young lady?'

'My answer must be,' answered the mate, with a certain formal, sympathetic gravity, 'that nothing is alive on yonder vessel saving a few cocks and hens.'

The captain made his appearance, followed by Mr. Blundell.

'I have arranged with the third officer,' said he, walking straight up to Captain Parry and the mate, 'that he shall take charge of the yacht and search for the boat. There can be no hurry whilst this clock-calm lasts. Still, I dare say you'll be glad to go on board.'

'I'm mad to go on board!' answered Captain Parry.

'Get your luggage together, then, sir. Mr. Blundell will provide the schooner with a couple of pistols out of the arms' chest, and the necessary ammunition. If you fall in with the boat, remember they are eight seamen, rendered desperate by murder. You will be but seven. The possibility is faint, the chance is the smallest,' the captain muttered in a dying voice.

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'I thank you for your foresight,' said Parry; and he went hastily to his cabin to pack up.

The mate told Captain Barrington that there were plenty of rockets and portfires aboard the schooner. A fireball by night might bring the boat to the yacht. He then produced a piece of paper, and gave the commander an idea of the quantity of stores in the little vessel.

'They'll want nothing from us, then,' said Captain Barrington. 'However, since the mutiny appears to have been owing to the rottenness of the food, sling a couple of casks of our beef into the boat.'

It was eleven o'clock when all was ready for Captain Parry to go on board the *Mowbray*. Four men and a boy had volunteered as a crew, and when the boat was freighted she lay deep alongside with seamen's chests, luggage, casks of beef, and human beings. The passengers made a tender farewell of this singular, most romantic leave-taking in mid-ocean. They pressed forward to shake Captain Parry by the hand. Some hoped that the blessing of God would attend his search. More than one lady raised a handkerchief to her eyes. As the boat shoved off, a hearty cheer broke from the whole length of the vessel. The boat reached the side of the *Mowbray*, and all that was to be received on board was hoisted up.

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Captain Parry breathed deep, and wore a wildness in his looks, whilst he stood for a few minutes gazing round about him. Of course, he remembered the little ship perfectly well—the delightful cruise he had taken in her, with Violet and her father, a little while before he returned to India. He looked, and began to realize the brutal scene as the girl had sketched it in that last entry. It was hard to think of his immensely wealthy friend Mr. Vanderholt meeting a mean, base end at the hands of a brutal Ratcliffe sailor. What had they done with Violet? The little ship seemed to smell of human blood. The airy graces of her heights, the beauty of all that was choice and finished betwixt her rails, seemed to have departed. Wherever murder stalks, the spirit of horror, attended by the ghost of neglect and decay, follows. They break the windows of the house. They command the spiders to build. The dirty little building in which the body was found is going to pieces. The alley up which the body was dragged is of a sickly green, with a growth of unwholesome grass.

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It was so with this yacht—this beautiful fabric, the *Mowbray*. The wizardry of murder had changed her to the sight of Parry. He cursed her with all his heart as the cause of the destruction of his sweetheart and Mr. Vanderholt, and, wondering what the devil had brought her so far from home, whether it might be possible that father and daughter had been sailing to India to meet him, that they might return together in the same vessel, he put his hand upon the fire-hot companion-hood, and descended the ladder.

He searched, as the two mates had searched, and, of course, found more than they. He beheld in a cabin memorials of his sweetheart—her dresses, her hats, a veil, and a pair of gloves lay in her cot. One glove was still bulked with the impress of her hand, as though she had but just now drawn it off in a hurry, and cast it down. He peered narrowly. The cabin was a charming little boudoir. He witnessed no suggestions of violence; nothing appeared to have been disturbed. He sought for marks of blood, then thought to himself, 'If she is murdered, they did not kill her with a knife—they drowned her.'

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He stayed for half an hour in this cabin, then entered the adjoining berth, which had been Mr. Vanderholt's. He found nothing to help him here. The old gentleman had been eccentric. He had believed he loved the life of the forecastle,—God help him!—and he had illustrated his idle imagination of fondness by causing his berth to be rendered as uncomfortable as possible.

Parry was disturbed in his investigations of this berth by a bustle in the cabin. He looked out, and saw a couple of sailors coming down with his luggage.

'Tumble those traps in here,' said he. 'Are we moving?'

'It is a fact, sir,' said one of the men, who was a Swede. 'A little gentle vindt has begun to blow, and der *Alfred* is going home.'

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'Home? I do not quite understand,' exclaimed Captain Parry.

He said no more, however, to the men, and went on deck to look about him.

An air of heaven, blowing out of the boundless blue, with not a cloud in the sky to show you where it came from, was wrinkling the wide waters into a thrilling azure, and under the sun the glory was blinding.

They had trimmed sail on the schooner—a trifling matter; a hand was at the helm; Mr. Blundell stood beside him, looking into the little binnacle. On the bow was the *Alfred*, with her foretop-sail full, every cloth stirless, so soft was the cradling of that sea. Her yards were braced forwards, and she seemed to lean; she floated upright in silent majesty, nevertheless, her trucks plumb with the zenith, and, as she gained way, her short scope of wake sparkled like a shoal of herrings under her counter.

Mr. Blundell was a stout, hearty young sailor, about two-and-twenty years of age. He had that sort of face which is often met at sea under both flags—perfectly hairless, fleshy, permanently tintured by the roasting fires and the drying-in gales and frosts of ocean-travel. He was looking at the compass of the schooner when Captain Parry approached. Perhaps he sought for a hint or two in gear that did not lead like a ship's, and canvas that was not shaped for square-yards. At a

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motion from Captain Parry, he drew away from the helmsman.

'I am at a loss,' said the captain, looking at the ship under the shelter of his hand. 'Is the *Alfred* going home?'

'Certainly, sir,' answered Mr. Blundell. 'We've dipped our farewell. We're now on our own hook.'

'Then, I mistook. I supposed when Captain Barrington talked of limiting us to time that he intended we should return to him here,' said Captain Parry.

The young mate smiled.

'His notion in limiting us to time,' said he, 'was that we should not run the quest into a hopeless job. There should be a limit.' [Pg 215]

'Of course, a reasonable limit,' said Parry. 'What is it?'

'It has been left to my judgment, sir; and I am willing to be governed by you.'

'Thanks, Blundell!'

Captain Parry, pronouncing this sentence with warmth and emotion, stepped to the binnacle and looked at the card.

'You are holding the schooner north-west,' said he. 'You have a reason?'

'We must head her on one course or another,' answered Blundell. 'I propose, with your leave, to carry out Captain Barrington's ideas. He has sketched me a circular course. I'll compass it off on the chart below presently, and you shall form your own opinion. Loose the square canvas, my lads!' he sang out, abruptly breaking from Captain Parry.

The captain lent a hand to pull and haul; he dragged to the music of the salt-throats at the sheets and halliards. The breeze freshened in a steady gushing. The ocean was a miracle of laughing light. Already you heard the snore of foam at the cutwater, and the stealthy hiss of its passage aft. [Pg 216]

The *Alfred* was growing small and square in the blue distance. She was feeling the breeze now, and her pale and shapely shadow leaned as she headed, with an occasional dim flash from her wet, black side, into the far northern recess.

Captain Parry went below, and returned on deck with the binocular which he had observed in Mr. Vanderholt's cabin. The main rigging of the *Mowbray* was rattled down to the height of the lower masthead. The captain got into the shrouds, and made his way to the crosstrees. Higher, being no sailor, he durst not crawl. With one hand he grasped a topmast shroud that was sweating tar; with the other he lifted the glasses, and searched the sea till his eyes swelled and throbbed in their sockets. When he descended he said to the mate:

'I have wondered why the men should have left the schooner afloat. Don't they usually scuttle vessels in affairs of this sort?'

'I heard the captain and the second officer talk this matter over,' said Mr. Blundell. 'The second mate thought that the villains knew what they were about when they left the schooner floating. She would be met with, and boarded. They'd find nothing to give them an idea of what had happened. So she'd be carried away to a port as a mystery, and that would be giving the men a better chance than had they scuttled her.' [Pg 217]

'Why?'

'Always one of the men who've been concerned in bloody businesses of this sort finds his way to a hospital. He lies alongside another man and gabbles. The second mate seemed to think that if one of the men of this yacht turned up at a hospital and gabbled, less would be made of what he said if the schooner had been towed into port as a mystery than had she been sunk. For my part,' added Mr. Blundell, 'I believe they left her afloat because they couldn't find the heart to sink her. She is a beauty,' he murmured; and he whistled as he looked aloft and around.

'I take the second mate's view,' said Captain Parry.

He now made the tour of the schooner. He went forward and looked into the men's deck-house, then dropped into the little fore-castle and peered round him. When he regained the deck, he saw a seaman climbing the fore-rigging, with a binocular glass slung over his shoulder. He watched him till the man had reached the royal yard, over which he threw his leg, with his back against the sun-bright mast. The seaman began to sweep the sea slowly and critically. [Pg 218]

'Good God!' thought Captain Parry, with a sudden heart-leap, 'if the boat is afloat, or has not been picked up, we ought to fall in with her.'

The noise of the breeze was in his ears, a glad sense of motion came to him from the quick salt seething alongside. His heart leapt up; but in a minute all was dark again within him, with the horrible dread that Violet had been murdered by the men before they quitted the schooner.

The large, comfortable long-boat had been lifted out of its chocks, and was gone. Captain Parry noticed, however, that two good boats hung in the davits on either hand. He was impatient to learn the directions given by Captain Barrington, but Mr. Blundell was busy with the little ship's [Pg 219]

affairs just then. He had to appoint a cook, and see to the dinner; he had to arrange for a masthead look-out that should be brief under that broiling eye of day. They were few, and it taxed his genius as a sailor to make the most of them.

At last he found some time to spare. A sailor was left to trudge a look-out; one at the helm made two, one on the royal yard made three. The cook was the fourth, and the 'boy' was left to stand-by. Captain Parry followed the mate into the cabin, and, whilst Blundell went into his berth for the chart of the Atlantic, the captain stood looking about him and thinking. She had sat there, or there, he thought, at table. It was so recent, the very fragrance of her might be found in the atmosphere. How often had her feet trodden those steps? He saw her, in imagination, reading; she pored upon some volume, under that golden globe, with her hair illuminated; he thought of her agony of heart when she rushed on deck at the sound of firearms, and saw her father, the captain, and mate lying dead, and knew that she was alone with a crew of murderers.

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'This is how Captain Barrington hopes we'll work it, sir,' said Blundell, coming out of Captain Glew's berth, and putting a chart upon the table.

He also produced a pair of compasses and a nautical instrument for measuring distances. He pulled a paper, covered with calculations, from his pocket, and placed it by his side.

'This will be it, I think, sir,' said Blundell, sticking a leg of the compass into the chart; 'where the point of this leg is we were when we parted company with the *Alfred*. We allow the boat a start of thirty-six hours, remembering always that our weather will have been hers.'

'Quite so!' exclaimed Captain Parry, devouring every word.

'I am now heading,' continued the mate, with a glance at the paper, 'to arrive at this point.' Here he put the pencil end of the compasses upon the chart. 'When we arrive there, our navigation will be this.'

He now, with great care, and constant references to the paper of figures, together with a frequent use of the nautical instruments for measuring distances, described a number of circles. These circles lay one within another, and when completed they might be likened to a cone-shaped spring, or to a corkscrew looked at vertically.

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'You will perceive, Captain Parry,' said the mate, 'that the distance between each circle is the same. How far can a man see from the schooner's royal yard? Well, Captain Barrington would not allow that he should be able to see so small an object as a boat, even with a good telescope, at a greater distance than thirteen miles. Thirteen miles to port and thirteen to starboard. Each circle, therefore, is twenty-six miles wide.'

'If the boat is afloat,' exclaimed Captain Parry, viewing the discs with admiration full of hope, 'she must positively be within one of these circles?'

'Unless she has taken a breeze and blown clear, or means to come running into the inner whilst we're steering our dead best for the outer circles.'

'What chance do we stand?'

'Frankly, sir, the smallest chance that ever was found at sea,' answered the young mate, rolling up his chart.

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'The horrible consideration with me,' said Captain Parry, 'is that the young lady may not be in the boat.'

Mr. Blundell looked slowly round the cabin, but made no answer.

'What do you think?' exclaimed Parry. 'If we fall in with the boat shall we find Miss Vanderholt in her?'

The mate mused, toyed a bit with the chart, rolling and unrolling it, then said:

'From what I overheard the mate say about the entry the young lady made in the log-book, I should argue that the men had been using her civilly from the time of the mutiny. That's in her favour, sir.'

Parry eyed him intently. All the shrewdness in Blundell's brain was working in his face, sharpening his gaze and pinching lips and nose into a lifted look of eagerness whilst he talked.

'There seems to have been no trouble aboard this vessel,' he continued, 'until the mutiny took place. That should signify that the men, taking them all round, were steady as sailors go. No doubt they'd got something in the Nova Scotia way in their captain. He appears to have been one of those captains who, after draining the blood out of men's veins, runs gunpowder in, then applies the fuse. Everybody's aghast at the bloody business, but it's one man's doing.'

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'You believe that they would not use violence towards Miss Vanderholt?'

'Until I knew, I could never persuade myself that they'd make away with her. They are men. I dare say they were demons whilst they fought, and thought of the cause of their fighting. I'll not believe that, as English seamen, they'd kill the poor lady.'

'She's a living witness against them.'

'They'll have heaped oath upon oath upon her, sir. Likely as not they'll put her aboard something passing, themselves going away and waiting for the next ship.'

'God grant it!' exclaimed Captain Parry. 'It's the first bit of hope that's come to me since we fell in with the schooner.'

CHAPTER IX. THE DISCOVERY.

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The wind that evening freshened out of the north-west glare of sunset. The sky thickened, and some small wings of scud flew south-east, bronzed by the western splendour dimming fast. The sea ran in a cloudy green, but without weight, in the light tropic surge.

At sundown Mr. Blundell hailed the royal yard, and the answer, hoarse in tone as a seagull's scream, was:

'Nothing in sight, sir.'

The mate ordered the man to come down on deck, and half an hour later, when darkness was on the face of the deep, and the last red scar had died out of the starless sky, the *Mowbray* was slopping softly through the creaming waters, under her mainsail and standing jib.

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It was like being hove-to; but she had way, and when Captain Parry looked over the taffrail, he saw the cold, green lights of the sea revolving and sliding off in the short spread of yeast the nimble clipper carried with her.

It drew down a night ghastly with the pallor of the hidden moon. At about nine o'clock they burnt a flare; the crimson flames rose quivering, and the smoke drove, black as a thunder-cloud, betwixt the masts to leeward. The little ship stood out against the night fire-tinctured.

She looked, with her glowing yellow masts and fiery shrouds, to be built of flame. The night came in walls of blackness to this wild and beautiful vision, and the noise of the sea, and the sense of the infinity of the deep, that was running and seething out of sight, filled the glowing picture with an entrancing spirit of mystery. You would have said that she owed her life and light to the sea-gods.

Both Parry and the mate, whilst this flare was burning, repeatedly directed their night-glasses at the ocean, and, even whilst it burnt, a man came aft to the call of the mate and sent up a couple of rockets. The fireballs hissed, burst, and vanished in spangles, darting a lustre as of lightning across a little space of sky.

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The flare crackled, leapt up, smouldered, and was extinguished by a bucket of water.

A couple of lanterns—bright globular glasses—were lighted, and hung up in the main rigging, one on each side. This brought the hour to about a quarter past ten. The sea was again searched, its ghastly face had stolen out, and the heads of the breaking billows under that thick and pallid sky were like flashes of guns in mist.

'If the lady isn't in this circle, Captain Parry,' said Mr. Blundell cheerfully, 'let's hope we'll find her in the next. If the boat's within ten miles of us they'll have seen our flare and those fireballs.'

'But we are moving through the sea,' said Captain Parry. 'If we make them a head wind, and continue to sail, how are they to fetch us?'

'The schooner's only just under command, sir. If I heave to the drift will put me out. With your kind leave I'll go below and get a glass of grog.'

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They both went into the cabin, leaving a man to look out. They were waited upon by the 'boy,' who was, indeed, a young man of about eight-and-twenty, with a face full of fallow fluff, and an old man's look in his eyes and in the contraction of his brows, as though he had been born in the workhouse and knew life.

But at sea there were but three ratings, and if you don't sign articles as an able or ordinary seaman, then, if you were eighty years old, and could scarcely creep over the ship's side with your cargo of scythe and hour-glass, you'd still be called a boy.

The mate and Captain Parry sat for a little in the cabin, sipping cold brandy and water.

'Should the men in the boat see our flares and rockets,' said the captain, 'what will they think of them?'

'They'll approach us to take a look.'

'But if they make out that we are the schooner of their piracy and murders, will they come on board?'

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'She's an open boat, sir, and you have to consider how men will be driven by exposure. Anyhow,' said Mr. Blundell, 'if we can only coax her this side the horizon, we may easily keep her in sight till we've worn them out.'

'I have been thinking of these red-hot skies, too. Will Miss Vanderholt be able to survive the exposure of even a day and a night?' And Captain Parry swayed in his chair with the grief of the thought.

'Well,' said the mate, with the note of a stout heart in his voice, 'only a sailor is able to tell a man what ladies really can go through. Low-class females, emigrants and the like, cave in quickly; they are the shriekers. They cannot bear terror, and it kills them on rafts and in boats. But your thoroughbred lady is always the one that I've seen, heard of, and read of, who has shown a lion's heart and the coldness of a stone head in shipwreck. If Miss Vanderholt be in the boat, you'll find that she'll have suffered less than the men.'

A faint smile stirred the lips of Captain Parry; but he grew quickly grave again, with the distress of his imaginations. At that moment a hoarse cry in the skylight made them spring to their feet. [Pg 229]

'There's a big ship a-bearing down upon us!'

The mate rushed up the steps, followed by Captain Parry. The ghostly sheen of the moon still clouded as with steam the thickness of the night, and the scene of heaven and sea was mystical with elusive distance, with the soft near flash of the surge, and the windy chaos of the horizon.

On the bow, not half a mile distant, was a large pale shape. The night-glass made her white-hulled, with canvas to her trucks. The schooner was thrown into the wind. It was clearly the intention of the stranger to speak the *Mowbray*. Through the small scattering hiss of the sea on either hand you might have heard the low, constant thunder of the bow-wave of the ship as she washed through the brine, making a light for herself with her sides and white heights, but showing no lights. On a sudden the human silence was broken by a short, gruff command, weak with distance. The sound might then be heard of yards being swung; ropes crowed in blocks, parrels creaked on masts, and in a few minutes a large white ship, with the fires of the sea dripping at her cutwater, lay abreast of the schooner, all way choked out of her by the backed topsail. [Pg 230]

'Schooner ahoy!'

'Hallo!' shouted Mr. Blundell, sending his voice far into the darkness over the ship's rail, whence the hail had proceeded.

'What's wrong with you that you are sending up rockets and burning flares?'

'We are in search of a boat. Have you met with a boat containing eight men and a lady?'

A short silence ensued.

'What schooner are you?'

'The *Mowbray*, of, and now for, the Thames, when we recover the boat. What ship are you?'

'The *Georgina Wilde*, Liverpool to Melbourne. I expect your people have been rescued. We passed a schooner's long-boat yesterday morning, and I read your name, the *Mowbray*, in her stern sheets.' [Pg 231]

'If that's the case,' exclaimed Mr. Blundell quickly to Captain Parry, 'there'll be no good left in this circle job.'

'Has he no more information to give us?' said Captain Parry, with a hopeless stare at the tall, pale shadow, upon whose decks nothing was visible in that thickness save a dull, Will-o'-the-wisp-like glimmer where the binnacle stand stood.

The schooner was hailed again.

'Hallo!' answered Blundell.

'We sighted a derelict yesterday at noon. She was within a mile or two of the long-boat. Looked like a small brig, timber-laden.'

'How would she bear from us now?' bawled the mate.

It was plain, from the stillness that followed, that the man with the powerful hoarse voice had walked to his compass-stand to consider the required bearings. A midnight hush came down upon the deep then, spite of the plash and gurgle of waters in motion, and of a dull song of wind up aloft in the rigging of the schooner.

Now it was that a single shaft of moonlight glanced through a rift down upon the sea, flashing up the rolling head of a surge into a melting hill of silver. The night seemed to sweep with a deeper dye of blackness from either hand that pure crystal ray. Yet it made a light, too. It gave substance and firmness to the visionary ship abeam. [Pg 232]

Captain Parry saw a figure coming along the deck from the binnacle to the rail to hail. He also perceived figures of seamen on the short topgallant forecastle; likewise he beheld the bowsprit and jibbooms forking out like a huge spear, poised for hurling in the grasp of a giant, and betwixt that extreme point of jibboom and masthead floated symmetric clouds of soft whiteness; but the moonbeam was eclipsed in a few moments, and the white ship sank back into a vision, glimmering and scarce determinable.

Again the schooner was hailed.

'The bearings of the derelict,' shouted the voice, in tones of the volume of a speaking-trumpet, 'will be north-west by north half north, about. Don't take this as if it was an observation. Try about forty mile on that course, and if nothing heaves into view, sweep the sea. The derelict's bound to be afloat. Farewell! Good luck attend you!' Then, a minute later, 'Swing the main topsail yard! Ease away your weather main braces!'

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The pale and lofty shadow leaned from the damp night breeze, and the water trembled into fire along the visionary length of her, when, with a soft stoop of her bow to some invisible heave of the ocean, she broke her way onwards, dissolving quickly into the night.

'About forty miles distant,' said Mr. Blundell, stepping to the compass. 'Shall we head on a course for her, sir?'

'Oh, most certainly!' answered Captain Parry.

'Better jog along under easy canvas, till it comes daylight, anyhow,' said the mate.

The course was shifted, sail trimmed, the gaff foresail was set, and the schooner, carrying the midnight breeze abeam, slid soundless through the gloom over the black, wide swell of the sea.

Captain Parry was too anxious to take rest. He lighted a cheroot, and paced the deck with Mr. Blundell, who had heroically resolved not to turn in that night—not to turn in at all until the timber-laden derelict had been sighted, boarded and rummaged.

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They kept the lanterns burning in the rigging. They never knew how it might be with the eight men and the lady, supposing the lady with them. It is true that the long-boat had been fallen in with adrift; but then, as Mr. Blundell put it, 'That might be due to an accident, without signifying that they'd been received on board a ship, and their boat let go.'

'My own view's this, sir,' said he, as he lighted one of Parry's cheroots at the glowing tip of the Captain's. 'The men saw that timber craft, and being scorched with the heat, and wild with cramp, they resolved to make for the shelter of it, where they could stretch their arms and take the kinks out of their legs. The painter which held the boat slipped, and she drifted softly off, and when they saw that she was gone she was a dozen ships' lengths distant. They could do nothing, aboard a drowned timberman with empty davits, and a list of perhaps forty degrees, but let her go. That's my notion. We shall find all hands aboard. If so, what will you wish me to do, sir?'

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'Bring them into this schooner,' answered Captain Parry. 'If they have murdered Miss Vanderholt, they shall swing for it, by God!'

'But pray consider this, sir,' said Mr. Blundell coolly. 'They are eight men, daring, defiant devils, no doubt, bullies in the alley, jolly examples of your Jack Muck. We are seven. To bring them on board we should be obliged to fetch them. But, sir, we can't leave the schooner deserted. She might run away from us. She got her liberty once, and the appearance of the derelict might excite her appetite afresh for freedom.'

'For God's sake, Mr. Blundell,' broke in Captain Parry, 'don't joke!'

'I mean, sir,' continued Mr. Blundell, in a voice that did him some honour, as it proved he could be abashed, 'that we should have to leave three of our people to look after the schooner, so that we should go four to eight in order to fetch them.'

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'We are armed,' exclaimed Captain Parry.

'Two pistols,' said the mate.

'We must bring them aboard—we must bring them aboard!' cried Captain Parry, in a voice that almost shouted with nerve. 'Will they be content,' he went on after a hard suck or two at his cigar, 'to continue washing about in a wreck that might spread under them at any minute like a pack of cards when they see a schooner alongside willing to receive them?'

'To be hanged, sir.'

'Who's to tell them *that* till we've got them under hatches?' said Captain Parry.

'They know this craft,' said Blundell, in a note of gloom. 'It'll be a job. Eight of 'em, and only four of us. It'll take us all we know.'

Captain Parry belonged to a fighting profession. When he talked of boarding the timberman and bringing off the eight men, his imagination was a little confused. He brandished a sword in fancy; he was followed by a number of smart men in red coats, and with fixed bayonets. He did not quite gather that, if he headed the boarders, he should be leading into glory three timid seamen who were entirely averse to selling their lives at any price. Moreover, Captain Parry was not a sailor. He could not imagine how difficult it is to gain the deck of a ship whose people do not want you. These eight men would, in a deck cargo of timber, find plenty of materials fit for knocking out the bottom of a boat, and the brains of those who should venture their noses above the rail.

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But it was an idle argument betwixt him and the mate. Were they going to find the half-foundered brig? Would the eight men be in her? Would Miss Vanderholt be amongst them?

At daybreak nothing was visible in the telescope from the fore royal yard. The weather had

cleared in the night. It was a strange, mountainous morning of huge swollen cloud, whose sun-bright bellies amazingly whitened the silver of that ocean. Now and again, round about the horizon, a spark of lightning flashed in the heart of a violet shadow of vapour, and now and again a low note of thunder, distant, tremulous as an organ strain, rolled across the sea, as though some huge, deep-throated beast, big as a hill, and couchant behind the horizon, was being worried.

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There was breeze enough to keep the schooner's sails full, and sunrise found the *Mowbray* pursuing the course of the night. Captain Parry refreshed himself with a bucket of cold green brine, and tried to make some breakfast. Mr. Blundell ate heartily, and again, as they sat at table, they argued upon the course to adopt should they find the eight seamen on the wreck.

'If they've got Miss Vanderholt with them,' said the mate, 'I should recommend asking them to allow us to receive her aboard—we leaving them aboard the wreck to be taken off by the next thing that passes.'

'I like that idea,' said Captain Parry; 'it would save bloodshed. We want nothing but the young lady. They should be glad to get easily rid of her as a witness. If they are short of food, we can supply them with stores enough to keep them going for a time that would allow of a reasonable chance of their being rescued.'

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'They'll want provisions, anyhow,' said the mate. 'Stove timbermen float on their cargo. You need to dive to get at the grub in those derelicts. I'm counting upon hunger courting them into the schooner without obliging us to try what coaxing them with four men and two pistols is going to do.'

They went on deck, and stared at the sea-line through glasses. A little before noon, just at the moment when Mr. Blundell was coming out of his cabin with his sextant, a man stationed aloft on the look-out hailed him.

'What is it?' shouted Blundell, springing through the companion-hatch.

'There is a black object away down upon the port-bow. It looks like a boat.'

'How does it bear on the bow?' cried Blundell to the little figure aloft, a sailor with a face set in black whiskers.

He looked to tremble in the heat up there, and his shape, as he stood erect to the height of the truck, seemed shot with the lights of several dyes, and against a swollen heap of cloud past him he showed like a coloured daguerreotype.

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'About two points,' was his answer.

Mr. Blundell shifted his helm for it, but, whatever it might be, it was not yet visible from the deck. The mate got an observation of the sun, and went below to work it out. When he returned he found Captain Parry examining a dark object on the bow with a telescope.

'It's a ship's boat most unquestionably,' said the captain, turning to Mr. Blundell.

The mate was at this instant hailed afresh from the masthead.

'There's another dark object about a point on the weather-bow,' said the fellow dangling high in air, his hoarse voice softening in falls as it reached the ear from the hollows of the sails. 'She'll be the wreck, sir,' he howled, after working away with his glass.

Captain Parry was as pale as the dawn with excitement and expectation.

'I vow to God,' said he, bringing his fist down on the rail, 'I would certainly lose my left arm with cheerfulness to know at this instant that Miss Vanderholt is alive and well in the wreck!'

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'If she is with them they'll all come aboard together,' said the mate, with scarce conscious dryness. 'Hunger and thirst will work their way with beasts, let alone men.'

Little more was said whilst the schooner, driven by a five-knot breeze, swept in long floating launches down upon the boat that came and went. There had been wind somewhere, and a small swell rolled in from the westward, running lightning flashes through the water. No man could say it was the *Mowbray's* long-boat till they had luffed and shaken the wind out of the schooner close alongside the little fabric. Then her identity was settled by a single glance at her through the glass. The yacht's name, '*Mowbray*—London,' was painted in large black letters in the stern-sheets.

'Stand by to hook her,' shouted the mate.

A seaman aft, jumping for a boathook in one of the quarter-boats, sprang into the little ledge of the main chains. The schooner was slightly manœuvred; the boat was brought close alongside and captured. She was as empty and dry as an old cocoanut-shell.

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'What does that signify?' said Captain Parry.

'One of two things, clearly,' answered Blundell. 'Either they have carried all the stores they left the yacht with aboard the wreck, or the ship that picked them up emptied her before sending her adrift.'

'Would they let a valuable boat like that go?'

The mate shrugged his shoulders. There are some questions concerning the sea which even a sailor cannot answer.

'Do you see that her long painter is trailing overboard?' exclaimed Captain Parry. 'Does it not look as if the knot had unhitched and let her slip away?'

'But from what, sir? That trailing length of rope might as easily mean that she was let slip from a ship, as that she slipped of her own accord from a wreck.'

This talk, uttered swiftly, occupied a minute, whilst they overhung the rail, looking into the boat alongside. [Pg 243]

'We must have her out of that,' said the mate, 'and restore her.'

The man who was hanging to her by the boathook, turning up a face as dark as a new bronze coin, exclaimed:

'There's something white right aft, jammed away down under them stern-sheets.'

It was immediately wanted, of course, but the man with the boathook could not get it and keep a hold of the boat, too; so another man jumped in and brought up a pocket-handkerchief.

'It's a lady's,' said the mate.

'It's Miss Vanderholt's!' exclaimed Captain Parry, observing a small 'V. V.' in the corner.

Two or three marks of blood stained it, as though the lip, nose, or ear had slightly bled.

'What does it betoken?' said Captain Parry, looking at the handkerchief, and speaking softly, as though to himself. 'If it is a memorial, why, in God's name, should it come to me blood-stained?' [Pg 244]

They got the boat aboard; all hands, including Parry, pulling and hauling at the tackles. When she was chocked, a course was shaped for the derelict brig, according to the indication of the masthead man. It was a time of thrilling anxiety for Parry. The handkerchief was no warrant that the girl had been in the boat. They might have bound her, and drowned her at the side of the schooner, and yet a handkerchief of hers might have found its way into the boat. The handkerchief, then, proved nothing. Nevertheless, Parry found a sinister significance in the blood-marks. Was not this blood-stained token most tragically portentous, as the only relic or memorial of his love that the sea had to offer him? He looked at it, and in the wildness of his heart he made a meaning of it: it was a farewell to him, a message mute and eloquent; it said to him that her father was slain, and that she was lost to him for ever. Thus he stood interpreting the thing.

Shortly after one o'clock the derelict was in view right ahead. The telescope then easily resolved her. She was a small black brig, with her lower masts standing and bowsprit gone. She sat tolerably high, but rolled with the sickly sluggishness of the waterlogged hulk. As the schooner approached, features of the wreck grew plain. She carried a deck-load of timber, and her hold was evidently full of timber. By some desperate gale she had been wrenched till her butts started, her strong fastenings gave, her topmasts went, and the green seas rushing in, drowned her into a lifelessness of helm. [Pg 245]

On board the schooner they could perceive no wreckage floating near. What sufferings, obscure and horrible, was that little wreck memorializing? The phantoms of the imagination peopled her. White-faced men, dying in squatting postures, were upon the sea-broken deck-load of timber. There was no captain, no command, the fingers of famine had effaced distinctions. Then one would die with a groan, falling sideways with his white eyes glazing to the sun; and another would mutter in delirium, and call upon the Lord Jesus Christ, and motion with a ghastly smile to his mother to make haste with the drink of water she was bringing him. [Pg 246]

Phantoms or no phantoms, all were gone. The wreck lay apparently lifeless, absolutely abandoned, a yawning frame, sodden by weeks of washing to and fro. Thus it seemed to the eyes aboard the schooner as she drew closer and closer to the desolate, mournful, storm-broken fabric.

'There may be rats in that vessel,' said the mate, with a countenance made up of relief and extreme curiosity; 'but I don't see them, Captain Parry, neither do I see anything else that's living.'

'A ship has taken them off,' said Captain Parry, in a tone of hopeless misery; 'and it may be months and years before I find out what is the fate of Miss Vanderholt.'

They were now within a musket-shot of the wreck. The yacht's way was arrested, and she seemed to stand at gaze, with her people staring. The long swell swung a dismal roll into the lifeless hull. A raffle of rigging lay over her sides, and whenever she rolled away she tore this gear up from the water as if it had been sea-plants whose roots were a thousand fathoms deep; it rose hissing to the drag, and sank, like baffled snakes, when she came wearily over again. It made the heart sick to watch her, to figure one's self as alone upon her; the loose timbers clattering through the long, black night, the dark water welling in sobs alongside, the awful and soul-subduing spirit of stillness that lies in the sea when its billows are silent, as though the hush in the central heart of the profound rose like an emanation of wind or vapour, taking the senses of the lonely one with [Pg 247]

the maddening undertones of spiritual utterance.

Mr. Blundell continued to view the wreck through a glass. Captain Parry stood beside him with tightly-folded arms, death-white with grief and the sickness of disappointment, and silent.

'There is nobody aboard that vessel, sir.'

'I fear not,' the captain answered in a low voice.

'The only place where people could find shelter,' said the mate, 'is in that little green deck-house. If there were eight men sitting in the house, one would have seen us, and all have tumbled out long ago.'

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'The long-boat has told us the story,' said the captain. 'They have been taken on board another vessel. Is Miss Vanderholt with them?'

He started as to a sudden access of temper and determination, and said:

'Blundell, give me two of your men, and lower that boat. I'll board the brig. I may find something to give us a clue.'

'Put one of the revolvers in your pocket, sir,' said Mr. Blundell.

A boat was lowered, and two men and Captain Parry, armed, entered her. All was lifeless aboard the wreck. It would have been ridiculous, then, to suspect an ambush. She had old-fashioned channels, platforms by which her lower rigging was extended and secured to dead-eyes. These platforms remained. The hulk would souse them, hissing, and lift them seething and streaming, but through long intervals they would sway dry with pendulum regularity.

'The main chains will be your only chance, sir,' said one of the seamen. 'Am I to go on board with ye?'

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'If you will.'

'Then, Tom, when we're out of it, shove off for God's sake, and keep her clear of them chains. If they come down upon you, your life and the boat ain't worth a drowned cockroach.'

Watching his chance with great patience, Captain Parry sprang. He stumbled; but a wild flourish of his arm brought his hand safely to an iron belaying-pin in the rail above. He seized another hard by, and, lifting his knees to the rail, gained the deck.

He stood holding on. The peculiar jerky rolling of the hull threatened to throw him, until a minute or two of sympathetic feeling *into* the life of the fabric should have put some government of it into his legs. The sailor had easily followed.

Captain Parry was looking at the forepart of the vessel, which was a horrible litter and muddle of heaped-up timber and smashed caboose, when his companion muttered in his ear in a low growl:

'My God, master, there's a living man!'

[Pg 250]

A living man it was, standing right in the door of the deck-house. He was a seaman, and carried a strange face to those who looked at him, though one might have said he should be familiar enough to anybody belonging to the schooner *Mowbray*. He was James Jones, the boatswain of the yacht. His cheeks were gaunt and grimy, and his eyes blazed in their hollows. His hair lay in streaks over his ears, and down the back of his head, as though to repeated greasy tuggings and pullings. He was without his coat, and his great muscular arms were bare to above the elbow.

Captain Parry recoiled a step, thrusting his hand into the pocket where the pistol lay. He suspected this man to be one of the eight, and that the seven would burst out in a minute.

'I'm damned if ye ain't come just in the nick of time!' said Jones; and his grin, and exhibition of yellow fangs, and his dirty skin and flaming eyes, made his face horrible. 'I tell ye what I've just found out. There ain't no death! "How do I know that?" says you. Why, ye see, a man ain't dead till he dies, and when he's dead death ain't got no existence for him. D'ye see it?' said he with an inimitable leer.

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Captain Parry saw that he was mad, but in the moment of detecting this he observed something more. Behind the madman, looking over his shoulders, stood Miss Vanderholt. She was robed in white, and wore a small straw hat. She was pale, as though exhausted, perhaps from the want of food or drink; otherwise, but for her impassioned transforming gaze, she looked as though she had but now come with Captain Parry to view the wreck.

'Oh, Violet, my dear one! Violet, I have found you!' cried Parry, and he rushed towards her.

She shrieked, standing still and clasping her hands, and looking up to God.

'There's no admission 'ere!' roared the madman, barricading the door by extending his arms. 'This is a royal yacht. Why don't you cast your eyes aloft and view the Royal Standard a-flying? The Princess Victoria is within. Didn't I know her gracious mother, the Duchess? I'm an English sailor, and I'm loyal to my native country. God save the King!'

[Pg 252]

Saying which, he turned and bowed with every mark of profound veneration to Miss Vanderholt.

'Let me pass, man!' cried Captain Parry, pulling out his revolver and hustling the powerful fellow.

'Hide it!' screamed Violet; 'he is mad! He has been kind to me! Oh, my God! George, am I dreaming? Is it you in the flesh, or am I mad, too?'

She put her hands to her eyes, and reeled to a stanchion, against which she leaned. The madman continued to barricade the door, both huge arms extended.

'Look here,' cried Parry, almost as mad as the seaman he confronted, with impatience, infuriated by this hellish lunatic obstruction, wild to clasp the girl, whose reel and motion of hands had stabbed his heart; 'we want to get at this young lady at once, to take her on board yonder schooner. Make way, for God's sake! I'll hear all about your views on death when we're comfortable aboard that vessel.'

'There's no blooming man,' shouted the madman, 'a-going to approach the Princess Victoria without falling down upon his bended knees and crawling to her feet, as the custom is at St. James's Palace!' [Pg 253]

Miss Vanderholt went into hysterics. She shrieked with laughter; she sobbed as if her heart was breaking.

'I think you'd better go down upon your knees, sir,' said the sailor who had accompanied Parry. 'Here, my lad,' said he, crooking his finger into a fish-hook at the man, 'you just make way for the gent to crawl to her Gracious 'Ighness, and whilst he's kow-towing, give me that there yarn of yourn about death.'

He winked at the captain, who sank upon his knees. The scene was grotesque, tragic, extraordinary. The boatswain watched the figure of the captain with fiery suspicion whilst he passed on all fours through the door of the deck-house. Miss Vanderholt was still in hysterics.

'Damn the ruffian! I can't stand it!' shouted the captain, and he sprang to his feet and clasped the girl.

But the madman had begun to state his queer paradox with fearful earnestness to the seaman, who had fixed him with a stare, and was, with singular judgment in a common fool of a drunken sailor, drawing him out of sight of the couple. [Pg 254]

Miss Vanderholt lay in her lover's arms, weeping and laughing; but a few kisses and murmurs of devotion produced a very good effect. She controlled herself, and then they were able to talk in swift questions and eager answers. Outside the madman continued to argue with the sailor on the subject of death.

'There ain't no death!' he roared, with all the strength of his throat. 'D'ye call it a good job, mate? Here stands the man as has got rid of the terror of the world. Hark you, bully! Ye can turn in now without fearing to die. It'll do away with prayers, for there ain't no death!'

Thus he raved, whilst inside, the girl, in the embrace of her sweetheart, talked in a score of feverish questions and answers. She was white, but clearly not from want of food. Up in a corner of the deck-house stood a little load of tins of meat and biscuit, removed from the *Mowbray's* hold by her revolted men. In another corner was the long-boat's big breaker, and a pannikin at hand for a drink. [Pg 255]

'Let's get away from this wreck,' said Parry, clasping the girl's hand. 'Yet, what a wonderful meeting!' he cried, devouring her with his eyes. 'What a miraculous deliverance! Oh, the hand of God is in it, and I am grateful—I am grateful!'

They moved towards the door, and the madman saw them coming.

'Look here,' he cried, making for them in a jump or two, with an air so menacing that Parry's hand instantly sought his pistol. 'No man walks alongside the Princess Victoria aboard this Royal yacht. Her 'Ighness the Duchess taught me how to behave myself in the eye of Royalty when I was a young un, and this is how it's done,' said he, giving Captain Parry a shove that drove him some feet from Miss Vanderholt; then, stepping in front of the girl, he bowed low, with all those marks of abject veneration which had distinguished his former obeisance, and saying, 'If your Royal 'Ighness will now step out,' he moved backwards. [Pg 256]

But a long plank lay athwart his path; the captain and the seaman saw what was to happen; the madman fell heavily backwards over it.

'Bring the boat alongside, Jim!' bawled the sailor. 'This is the Ryle yacht. See the Standard a-flying? The Princess Victoria is aboard, and we've got to back her into the boat according to the custom of the Court of St. James's Palace.'

The boatswain was up again, and, flourishing his hand, he cried:

'Right!'

'You leave him to me, sir,' said the sailor, with a half-wink at Captain Parry, who was absolutely at a loss.

He would not for a million have shot the unhappy madman, and yet he durst not approach Miss Vanderholt whilst that huge and brawny lunatic watched him.

The seaman in the boat concluded that his shipmate had lost his mind.

'What the blooming blazes,' he thought to himself, 'is Bill a-jawing about, with his Ryle yachts and Ryle Standards?' [Pg 257]

And he looked right up into the sky.

'Stand by now, Tom, to receive her Ryle 'Ighness!' shouted the sailor, with a glance at the madman. 'As her 'Ighness must go first, there's no harm, I hope,' said he, 'in her walking face foremost?'

'She always do,' shouted the boatswain. 'Bow her to the rail, and hand her over.'

Nothing could have been better. The swell gave them a good deal of trouble, but two of them were sailors, and presently Miss Vanderholt was in the boat. Captain Parry sprang into the chains, and, watching his opportunity, leapt, and was by his sweetheart's side in a minute.

The madman overhung the rails, staring greedily. He knuckled his brow as one who would drive a pain out of his brain, then began to laugh when Captain Parry jumped into the boat.

'Bring him along, Bill. You lay he'll know what to do!' cried the sailor in the boat.

'Her Ryle 'Ighness commands you to attend her, sir,' said the seaman. 'Step right over the side into the chains, and don't jump back'ards.' [Pg 258]

The boatswain drew himself stiffly erect, and, after gazing aloft at the vision of the Standard, which blew in rich folds under the swelling clouds to his insane eye, he exclaimed:

'Who's going to look after her Royal 'Ighness's yacht if I leave her?'

'She'll lie quiet enough, mate, till you return,' said the sailor. 'Hark! Her Ryle 'Ighness is a-calling of you.'

'Pray attend upon me! I command your presence in this boat!' cried the girl in the loudest, most imperious voice her condition would permit her to manage.

The poor creature bowed low over the rail, then in silence dropped into the chains, followed by the sailor, and in a minute or two both were seated in the boat.

All went quietly. The boatswain shifted restlessly in his seat, with a grin of stupefaction. His burning eyes rolled over the *Mowbray*, and again and again he pulled his hair with hands that sweated like tallow. [Pg 259]

Miss Vanderholt's first exclamation, when she was handed over the side, was, 'My father! my poor father!' And she began to cry. The dreadful scene rose before her mental vision, and she shook with old sensations of terror.

Captain Parry, passing his arm through hers, gently and tenderly led her below. She had been too much moved to address Mr. Blundell, and for a little while she needed the privacy of the cabin and her lover's company. Presently, whilst they sat below, she told Captain Parry the story of the mutiny, and her adventures down to this hour.

It seems that some of the men were for going away at once in the long-boat, after scuttling the yacht; others were for letting her lie afloat; but all were agreed that she must be abandoned. Then Miss Vanderholt found out that they were undecided what they should do with her. Most of them, she gathered, were for leaving her in the yacht, to take her chance of being picked up. [Pg 260]

'Why not?' said they. 'We can shorten sail for her before we leave. We can lash the helm amidships. She's got plenty to eat and drink. She can't come to hurt in these waters, and is bound to be rescued.'

But the boatswain, who had grown ferocious in temper, and had manifested many symptoms of insanity, swore that she should not be abandoned to her fate. She was an Englishwoman; he was an English seaman. By God! he would brain any man who talked of leaving the poor young lady alone to wash about in the schooner.

She told Captain Parry that this Jones overawed the men, and they seemed to treat him as though his madness made him superior to themselves. They all left in the long-boat. The boatswain next morning went quite mad, and took Miss Vanderholt to be the Princess Victoria. He bowed humbly to her in the boat; he would sometimes kneel to her. He whipped a straw hat off a man's head to shade her with.

His hallucination was, fortunately, a sober one. He supposed the men to be the crew of the cutter of some Royal yacht or other, and himself in command, seeking the vessel that her Gracious Highness, as he frequently called her, might sail round the world. A man cut his finger in opening a tin, and the young lady gave him her handkerchief to bind the wound. He left it in the boat. [Pg 261]

When they fell in with the derelict they were exhausted with the scorching heat and the exposure by night, and determined to take shelter and rest aboard, and signal for help, if help should heave into view. They emptied the long-boat; but that same evening of their entering the derelict, about an hour before sundown, a small brigantine leisurely came flapping down upon them, and seven men entered the long-boat and rowed for her, leaving the boatswain and the young lady to their fate.

Not until long afterwards was it discovered that this brigantine was a Frenchman, that her crew

had mutinied, and sent her captain and mate adrift, and that, though they perceived the figures of the boatswain and the young lady on the brig, yet, on the *Mowbray's* men telling them that one could bear witness to the mutiny, and that the other was a dangerous madman, they put their helm up and sailed away.

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Before the set of sun the *Mowbray* was heeling to a fresh breeze; every cloth that could draw was driving her cutwater through it, and her clipper-stem rose the white brine raving to her hawse-pipes. She seemed, like those on board, to have got the scent, and to know that she was going home.

THE END.

BILLING AND SONS, PRINTERS, GUILDFORD.

[Pg 263]



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