







The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

WORKS OF  
JAMES OTIS



THE WRECK OF THE  
"OCEAN QUEEN" \$1.50

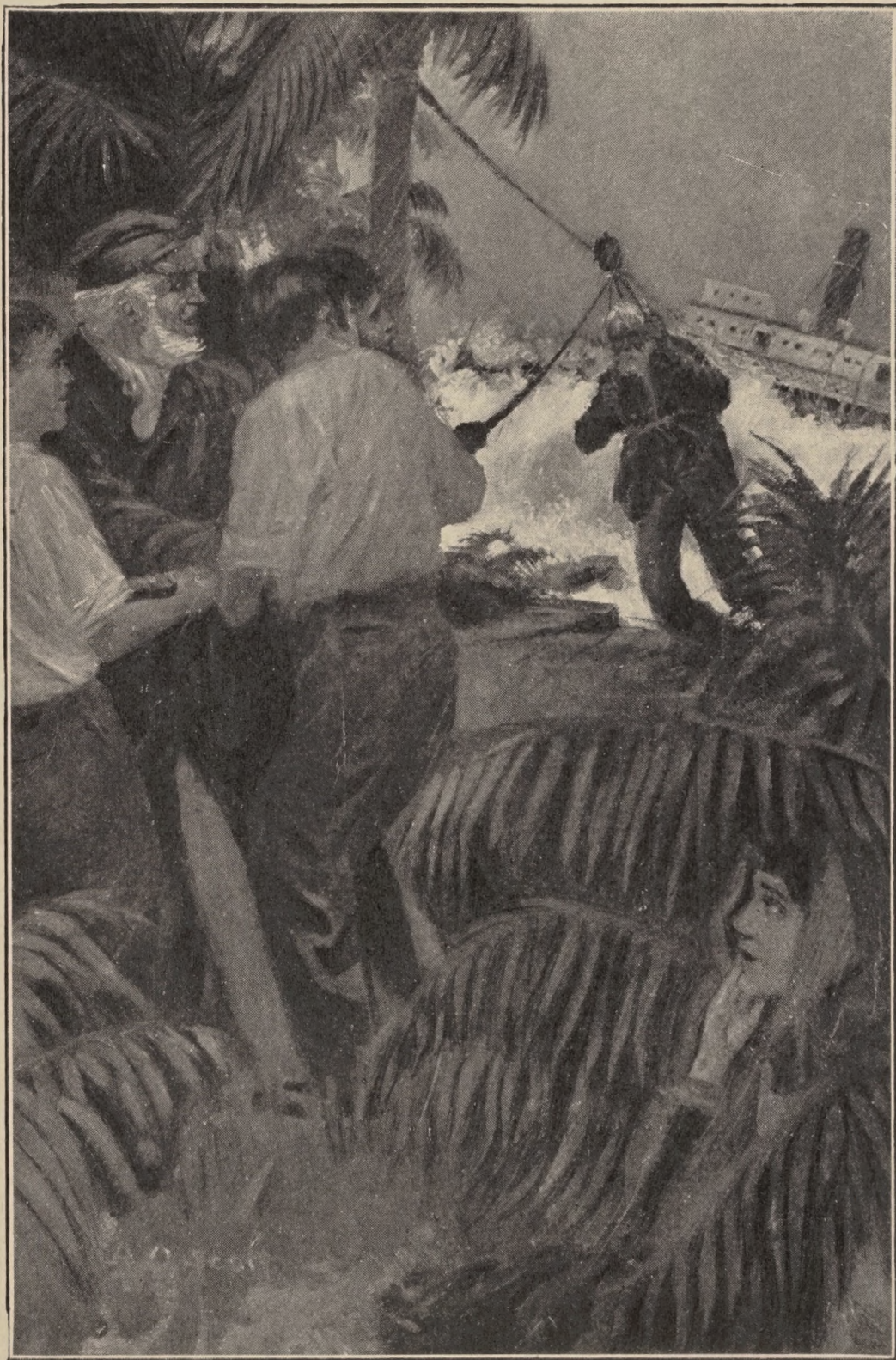
LARRY HUDSON'S AMBI-  
TION .50



L. C. PAGE & COMPANY  
New England Building, Boston, Mass.







"EVERY PERSON TAILED ON TO THE ROPE." (*See page 281.*)

# THE WRECK OF THE "OCEAN QUEEN"

A STORY OF THE SEA

By JAMES OTIS *Kaler*

Author of "Larry Hudson's Ambition," "Raising  
the Pearl," "Toby Tyler," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY

A. O. SCOTT



*Boston* ✦ L. C. PAGE &  
COMPANY ✦ *Mdcccvii*

PZ7  
K124 Waw

LIBRARY of CONGRESS  
Two Copies Received  
JUL 25 907  
Copyright Entry  
*July 25, 1907*  
CLASS *a* Xxc., No.  
*182745*  
COPY B.

*Copyright, 1907*

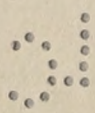
BY L. C. PAGE & COMPANY  
(INCORPORATED)

Entered at Stationers' Hall, London

*All rights reserved*

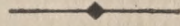
First Impression, June, 1907

07-24585



COLONIAL PRESS  
*Electrotyped and Printed by C. H. Simonds & Co.*  
Boston, U. S. A.

# Contents



CHAPTER	PAGE
I. HOW THE ADVENTURE BEGAN . . . . .	I
II. THE DISASTER . . . . .	19
III. THE WRECK . . . . .	36
IV. THE ISLAND . . . . .	55
V. TONY DISAPPEARS . . . . .	73
VI. BESIEGED . . . . .	90
VII. THE VENTURE . . . . .	106
VIII. A RUNNING FIGHT . . . . .	124
IX. INVALID AND PRISONER . . . . .	142
X. RAFT - BUILDING . . . . .	159
XI. SHORT ALLOWANCE . . . . .	174
XII. A RECRUIT FOR THE MUTINEERS . . . . .	188
XIII. A CHANCE SHOT . . . . .	207
XIV. OUTFITTING THE RAFT . . . . .	217
XV. A NEW MOVE . . . . .	235
XVI. ON THE OFFENSIVE . . . . .	249
XVII. THE RESCUE . . . . .	267
XVIII. MR. OSBORNE'S INVITATION . . . . .	283



## List of Illustrations

---

	PAGE
"EVERY PERSON TAILED ON TO THE ROPE" (See page 281) . . . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i> ✓
"HE RETURNED, LOOKING AS IF HE HAD SEEN A GHOST" . . . . .	81 ✓
"CAPTAIN BRAGG WAS THE LAST MAN IN THE LINE" . . . . .	114 ✓
"THE ARMS WERE OUTSTRETCHED AS IF TRYING TO GRASP SOMETHING" . . . . .	184 ✓
"'HELP! HELP! MR. OSBORNE IS SHOT!'" . . . . .	212 ✓
"I RAN AS IF IN A DREAM" . . . . .	260 ✓





# The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

---

## CHAPTER I

### HOW THE ADVENTURE BEGAN

**T**WENTY years have passed since that day when I believed myself so wonderfully fortunate; but very soon came to understand I was embarked on a voyage which was but the beginning of the strangest and the most startling adventure in which a lad ever involuntarily played a part.

I had but just turned sixteen years of age; had been graduated from the high school in my native town with honours, and was counting on entering college as soon as, in the opinion of the family physician, I had had enough of outdoor life to strengthen me for the four years of hard study which lay before me if I succeeded in doing the work necessary to win a diploma.

No lad likes to confess that he is not as strong and well able to do an ordinary amount of hard work as are his fellows, and yet I was forced to admit that

## 2 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

every classmate I had just been associated with, was my superior in health and strength. The one question to be decided was as to where I could spend the time to the best advantage while preparing myself for the mental race, and the matter was under most serious discussion when my uncle, whose namesake I am, came to the rescue in what at the time I thought was a most delightful fashion, although, as a matter of fact, as was soon to be proven, nothing else could have been so nearly fatal to my hopes as a student.

Amos Grout, my father's brother, had spent the greater portion of his life at sea, having been for many years, prior to his retiring from business, captain of some of the largest and best sailing-ships built, in the days before they were displaced by what he calls "iron tankers" — meaning steamers. The old gentleman professed to have the greatest dislike to metal hulls, whether propelled by wind or steam, and yet at that time, when he should have remained at home in order to get all the enjoyment possible out of life, it was his intention to journey around the world by the ordinary routes of travel.

"I'm wantin' to see some of the familiar ports once more before I die," he said to my father on the day when he broke in upon the family council where was being discussed my future. "I reckon it won't do me any harm to spend a few months on those confounded iron tankers which don't deserve the name of ships, an' yet contrive to stay atop of water so long that we've got no right to call 'em divin' bells. I'm thinkin' of goin' around the world like any land-

lubber, an' after I've spent a couple of years, more or less, aboard a creakin', groanin', wabbly old hulk of a passenger-steamer, maybe I'll feel more contented to putter about on shore for the remainder of my days."

"You have the right to please yourself, Amos, if any man has," my father said heartily, for he and his brother were ever warm friends. "Without child or chick in the world, there's no reason why you shouldn't go to Timbuctoo, if so be you've a hankerin' for the place. I only wish we could decide as quickly what should be done with our Amos, for certain it is he must have plenty of outdoor life before he settles down to another long time of study."

"Your Amos?" my uncle said quickly and impatiently, as if we had failed to understand him. "Isn't he the reason why I'm here this day the same as askin' your permission to take a holiday?"

As a matter of course both father and mother looked, as indeed they were, thoroughly puzzled by my uncle's words, and he began to roar as if in a passion, although knowing him so well, we understood it was only a trick of his to appear angry, even when he was actually bubbling over with good humour:

"Do you allow that I'm to be shipped off alone like some second cousin who's to be sent to the poor-house?" he cried in a tone so loud that any one a square away, who had been listening, could have heard him. "With a hulkin' lad like Amos livin' a life of idleness, I'm to be packed off by myself, eh?"

Then it was that we began to understand what he

## 4 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

was driving at, and, as has already been set down, I believed myself the most fortunate lad in the world to have a rich uncle who wanted company while he journeyed around the world in search of pleasure. It goes without saying that the invitation, thus given as if in anger, was accepted without loss of time, and nothing occurred to prevent us from setting out in accordance with the plan already formed by my uncle.

There is no good reason why I should make any attempt at telling of our voyage across the Atlantic, or of what we saw in Europe while moving leisurely about to those cities which gave promise of affording us the most pleasure, for I have not set myself down to write a book of travels such as can be copied from any guide-book, but to describe at length that adventure which, for many a long, fearsome day, threatened my uncle and myself as well as many others, with a most cruel death.

Therefore it is that I shall make no mention of what we saw on our travels, until the fourteenth day of May, in the year 1871, when we sailed out of the harbour of Hong Kong, bound for Manila. We had been away from the United States so long that I would have been well pleased at the announcement that we were at last homeward bound; and seen so many odd sights that I was no longer eager for strange scenes; but sat on the deck of the steamer watching the passengers and crew, instead of trying to impress upon my mind the details of that city and harbour which had come to the English through the Chinese government.

Uncle Amos had found in the captain of this steamer, the *Ocean Queen*, an old acquaintance, and was on the bridge with him, most likely fancying himself once more in command, therefore I was at liberty to do as I pleased, and it so happened that I chose to watch my fellow passengers and such members of the crew as came within my range of vision, speculating idly as to why this one or that was on board.

He who first attracted my attention was a lad of about my own age, who was talking eagerly with a lady whom I fancied was his mother, and because none of the other passengers spoke with these two as we sailed out of the harbour, I came to believe they were alone, as I found really was the case when I looked over the list of passengers, and read there the names:

“Mrs. Joseph Currier.  
Master Samuel Currier.”

The boy looked well and strong, as if he could not only take his own part in this world, but share the burdens of another, and, perhaps, because he was so directly my opposite bodily, I at once had the greatest desire to have him as a friend, promising myself that on the following day, after the voyage was well begun, I would do my best at making his acquaintance.

Another of the passengers who particularly attracted my attention was a regular Miss Nancy of a man, who sported the most gorgeous clothing, and

## 6 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

paced to and fro as if disposed to give every one an opportunity to look at him in admiration. His name, as I learned later, was Roger Osborne, a howling swell from New York, who was doing his best, and with very fair success, at charming a sweet-faced young lady who sat in a steamer-chair muffled to the chin in shawls, although the day was anything rather than cold. She gave but little attention to the walking tailor-shop; it was easy to see that they were acquaintances, but she bit off her words mighty short when speaking to him, and I came to believe she had tired of such monkey-shines as he was cutting.

The other passengers did not interest me very much — perhaps it was because my attention was called to a person other than those who were on the ship by way of pleasure. This was the third mate, as I judged by the single band of gold lace on his cap, and it is safe to say that never had man a more villainous face than he showed to me when he came aft as if to have a look at the company.

At the time I said to myself that I was a fool for sitting there in Uncle Amos's chair, watching the people and speculating as to what might be read on their faces; but I remained, nevertheless, and was really fascinated by the expression of hatred toward his own kind, which I fancied it was possible to read on the fellow's face. Now it may seem strange to some that a lad hardly more than sixteen years of age would thus spend his time, and many might believe I was playing the prig; but that is not so. From the first day when we set off on our voyage

around the world, Uncle Amos had taught me to do this same thing, so to speak, by insisting that I sit by his side while he called my attention to this or that face among the passengers, pretending to read not only their characters, but their business pursuits, by studying the features.

More than once had he hit the nail squarely on the head, as I came to know before the voyage was at an end; but in two or three cases he had made the most comical mistakes, as for instance, when he declared beyond any possibility of a mistake that a certain man was a bully of the lowest type, and, lo and behold, he was one of the most celebrated lawyers in New York.

The hangdog of a mate lingered aft a long time, as if engaged in the same pleasure which occupied me. He scrutinized carefully every face, particularly those of the men, and more than once did he look toward the bridge of the steamer, where I could see the captain of the ship and Uncle Amos standing side by side as if engaged in most earnest conversation.

When the dinner hour came, and my uncle was with me again, I had other things to think of than the boy whom I desired as a friend, the howling swell who had bored the sweet-faced girl, or the bully of a mate, for Uncle Amos was filled to the brim with ship news.

“The captain of the *Queen* is an old friend of mine, Young Amos,” he said to me, sticking on that adjective to my name regardless of who might overhear him, and I fancied it caused me to seem like a baby to others. “I made my first voyage with him

## 8      **The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"**

after I got a berth aft — I was second mate then, and he treated me like a gentleman, when I dare say I should have been rated soundly as a lubberly sailorman who dared set himself up as an officer. Captain Bragg is his name; he hailed from Bridgeport, in Connecticut, when I first knew him, and has drifted from one command to another till now he is master of the finest passenger-steamer sailing out of Hong Kong, if you can truthfully say there is anything fine about an iron tub, for the best of these metal ships is a wallowin' tub alongside some of the Yankee-built clippers in the China trade when I was young, an' sailormen depended on such wind as the Almighty sent, instead of havin' a teakettle in the hold to shove her along. I remember once —"

At that moment came the second summons to dinner, and I was not sorry, for it cut short one of uncle's long-winded sea-yarns, of which I had grown tired through hearing two or three every day since we left New York.

We had seats at the captain's table, thanks to Uncle Amos's acquaintance with the master of the ship, and that is no small advantage on a long voyage, as I had already found out, for one gets the best of everything before those at the other tables have well begun, which is to be desired when a fellow is hungry.

The other boy — Samuel Currier — sat beside his mother at the first officer's table, and when he looked at me, which was often, I fancied he was as eager to be friendly with me as I with him, therefore made up my mind to give him a chance as soon as the dinner had come to an end.



Uncle Amos and Captain Bragg were talking in a low tone when next I paid any attention to them, and I heard my uncle say:

“How did it get noised around that this was a remarkably rich ship, Bragg? I have heard the passengers talkin’ as if nothing ever left Hong Kong with such a lading.”

“The trouble is that the money wasn’t sent on board until at the very last minute, although it was agreed it should be put aboard last night, and everybody, except you, who were the last to show up, saw it swung below,” the captain said, as if he was angry because the steamer had such a rich cargo. “It’s Spanish government specie, so I heard, though why it was sent by us from Hong Kong beats me.”

“What’s the rest of the cargo?” my uncle asked.

“General merchandise, such as you can fancy would be sent to Manila, with the exception of arms and ammunition — more government supplies.”

“How does it happen that a merchant ship is carryin’ ’em?”

“One of the Spanish cruisers had to put in to Hong Kong, to go in the dock, owing to having taken the bottom where even a blind man could have seen the reef, and we are carrying her lading.”

Then the captain turned to the fat old lady who sat at his right hand, in order to answer some foolish question which she had asked, and I took advantage of the opportunity to say:

“I should think the captain of a steamer would be glad to have a rich cargo, sir.”

“So might he be if it had come aboard as it should;

## 10 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

but this takin' in gold as if it was pig lead, for all the toughs of Hong Kong to see, is enough to make a master just a bit nervous."

"Why?"

"Well, lad, there's always the chance that men might be tempted to take the risk of the gallows by makin' themselves rich with other people's money, an' if it was generally known in Hong Kong that so much treasure was to be shipped, there's no tellin' what kind of a job might be hatched up."

At that moment Captain Bragg turned to my uncle once more, the fat lady's curiosity having been satisfied, and I heard him say:

"You may be certain, Grout, that I had a look at the passenger list as soon as I understood at what time the treasure was to be sent aboard; but every berth was taken three or four days before it became known that the Spanish cruiser was to re-ship her lading, therefore there's no call for me to trouble my head."

"What about your crew?" my uncle asked, and the captain replied:

"It's made up about as you might expect; plenty of bad blood aboard, but no one with backbone enough to regularly turn pirate, so I think you and I can settle down to a game of checkers this evening without fear that anything will go wrong."

Uncle Amos believed himself to be the most skilful checker player in the world, and I was glad Captain Bragg had an inclination that way, because I had really felt obliged to play with my uncle whenever he asked me, which was altogether too often accord-

ing to my ideas, and it is poor sport to take a hand in a game when there's no question but that you will be beaten. We, meaning Uncle Amos and myself, had spent the greater portion of our time, since leaving home, over checkers or sea stories, and the idea of having a vacation of one evening was something very pleasing.

As soon as the dinner had come to an end I took my station just outside the door of the saloon, and when Samuel Currier showed himself I gave him the chance to make my acquaintance. He was perfectly willing to take advantage of the opportunity, and in less than five minutes we knew each other properly.

His home was in Boston, although he was very much different from one Boston boy we met in Paris, with nothing about him that looked like putting on airs, and he was going with his mother to Manila to see his grandfather, who had been in business there for nobody knows how long. He wasn't expecting to have much fun, because he couldn't speak a single word of Spanish, and his only hope was that Uncle Amos and I would stay as long as his mother did.

"At any rate we'll be together until we arrive at Manila, and that's a good deal, for until I saw you it seemed certain this would be a dismal voyage, with nothing to do except watch the dude dance around that pretty girl."

"Have you noticed him too?" I cried with a laugh, and then I advised him to watch the third mate when he had nothing better to do.

"I've been looking at a lot of Filipinos in the steerage, having nothing better to do," he said by way of

## 12 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

showing me that he kept his eyes open pretty wide. "They are a tough-looking lot, although it don't seem possible that such little people could do very much mischief; but it seems they have kept the Spaniards busy a good deal of the time."

Then we talked of the islands we were about to visit, he telling me all he had read about them, and I doing the same by him; but getting far more in the way of information than I gave. As for instance: I learned that the translation of the name "Hong Kong" is "Fragrant Stream;" that it was leased by the British government from the Chinese in 1841, and is about thirty miles square. It is an island, Sam said, although I already knew as much, and is the greatest traffic centre on the Chinese coast.

For my part, I could tell him that our steamer was to run up the coast as far as Amoy, where she would stop several hours, passing on the way Namoa Island, which was formerly populated almost entirely by pirates, and even to this day the people would not hesitate to do something in the way of piracy if a reasonably safe opportunity offered. Uncle Amos once had a row with the villains, and came very near losing his ship, as I had heard a dozen times over since arriving at this quarter of the globe, and Sam Currier, hearing as much, was wild to seek out my uncle that he might hear the yarn for himself; but I had no idea of listening to that old story while it was possible to talk with such a mighty good fellow as this boy from Boston appeared to be.

I also knew that when the *Ocean Queen* left Amoy, instead of heading directly for Manila, she would lay

a course for the most northerly end of Luzon, in order to take advantage of the strong currents of the China Sea, which vary from one to four knots an hour. Sam knew very little about ships and navigation; but I had heard so much from Uncle Amos on the subject since we left home, that it was possible for me to talk in a sailorly fashion, therefore I have no doubt but that he believed me to be an experienced seaman. It seemed to me well he should have such an idea, if for no other reason than to counterbalance his knowledge of geography and history, which appeared to me so great that at times I was almost ashamed of my ignorance.

Sam didn't seem to be trying to show off his superior knowledge; but it can easily be understood how a fellow like me would feel to have him recite, as if reading from a book, something like this:

“The Philippine Islands, numbering some twelve hundred, are separated by narrow channels, and cover an area nearly twice as large as the British Islands. They were discovered in 1521 by a Spanish squadron, under Magellan, who lost his life on the occasion while fighting with the people of Zebu. At first the Philippines were called St. Lazarus Islands, but twenty years later they were given the present name, in honour of Philip. Only in 1565, however, forty years after their discovery, first Zebu, then Panay, and finally Luzon, were taken possession of by a force under Miguel de Legaspi. Since that date Spain has held the whole group, though several of the southern islands hardly acknowledge her authority.”

## 14 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

Uncle Amos had a good map of the islands we were to visit, which was all I needed in the way of information, although as a matter of course I made it appear that the account which Sam gave was intensely interesting. Before he could spread himself any further, however, I called his attention to the swell, who was promenading the deck aft where the pretty girl still sat done up in shawls, and from that out we gave more heed to the passengers than to such dry stuff as history and geography, never dreaming how well we were to become acquainted with one of the smallest islands of the group.

Before the *Ocean Queen* arrived at Amoy, Sam Currier and I were as good friends as it is possible for two fellows to be, and, having set ourselves right down to the task of learning whether the third officer was as much of a brute as he looked, we made his acquaintance. His name was Enoch Files, and I suspected, from some things he said during such times as we could make him talk, that he came from New Bedford way, though when I taxed him with the supposed fact, he shut his mouth like a clam.

Except as a specimen of natural history, to be studied simply through curiosity, he was not a pleasing addition to our list of acquaintances. He was generally growling about the way the world had used him, and I have since come to believe that when a fellow thus accuses everybody with whom he comes in contact, it is fairly good proof that he has not deserved well of mankind. Files, when he was not sulky, questioned us so closely concerning this passenger or the other, that I wondered why he was

thus curious, since his business lay entirely with the ship, rather than among those who had taken passage. Then again, it seemed to me as if he was displeased, or disappointed, because my uncle was an old shipmaster who had served the greater portion of his life in the China trade, and would, naturally, have his eye-teeth cut for villainy of any kind.

Sam and I soon tired of studying a grumpy specimen like the third officer, and before the *Ocean Queen* left Amoy, it was almost as if we had never met him. Mr. Thompson, the first mate, and Mr. Jenkins, who was next below him in command, were as nice men as you would meet in a year's journey, and when off duty they made matters as pleasant as possible for us youngsters.

Mr. Thompson took us below, into the engine-room, where he introduced us to Mr. Ezra Stubbs, the chief engineer, who was born way down in Maine, and this last officer was very friendly as soon as he learned where we hailed from.

An odd stick was Mr. Stubbs. While the steamer was lying at Amoy, taking on and discharging cargo, during which time the engineer had nothing to do, I ventured to say that it seemed queer to find so many men from the United States on board a ship in Chinese trade, and he replied with a grin, as if believing the only sailormen in the world were to be found in our own country:

“Cap'in Bragg knows what he's about, lad, when he makes up a crew from the best material at hand. There's never a sailorman from the States shows up in these ports but the old man tries to hire him.

## 16 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

We've got a very decent lot of officers, bar that kill-joy, Files, an' I only wish we could say as much for the men."

"We haven't seen many of them," Sam said as if the matter did not concern him very deeply, and the engineer replied crustily:

"Wa'al, that's no loss, lad, for they're poor sticks, take 'em as they run. We've got specimens from pretty nigh every tribe or nation in this section of the world, an' I wouldn't trust one of 'em with a flea-bitten yaller dog, unless I had some grudge agin the poor creeter."

"Did Mr. Files come from New Bedford?" I asked, for, whatever turn the conversation took, my mind was constantly coming back to the third officer's ugly face.

"It's hard tellin' where he hails from, lad; but there's one thing certain — he's afraid to name the place for fear we'll come to learn of his kickin' his grandmother, or some other such mean caper."

I am not trying to make it appear as if such conversation has anything of importance with the story I am trying to tell; but have set it down in order to show the opinion of the *Queen's* officers regarding one of their number.

We had what you might call a summer day's cruise along the Chinese coast; but within two hours after leaving Amoy for the forty-eight-hour run to the northernmost of the Philippine group, there was a change in the scene such as soon proved which of our passengers were seasoned sailors. Then it was that we struck the tail end of a belated winter monsoon,



with the wind from the northeast kicking up a heavy, ugly sea which knocked the *Ocean Queen* about as if she had been no more than a feather.

Mr. Osborne, the swell, was the first to give in, and the expression on his face as he staggered below, leaving pretty little Miss Hubbard in her chair on the lee side, was so comical that Sam and I could not prevent ourselves from laughing outright. Even the young lady, who had been so chummy with him a few minutes previous, was forced to bite her lips in order to hide a smile.

Our mirth came to a speedy end, however, for inside of half an hour the steamer was jumping and staggering at such a rate that the oldest shellback on board would have found it impossible to move about without something by way of support, and we lads offered to help Miss Hubbard to her cabin. It was high time the young lady went below, for the *Queen* was sending the spray fore and aft, and if she wasn't soaking wet I'll eat my head, as Uncle Amos so often says.

The three of us were sent sprawling on the saloon floor as we came down the companionway arm in arm, and once there the stewards, or such of them as could move about, helped us to our cabins after no little labour.

The weather was a bit too heavy even for such an old sea-dog as Uncle Amos, and I hadn't been in my bunk more than five minutes when he came below, puffing and blowing like a porpoise.

"I didn't suppose anything in the way of weather would drive you below, sir," I said, as he came into

## 18 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

our cabin like a ball out of a gun, the steamer having given a mighty jump just as he opened the door, and he growled while trying to reach the cushioned locker which he used as a couch in the daytime.

"I'm too old a fish to face a nor'east monsoon when there's no need of it, Young Amos, an' this 'ere cabin is a good bit snugger than the bridge while this blessed tank of a ship is stickin' her nose into it as she's doin' now. If I'd needed anythin' to convince me that an iron kettle wasn't meant by the Almighty to float as a timbered hull can, this dose would be enough."

"Is there any danger, sir?" I ventured to ask, beginning to grow a bit timid because he had thought it best to come below, and he replied as if in anger:

"There's always danger in Chinese waters, Young Amos; but with such a skipper as Joe Bragg, there's little to be feared, save in the way of bein' knocked about as we're gettin' it now."

Then my uncle must needs begin spinning a long yarn of disasters in the Chinese sea, which he had experienced or heard about, until I begged of him to hold his peace, for with a ship plunging and leaping as the *Ocean Queen* was doing, it is not calculated to make a fellow feel overly well in mind to hear how brave seamen have met death in the midst of such a gale as was then raging.

## CHAPTER II

### THE DISASTER

**B**EFORE another morning came it was as if some one had been beating me with a stick; it really seemed as if every portion of my body was sore from the many bruises received as the *Ocean Queen* tossed us about in our bunks much like corn in a popper. One might as well take the tumbling about passively, as to hold on to the sides of the narrow sleeping-quarters and strain every muscle to avoid being thrown out bodily, for a little of such work was as bad as the thumping.

More than once during the night did my uncle crawl out of bed at risk of breaking every bone in his body, and literally fight against the motion of the ship until he was come to where he could peer out through the windows of the smoking-room, which was on the upper deck. Because he did not attempt to make me believe he had experienced far worse gales than that which was smiting the *Ocean Queen* stem and stern, I knew he was far from being comfortable in mind regarding the possible safety of the ship; but it was not until considerably past midnight that I ventured to ask if the storm was increasing.

“As nearly as I can make out, it is, lad. These

## 20 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

nor'east monsoons are ugly customers to deal with, even when you've got a properly built ship under your feet, an' in an iron kettle like this there's no knowin' how soon you may be blown on your beam-ends."

"Is there really any danger of our being swamped?" I cried, frightened by the tone in which my uncle spoke.

"If I was aboard a wooden vessel, I should say that so long as we could keep her before the wind, an' had plenty of seaway, everything was as it should be; but in a kettle like this, with a big brood of islands dead to so'therd, no man can guess what may happen."

After receiving such an answer I regretted having asked the question, for now I was thoroughly frightened, and so far gave over trying to hold myself in the bunk that I was thrown out twice in rapid succession, with a force sufficient to have broken more bones than one had I fallen awkwardly.

By that time I came to realize how foolish I was to give way to fear when there was nothing to be gained by trembling, and resolutely forced myself to think of something other than the danger to which we were exposed.

Shortly before it was time for the sun to rise, Uncle Amos gave me no slight degree of comfort by saying, as if speaking to himself:

"It may be I've given these iron hulls a black eye when they didn't really deserve it, for the ship seems to be behavin' well, even though the wind is heavier than it was an hour ago. If we've got sea-room

enough, there's no reason why Joe Bragg shouldn't be able to run out of this smother."

The wonder of it was that I could hear what the old gentleman said, for the uproar was great with the banging of doors, the crash of crockery as some one of the saloon lockers broke away, and the pounding of the screw when the *Ocean Queen's* stern was raised so high in the air that it whirled like mad with no resistance to its motion. It was a turmoil sufficient to deafen one, and yet I had heard my uncle's words quite distinctly.

"Are you going to make a try at getting on deck, sir?" I asked when the gray light told that a new day had come.

"Not a bit of it, lad. I'm gettin' too old an' clumsy to take my chances outside where the sea must be makin' a clean breach over us, when there's nothin' I can do to help things along. It's likely Joe Bragg will be comin' down for a bite to eat before long, an' then we'll hear what he has to say. Suppose you an' I crawl out into the saloon; it'll be more cheerful than this knot-hole."

When we first came aboard I had thought our cabin was of unusually generous proportions; but straightway my uncle likened it to a knot-hole, it seemed stifling, and, exerting myself to the utmost, I finally contrived, with the assistance of one of the stewards, in making my way to an armchair in the main saloon, which was likewise the place where the meals were served.

Uncle Amos and I were the only passengers who had ventured outside their sleeping-quarters, and the

## 22 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

Chinese stewards had nothing to do save wait upon us. After three cups of coffee had been spilled as the yellow servants tried to cross the saloon, I succeeded in getting a few mouthfuls of the steaming hot liquid, and a world of good it did me.

It seemed as if the greater portion of the danger had passed when I was thus refreshed, and while clinging to the arms of the chair lest I should be hurled across the saloon as the steward who attempted to wait on me had been flung no less than three times, I tried to picture in my mind how the gorgeous swell, Mr. Osborne, looked, while sick, as I had no doubt he was.

While I was thus engaged, trying to forget the desperate battle with the elements which the ship was waging, Sam Currier came out of his cabin much as a ball comes from the striker's bat, with no control over himself as he strove to clutch at this piece of the furnishings or that, while he rolled directly toward me.

It was a good catch which I made, and it saved him from an ugly bump against the partition of the nearest cabin. I contrived to get a stout grip on his arm, and brought him up all standing. Then, as the steamer hung almost motionless on the crest of a wave, I pulled the lad in until he was able to clutch the arm of my chair. After considerable labour on the part of both, he wedged himself in by my side, and we got along quite comfortably, because it was impossible for us to be shaken about very much while in those snug quarters.

Such breakfast as was served that morning we lads

ate while packed into one chair, and, despite the furious gale which seemed bent on sending our steamer to the bottom, we found much that was comical in the appearance of the passengers who were sufficiently bold to make an effort at getting their share of the meal.

Not above a dozen showed themselves, but Sam's mother, Mr. Osborne, the swell, and pretty Miss Hubbard were not among the number. Sam told me that his mother was no more frightened than you would expect a woman to be, and that she had succeeded in holding herself inside her berth despite the plunging of the steamer.

For awhile it was very much like sport to watch the people come shooting out of their cabins and go sliding across the deck; but when all who were inclined had made the venture, and we could no longer find interesting subjects to talk about, the time passed heavily. While remaining silent we had a good opportunity to think of the danger which menaced, and what little we saw of Captain Bragg was not calculated to make us any more comfortable in mind.

He came into the saloon after the others had eaten what had been served, and talked a few moments with Uncle Amos, shaking his head several times as if to say that the situation was not pleasing, whereupon Sam said to me:

“It seems that Captain Bragg and your uncle, whom you say is an old shipmaster, are no better pleased with this kind of weather than are we.”

If there was any change in the weather during the

## 24 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

day, it was for the worse, and when, weary of sitting wedged into the chair with the boy from Boston, I called one of the Chinese stewards to help me to my cabin, the *Ocean Queen* was plunging about more wildly than ever, if indeed that could be possible.

Near about noon one of the Chinamen made shift to bring me a bowl of soup, more than half of which was spilled before getting a small portion into my stomach, and I was lying there wondering how much longer the steamer could hold herself together against the furious buffeting of the wind and waves, when Uncle Amos dashed in, fetching up against his berth with a thud that must have shaken him terribly.

"How much longer is this going to last, sir?" I asked, irritably, meaning, of course, the storm, and he replied in the tone of one who has lost his courage:

"I wish I knew, lad. Instead of runnin' out of the flurry, as Bragg counted on, he seems to be swingin' with it. I've been insisting that his kettle hasn't power enough inside her to stand up against the wind; but is bein' carried around with it, an' although he wouldn't admit as much, he didn't try very hard to back me down."

"And what would be the result, sir, if all you say be true?" I asked, once more becoming so frightened that it was difficult to prevent my teeth from chattering.

"No man can say, lad," my uncle replied solemnly; "but it begins to look as if we'd have a chance to find out. We are in the hands of the Almighty, my



boy, an' none but sailormen know the full meanin' of the words."

Then, after a great effort, Uncle Amos succeeded in climbing into his bunk, where he remained silent, as if not in the mood for conversation.

Strange as it may seem, I slept not a little during the day, and toward night must have had a long nap, for when I awakened it was dark in the cabin. Again and again I called to Uncle Amos; there was no reply, and I came to understand that he had gone out while I was thus sleeping, although how he contrived to do so was more than I could well imagine, for it seemed as if the steamer literally stood on her bow or stern every instant, changing position so suddenly that no person could have kept his feet against it, unless he had a stout grip with both hands on something immovable.

I knew full well that it would be impossible for me to leave the cabin without assistance, and I remained there perforce, at times actually holding my breath in painful suspense when the labouring steamer sank down, down into the watery chasms as if taking her last plunge.

Then came a time when, for perhaps ten seconds, I fancied that we had suddenly sailed out of the tempest, because the steamer seemed to ride more easily; but the idea was hardly more than shaped in my mind before we rose again on the crest of a wave, appeared to shoot ahead with lightning-like speed, stopping so suddenly, with a tremendous crash, that I was thrown straight out from the bunk against the cabin door with sufficient force to shatter the panels.

## 26 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

Half stunned and well-nigh stupefied with fear, I heard the wildest screams and cries from all around me, but failed to understand the meaning of all that had happened until feeling that the steamer was again being lifted up, up until once more came the gliding motion which I felt before the first shock.

Again came a crash that sent me a second time across the small room, and then ensued a sickening silence while one might have counted ten, when the screams and cries burst forth more wildly than before.

By this time I came to realize what had happened. The *Ocean Queen* had struck a reef, perhaps the shore of an island — it mattered little what, so far as we were concerned, for in that furious tempest there was small chance we could save our lives even though we were then within a hundred feet of the mainland.

After that second crash and shock the steamer remained immovable; but I could hear the surges strike her with such force that the iron hull quivered as does a leaf in the evening breeze. We were aground, and I understood that anything made by man could not long withstand such a battering as the *Ocean Queen* was receiving.

Slowly but surely the hull was heeling to starboard, and with frantic haste I forced my way out through the splintered door before it should be too late, for if the steamer lurched much farther, the entrance to the cabin would be directly above my head. As I struggled through, heeding not the wounds inflicted by the shattered woodwork, the

shrieks and cries of fear or agony drowned all other sounds save the terrible pounding of the waters.

How I succeeded in getting through that narrow opening, where the splintered boards caught and held my clothing as if bent on dragging me back, I cannot say. It was at the time enough for me that at last I stood free on the saloon deck, gazing like a stupid at the wild scene of panic everywhere around. Men were running aimlessly fore and aft, screaming wildly, incoherently. Women were stretched at full length on the deck, moaning as if in bodily pain, or praying without giving due heed to their words, and never one of all that company who retained sufficient of his or her senses to make any effort at learning the extent of the peril.

It was while I stood helpless in my terror, striving to catch a glimpse of Uncle Amos, as if believing he would be able to help me in that awful time, that I saw one person threading his way swiftly among the maddened people, uttering words of cheer — urging the men to give token of their manhood, and the women to take such measures as might be possible for making ready to leave the ship.

“The officers of this steamer are brave men, and will do all within their power to save us who are under their care!” he shouted, and a big, burly passenger near me cried with a whine:

“They have locked us in here to drown like rats in a trap! I tried to get into the smoking-room; but found every door bolted or barred against me.”

“You know very well that we have been fastened below since noon, lest some one should foolishly try

## 28 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

to gain the deck, where he would have been swept away by the seas! I tell you that the captain of this ship will be here as soon as he has done what may be within his power on deck; but it will be impossible for him, or any other, to aid us while we are behaving more like lunatics than reasoning beings."

While I was striving in the dim light, for but few of the lamps were yet burning, to make out what brave fellow this was who put aside his own fears to cheer others, Sam Currier seized me by the hand and shouted, for the din was so great that words spoken in an ordinary tone could not have been heard:

"Come with me to my cabin! Mother has fainted, and I can't get any one to help me when the word comes for us to go on deck!"

At that moment I had given up all hope that we would ever have an opportunity of going on deck again, for I made no doubt but that those who had declared we would drown there like rats in a trap were speaking no more than the truth, yet I followed the boy from Boston, forcing my way among the maddened crowd, who were screaming less loudly in order that they might hear what the one brave fellow among us all was saying.

"Who is he?" I asked of Sam Currier, as we passed near the man who strove to cheer others instead of making his own preparations for death, or for the struggle against the elements.

"It's the swell, Mr. Osborne!" Sam cried. "I wish somebody had kicked me before I had a chance to make sport of him!"

"The swell!" I repeated in astonishment, and

then as a sudden thought came into my mind, I said with much of envy in my heart, "If any of us are saved, Miss Hubbard will be among the number, for Mr. Osborne appears to be the only brave man here in the saloon."

By this time we were come to the cabin occupied by Sam's mother, and when we crept down through the door, which was open, the steamer being heeled on that side, I saw the poor woman lying on the floor, as if death had already come to her.

I had no idea as to what should be done; but Sam was eager to get her out into the saloon, where she might have her chance with the rest if word came for us to take to the boats, and we were half-dragging, half-carrying her up the inclined deck when some one called me by name.

"Here!" I replied, without turning my head, and not recognizing the voice in all that uproar, for I was well-nigh as crazy as the wildest person there.

"What are you about, lad?" came the question an instant later, and, wheeling around as nearly as was possible while holding the unconscious woman, I saw my uncle.

I could not have repressed the exclamation of joy which escaped my lips, however much I might have tried, for, to my mind, here was the one man among all on board, next to Captain Bragg, who could aid us, and I cried hurriedly:

"This is Sam's mother, who has fainted, and we're getting her out into the saloon so she'll be seen when the word comes for us to take to the boats."

"Leave the poor woman where she is!" my uncle

## 30 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

said in a tone of authority. "She will be the better off in the bunk," and, raising her in his arms, he laid her gently back on the bed, after which he began pouring water in her face as if it was his purpose to drown her at once.

"But if the people make a rush for the boats, she may miss a chance of getting ashore, sir," I said hurriedly, and my uncle replied, speaking with his lips very near my ear, as if afraid others might hear him:

"There'll be no rush for the boats, lad, because the gale hasn't left one aboard, an' —"

"But how will we get ashore?" I cried wildly, and it is not certain that tears did not fill my eyes, for if the boats were gone, what hope had we of saving our lives?

"We're in the keepin' of the Almighty, lad, as we were before the steamer struck, an' if it's His will, we'll have the land under our feet once more, boats or no boats."

The tone in which Uncle Amos spoke awed me, and I held my peace, not daring to give further words to my fears, until Sam's mother opened her eyes. It was as if the poor woman did not realize for a minute or more what had happened, and then, clutching my uncle by the sleeve, giving no heed to Sam, who was kneeling at her side, she cried:

"The steamer is surely wrecked past all mending; must we die here in the darkness, without making any effort to save ourselves?"

"Death will come no less easily in the night than under the glare of the sun," my uncle said, speaking

in a tone which gave me the chills, for it sounded as if he was taking part in a funeral. "There is nothin' we can do, ma'am; if we would be of assistance to the officers of this steamer, who are doin' all within the power of men in our behalf, we must control our fears, at least to the extent of remainin' decently quiet."

It was as if he had scolded her, and I can but think she took it in such a way, for on the instant she sat upright, asking quietly:

"Is the ship sinking, sir?"

"That cannot be possible, after takin' the ground as solidly as she did. The greatest danger now is that the waves may pound her to pieces before mornin'."

"Will nothing be done toward saving our lives before then?" and she asked the question as if simply satisfying an ordinary curiosity.

"Most likely no move, so far as the passengers are concerned, *can* be made before light. The night is black; the seas breakin' over the hull render it in the highest degree dangerous to make one's way half the length of the deck. In order to find Young Amos, I was forced to make the venture; but, old sailor as I am, I came near to losin' my life," and my uncle, who had been sitting on the locker that he might the more readily speak with the frightened woman, now arose to his feet, showing us that he was drenched as if having been overboard.

Mrs. Currier did not speak, and Uncle Amos, closing the cabin door to shut out, so far as might be possible, the babel of cries which came from the

## 32 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

saloon, told us as much as he knew of the situation, and although it was evident that he made every effort to speak calmly, I could readily detect the tremor of his voice.

"Because this ship has been knocked about from one point of the compass to the other by the gale, it is impossible for the captain to say where we are, except that we must be among the Philippine group. Owin' to the darkness, an' smother of water as the sea comes aboard, there is nothin' to be done till we can see how she is held; but, knowin' Joe Bragg as I do, ma'am, I give you my word that he an' his officers will do all mortal men can for every soul aboard. We're in the Lord's keepin' here as we would be ashore, an' to howl an' carry on as them idjuts out there are doin', is to shame our Maker in whose image we are."

Uncle Amos motioned toward the saloon with his thumb, that we might know whom he called "idjuts," and, having thus much the same as ordered us to hold our peace, he opened the cabin door, intending, as I had no doubt, to give the screaming, terrified mob — for it was nothing less — his opinion of them.

The uproar was by no means so great or wild as it had been immediately after the steamer struck. Mr. Osborne, the swell whom I had believed a few hours previous lacked even so much of courage as might be sufficient to defend himself in event of an attack, had actually forced the more noisy of the men to hold their peace, and was now trying to soothe the weeping women.

When Uncle Amos marched out among that



throng, some silent and others noisy in their terror and grief, it was as if he counted on using his hands in order to make them behave themselves as people should while standing face to face with death, and he began the lesson by saying to Mr. Osborne so loudly that all must have heard him:

“ I am glad to see that there’s one sensible man among us, sir. I’ve stood before death many a time in my life, when I had around me only sailormen, who are not supposed to be very gentle in their ways; but this is the first time I was ever thoroughly ashamed of my companions, savin’ you, sir.”

“ Have you been on deck? ” Mr. Osborne asked quietly, and in much the same manner as if he had been inquiring as to the day’s run.

“ Ay; I was in the chart-room when she took the ground.”

“ Have you any idea as to the situation? ”

“ None whatever,” my uncle replied, and then he told all that throng, which had quieted down when he began to speak with Mr. Osborne, much the same as he had repeated in Mrs. Currier’s cabin.

“ I will go and tell Miss Hubbard that she had better remain in her berth,” Mr. Osborne said when my uncle was at an end of his recital, and as he moved away one of the men cried out angrily:

“ Why don’t the captain launch the boats and take us off this wreck? Does he want us all to drown here while he and his crew have a chance to slip away? Does he think we might hinder him from saving his own precious body? ”

“ Open your mouth again with a word against

## 34 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

Joe Bragg, the ablest shipmaster in the China Sea, an' I'll throttle you!" Uncle Amos cried in a fury as he made his way among the passengers in the direction from which the voice had come. "You'll not find him thinkin' of his own safety while a single passenger is in danger!"

"Then why don't he launch the boats and let us out of this hole?" some other man cried angrily, and Uncle Amos replied in a voice almost choked with rage:

"The first landsman that showed his head outside the deck-house would be washed over the rail before he could shut his eyes; that's why you're kept below, an' as to the boats, if you *will* have the truth, you cowards, every blessed one was carried away hours before the steamer struck! Now do you want to go out an' ask the cap'in why he ain't down here soothin' you crazy idjuts? Try to show yourselves men, if that be possible! You're makin' more outcry than the women, an' if it so be Joe Bragg does succeed in gettin' you out of this mess, I hope the finger of scorn will be pointed at you for ever an' a day, as a disgrace to the name of men!"

Mr. Osborne came up before Uncle Amos had done with his angry words, waiting until he ceased speaking, when he said:

"Miss Hubbard, of whom I spoke a few moments ago, is alone on board — I am the only person with whom she is acquainted. It is no more than natural she should be terrified, for this is a time when I fancy a brave man might be excused for trembling. I wish she had some companion during this fearful

time, and take the liberty of asking if your wife is on board, sir? ”

“ I thank God she isn't, sir,” my uncle replied, fervently, and then, as if suddenly remembering Sam's mother, he added, quickly, “ In yonder cabin is a lone woman, who has been travellin' in the company of her young son. Your friend could go in there, I reckon, an' it may be one would cheer the other a bit.”

“ Will you come with me to Miss Hubbard's cabin and explain matters, sir? ” Mr. Osborne asked, with as fine an air as if he had been ashore in safety.

“ That I will, an' afterward flog some of them cowards till they no longer have the strength to howl,” Uncle Amos said fiercely as the two went aft.

Then Sam Currier put his hand gently in mine, and mighty glad was I to feel the soft grip, for there was so much of fear in my heart that I had hard work to prevent myself from joining the cowards in their weeping and wailing.

## CHAPTER III

### THE WRECK

**T**HERE is much I could set down regarding that fearsome night, when at times the waves struck the steamer such blows that it seemed as if she must be torn to pieces; but so many words will be required in the telling of what happened after the day dawned, that I must pass over very many details which would be well worth the reading.

The example set by Uncle Amos and Mr. Osborne soon reduced the cowards to comparative silence, and after Miss Hubbard and Sam's mother were together in the latter's cabin, there was nothing for us to do save listen in fear and trembling to the pounding of the surges against the side of the wounded steamer.

At first she quivered like a living thing under the blows of the sea, until it was as if she would shake herself apart, and then, after what appeared like a very long while, she ceased to move, save, as it seemed to me, she gradually righted to an even keel, when Uncle Amos cried in a tone of relief, speaking so loud that all in the saloon could hear the words:

“The tide has gone down, leavin' us stranded where the surf cannot reach the hulk. Durin' a few

hours, at least, there is no fear the ship will be stove, an' before the waters rise again the wind may quiet down a bit. That she has settled fairly, we can tell by her no longer havin' a list."

"God grant the gentleman speaks the truth!" I heard a woman near me say fervently, and then those men who had shown themselves the greatest cowards, began swaggering to and fro as if it was only because of their efforts that the sea could no longer smite the ship.

It may have been no more than midnight, though it seemed to me as if twice twenty-four hours had passed, when Captain Bragg and the first officer came into the saloon looking much as if they had been under water ever since the ship struck; but making no sign that matters were other than as they should be.

"Spread the table with the best you have got, an' see to it that there be plenty of hot coffee," the captain said to one of the stewards, and Mr. Thompson followed the man into the pantry as if to make certain the captain's orders would be obeyed promptly.

This command had hardly more than been given when the passengers crowded around Captain Bragg, each demanding that he tell them in what condition the ship might be, and all speaking at the same moment, so that the din was nearly as great as when the first shock told us the *Ocean Queen* had come to the end of her last voyage.

It was five minutes or more before the captain could, by entreaties and threats, induce the clamorous ones to hold their peace, and then he said,

## 38 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

speaking bravely as if to show he did not consider our position very serious:

"It is impossible to say on what land we have struck; there is little question, however, but that we are fast near the northern point of Luzon. I am of the belief that we are on one of the Batan Islands, or, perhaps, further south in the Babuyan group, all of which lie north of Luzon in nearly the same longitude as the southerly point of Formosa. Mr. Thompson, the first officer, inclines to the belief that we are on Luzon, but I cannot believe we made so much southing durin' the gale."

"When will you know where we are?" one of the impatient men asked petulantly, and the captain replied calmly and kindly:

"As soon as day breaks it should be possible to get a fairly good idea. The wind is abatin' very rapidly, an' you are now in far less danger than when the *Queen* was afloat. As a matter of course, there may be a tedious delay; but wherever we are, it cannot be a very long while before it will be possible to send to Manila for assistance. I give you my word that there is no reason, save for the fact of the steamer's bein' a helpless wreck, why you should not make yourselves comfortable by dismissin' all fears."

There could be no question but that the captain believed all he said, and by the time Mr. Thompson returned to the saloon, taking his place at the head of one of the tables as if impatient to be served, the passengers were as calm as they previously had been excited.

The stewards, whose movements had probably

been quickened by the first officer, soon had food before us, and in less than half an hour from the time Captain Bragg made his appearance, every passenger was at the table, seemingly in as good spirits as on the afternoon out of Hong Kong. I could not rid myself of the fear, however, that at any moment the ship might slide off into deep water, and sink like a stone; but the remainder of the company did not appear to have any such forebodings, and I strove to banish from my mind anything which might prevent me from enjoying this repast on board what we all realized was a hopeless wreck.

When the meal was come to an end, and I fancied that Captain Bragg, Uncle Amos, and Mr. Thompson kept the people in their seats as long as possible, the doors of the deck-saloon and the smoking-room were thrown open, thus giving the passengers an opportunity to learn if it was in their power to see more than had already been reported.

Sam and I went on deck after a time, but delaying until many of the people had returned to the comfort and cheer of the saloon, lest it should appear that we doubted what had been told us, and it would have been as well had we remained below, so far as seeing anything was concerned. Heavy clouds still blotted out the faint light of the stars, and the phosphorescence of the waves as they rolled up so harmlessly against the hull, their strength having been broken by the outlying reef most likely, was all that we could distinguish.

“ Surely it seems as if we had been driven high up on the rocks, or the beach, whichever it may be; but

## 40 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

yet that is impossible," I said, as if my opinion was of great value, and Sam asked, quietly:

"Why is it impossible?"

"Because the wind could not drive so big a steamer very far up on the shore."

"It is certain you have not read how the P. & O. steamer *Bokhara* was driven by a northeast monsoon across the shoals and banks of the Pescadores, where there was hardly more than eight feet of water, until the plates, and even the frames of the hull, were actually worn away."

"When did that happen?" I asked, wondering whether Sam had not been listening to some of my uncle's yarns.

"Less than a year ago. I found an old copy of the Hong Kong *Daily Press* at the hotel, and was reading it the evening before we left."

If that story was true, and I determined to ask Uncle Amos about it later, then was it possible the *Ocean Queen* had been blown so far inland that we might step ashore dry-shod after sunrise, and this thought made me very comfortable in mind, knowing as I did that the wreck could not remain long on the coast without being sighted by some of the many craft which probably cruised in those waters.

Sam and I went below once more, and found in the saloon a very cheerful company, for it was as if every one had come to much the same belief as I indulged in, and those who howled the loudest when it seemed as if the *Ocean Queen* was about to founder, were now the most noisy in their joy and mental relief.

Miss Hubbard, who is the very nicest young lady I



ever met, was so kind as to pretend that she and I might be firm friends, and I had not yet finished telling her of home, when my eyes closed in slumber even as I sat on the couch beside her.

When I awakened, it was to find that she had drawn me toward her until my head rested in her lap, as if I had been no more than a baby, while Sam was lying on the deck at his mother's feet. The gray light of the coming dawn had crept into the saloon until the flame of the lamps looked dull; many of the people were sleeping as best they might in the saloon, and a goodly number were missing.

“Have those cowardly gentlemen gone into their cabins?” I asked of Miss Hubbard, after making an awkward sort of apology for having allowed her thus to tend me as if I was a child, and she replied that nearly all the gentlemen had followed the captain on deck when the darkness dimmed to gray, thus telling that morning was near at hand.

As she spoke Sam awakened, and I proposed that we two go on deck at once, promising to come back in a very short time with such information regarding the situation of the steamer as we could gain.

There was no thought of evil in my mind as I ran up the companionway. I had already settled it that ours was the most convenient and harmless casting-away that could well be imagined, and, therefore, was my disappointment and grief all the greater when, with the rapid approach of the new day, it was possible to see the extent of the disaster.

Even before glancing ashore, I looked around the deck where, when I was last in the open air, every-

## 42 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

thing was trim and neat, as is customary on such a steamer as the *Ocean Queen*. Now it was at a most dismal wreck that I gazed. The bridge and one of the smoke-stacks had been entirely carried away; great gaps here and there in the rail told of the fury with which the surges had leaped upon the labouring ship. Where but a few hours before had swung canvas-covered life-boats, were now frayed ropes swinging idly to and fro in the gentle breeze, for the monsoon had given place to what was rapidly becoming a dead calm, and the iron davits, bent and twisted, seemed to speak of our helplessness.

The steamer appeared to be a perfect wreck as to the upper works, and I wondered how it had been possible for Captain Bragg, who knew full well before he came below how great was the disaster, to appear cheerful — almost happy.

"Where are we?" I asked, as Uncle Amos, seeing Sam and me, came up with a certain stiffness of manner, as if he had suddenly grown old, and while asking the question I looked outboard with more of fear than curiosity, seeing a line of rocks extending well in among the foliage, with the hulk perched on the outermost point.

"It's an island, an' I'm allowin' Joe Bragg was right when he guessed we'd struck one of the Batans; but we'll know more about it when he takes the sun at noon," my uncle replied. "We're far out of the course of steamers runnin' to Manila, an' it may be we shall camp here some time before sightin' Luzon."

"How can we get ashore?" I asked in a tremulous voice.

“ That part of it will be an easy traverse to work, lad. Go forward a bit, an’ you’ll see what is bein’ done.”

Sam and I did as he suggested, and from that moment until after many hours had passed, we had no need to ask questions, for by listening to what the excited passengers said, and by using our eyes, we could have a good idea of the situation.

Well forward, where was what would have answered in a sailing-ship to the fore-castle deck, but was now no more than a mass of battered iron plates and splintered planks, a dozen or more officers and men were working over what appeared to be a small raft, made up of such life-preservers as were to be found in the cabins, and I heard some one say that a man was to be sent ashore on the contrivance, in the hope that a hawser might be made fast to trees, or points of the ledge, on which all hands could make their way to the land.

Then we heard, from this one or that, further concerning the condition of the ship. Her bottom was stove so badly that the hull was filled with water to within a few inches of the saloon deck; two of the steerage passengers had been drowned very shortly after we struck, and as the sea poured in through the shattered iron plates, one of the firemen had been scalded to death by escaping steam. Everything movable had been swept from the decks, and save for the doors of the cabins and such woodwork as might be ripped off from the saloon furnishings, we were unable to build a raft. The storerooms were flooded, and nearly all the provisions destroyed; and in addi-

## 44    **The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"**

tion to this tale of disaster, there was every reason to fear that the island where we had grounded might be inhabited by men who would prove no less merciless than the sea.

All this, and a hundred other wild rumours, some of which might be true, but many were in the highest degree impossible, did Sam and I hear as we stood well up in the bow watching the sailors at their work, yet that danger which seemed to me most imminent was not suggested by those who appeared to find pleasure in representing the situation as being desperate. The crew was made up of brown men and yellow, with but one white face among them, and that a villainous-looking old shellback who might well have served as a model for a pirate. He and the third mate were apparently good friends, and when I saw them whispering together now and then, the question came into my mind as to whether the two were not already laying their plans to profit by our misfortunes.

There was danger in plenty on every hand, without my going out of the way to find more, and I resolved not to let fear run away with common sense, therefore gave all my attention to the efforts which were being made to stretch a hawser to the shore.

The collection of life-preservers were bottomed with a door taken from one of the forward cabins, and, attached to this poor apology for a raft, was a long length of small line with a coil on the steamer's deck to be payed out as the rude craft advanced toward the land, if indeed it could be propelled in any desired direction. I knew that if the sailor se-

lected to make the attempt could gain the island, it would be a comparatively simple matter to haul ashore a hawser with the small line, or that the raft might be sent back for another man — the only question was as to whether the contrivance might be navigated among the rocks where the waters boiled and surged with many an eddy and tiny whirlpool.

It was a Filipino sailor who was to make the attempt, and as he clambered over the shattered rail while half a dozen of his mates were lowering the odd raft, I questioned whether I was not both larger and heavier, for he looked to be little more than a boy.

“A plucky beggar, that,” Uncle Amos said, as Captain Bragg stepped back to his side to watch the fellow try to navigate the awkward craft through the boiling waters. “It strikes me he enjoys what many a white man would balk at.”

“He *is* plucky,” Captain Bragg replied, looking around as if fearing some one might overhear him. “He has sailed with me these three years, an’ I’ve never seen the time when I didn’t believe Tony, as we call him, wouldn’t be glad to put his knife into my back.”

“Where did you pick him up?”

“In Manila; he came aboard like a half-starved kitten, and I always suspected that he’d been up to serious mischief in the city, for he keeps under cover as much as possible, except at Hong Kong. He’s the one to get the hawser out if it is to be done, an’ after that it stands me in hand to keep him under my eye.”

“Is there a possibility you may have trouble?”

## 46 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

Uncle Amos asked in a half-whisper, and the captain said, curtly:

"Look at the crew, including the third mate! It is known that we're a rich ship, and if this is the island I believe it to be, there's nothin' to prevent them from doing their worst — or makin' a try for it. Are you armed, Grout?"

"Bless you, no; what call have I to carry weapons when I'm travellin' for pleasure?"

"Take this revolver," Captain Bragg said, as he slyly passed something which he had drawn from his hip pocket, to my uncle. "I'll see that you have another, an' I'm countin' that you'll stand ready if needed."

"You can reckon on me, not only in a pinch, but in case you're obliged to stand watch, as likely will be the case. There's another man aft I'd advise you to call on; that little whipper-snapper of a dude. He's got more real grit than all the rest put together."

"Speak to him, if you get the chance, Grout, for there's no telling how soon we may need to stand together. Perhaps the fact of the treasure makes me overly nervous; but I've got it in my head that we're going to have trouble with the crew."

"Go down and ask Mr. Osborne to come here," Uncle Amos said to me in a low tone, and not until then was Captain Bragg aware that I had been near, standing half-hidden at the corner of the deck-house as I was. "Tell him to come up careless like, as if he wanted to ask some fool question."

I hurried away, for by this time, as may well be imagined, I had come to understand that this ship-

wreck was not like to prove the pleasant little experience I had counted on when first seeing the position of the steamer.

Mr. Osborne was talking with Miss Hubbard when I got below, and only by breaking in on the conversation, as if I had forgotten my manners, was it possible to attract his attention, for when she was near he had neither eyes nor ears for anybody or anything else.

He didn't need a kick in order to make him take a hint; but seemed to understand exactly what the matter might be immediately I had repeated the message sent by Uncle Amos. Excusing himself carelessly to Miss Hubbard, he sauntered out on deck as if there was nothing in the world he enjoyed more than promenading on a wreck, and when I joined the little party, he had evidently been made acquainted with Captain Bragg's fears.

Tony, the Filipino, was already in the water struggling bravely to force the unwieldy raft inshore, and however great a villain he may have been, surely no one could have put up a better fight in behalf of those who were unable to help themselves. He made no attempt to remain on top of his awkward craft; but used it only as a means of keeping his head above water as he kicked at this or that point of rocks to aid him in the passage. More than once was it possible, by standing on the submerged reef, to push the collection of life-preservers shoreward, and again and again did he disappear entirely from view as the angry waters surged above his head.

The line attached to the raft served to make an

## 48 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

advance more difficult, for, small though it was, it acted as a drag upon which the waves dashed at times with such force that the little Filipino could not prevent his raft from a backward drift.

The crew of the steamer, and I observed that Enoch Files stood in their midst as if recognized as a leader, watched eagerly the struggle with the sea until that moment came, after a full half-hour of battle, when Tony gained such a foothold upon the shore as enabled him to drag the raft above the reach of the waves.

Then it was that a shout of triumph went up from the passengers who, poor foolish things, believed all danger was passed now that a hawser could be sent ashore, and even the women insisted on bearing a hand as the heavy cable was overhauled while Tony drew the end shoreward.

Mr. Thompson directed the movements of the men as communication with the island was being established, and when the work was nearly finished, Captain Bragg called him amidships, to say:

"When you send your men ashore to make ready for the sling, let Mr. Jenkins be one of the number. Once he is on land, have him take a look at the island to learn if there are any natives nearabout."

Mr. Jenkins was the second mate, as I have already said, and a few moments later I saw him making his way across the swaying rope which Tony had not been able, unaided, to haul taut, followed by two others. It was nothing in the way of child's play to make the passage hand over hand, when a slip would have resulted in a fall on the jagged rocks below;



but the sailors went about the job with apparently no more care than if they had been set to some trifling work on deck.

Immediately these three had joined Tony, the hawser was made fast more securely, and then such of the crew as were on the wreck roused in their portion of the slack in fine style. A traveller was soon rigged, meaning a sling of rope which would slip readily over the hawser, with ropes attached so that it might be drawn in either direction.

Enoch Files made as if he would be the first to go ashore immediately this work had been done; but Captain Bragg shouted, peremptorily:

“Avast there, Mr. Files! We have more need of you aboard than ashore. You will find Mr. Stubbs, and learn what it is he would have you do for him.”

While one might have counted twenty the mate hung in the wind, as if it was in his mind to refuse obedience; but after a long look at the captain's face, he wheeled sulkily about, and I saw no more of him for several moments.

Some of the passengers, among the more eager of which was a Mr. Sampson, a travelling salesman, who counted on supplying the Filipinos with the latest inventions in the way of farming tools, would have gone on shore immediately after Files had been ordered to report to the chief engineer, and even went so far as to order two of the crew to aid him in the undertaking, as if the captain was no longer in command.

“What's goin' on there forward, Mr. Thompson?”

## 50 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

Captain Bragg cried out, as if he could neither hear nor see the passengers.

"Mr. Sampson an' some of his friends want to go ashore, sir," was the reply of the mate, as he stepped in front of the travelling salesman to prevent him from going over the rail.

"You will stop them from doing so, sir. Until we have good information as to whether the island is inhabited, all hands are to remain by the ship."

"Suppose I don't choose to do so?" Mr. Sampson cried, wheeling around defiantly, and as he spoke Mr. Files came running up from the lower deck as if scenting trouble.

"It makes very little difference to me what you *choose* to do, sir," the captain replied, sharply. "Neither you nor any other person will go over this rail save by permission or express command."

"It won't pay for you to be so high and mighty, Captain Bragg," Mr. Sampson shouted in a most offensive tone. "When a ship is wrecked, the captain is no better than the cook, so far as authority goes, and we're not obliged to ask your permission for whatsoever we may want to do."

This mutinous language seemed to give Mr. Files the greatest pleasure, and he stepped jauntily up to the travelling salesman as if to offer his services in the way of teaching the captain his duty, when Mr. Thompson espied him.

"Were you sent to speak with Mr. Stubbs?" the first officer asked, sharply, and before reply could be made, Captain Bragg, walking quickly forward, wheeled upon Mr. Sampson threateningly, as he said

sufficiently loud for those of the crew as were pricking up their ears to hear:

“Don’t make the mistake of thinkin’ that my authority is gone when the ship takes the ground, else you’re like to come to grief. I want you, an’ every person aboard this steamer, to understand that I intend to be the master, an’ at the first show of mutiny, either on the part of passengers or crew, I shall take the law into my own hands. As for you, Mr. Files,” and the captain wheeled about as he spoke, “if you show your head on deck again when I’ve sent you below, you won’t be allowed time in which to repent of the mistake!”

The surly-looking mate disappeared very suddenly, while Mr. Sampson stood his ground, probably not because he was particularly anxious to remain exactly in that place, but in order to show that he did not intend to submit to the captain’s authority now that the *Ocean Queen* was a helpless wreck.

“Mr. Thompson, station a couple of trusty men to prevent the passengers from coming forward of the bridge,” the captain said to the first mate, who had stepped to his superior’s side as if thinking the latter might need assistance, and then the commander wheeled once more upon the travelling salesman, his hand upraised as if to strike. “Get aft where you belong, an’ be quick about it. The safety of all these people depends upon the discipline maintained, an’ I shall not hesitate even to exceed my authority.”

Just for an instant I thought the captain was going to strike the insubordinate passenger; but Mr. Samp-

## 52 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

son had his share of prudence, and beat a retreat, contenting himself by threatening, when he was well aft:

"You can bully us just now; but wait a bit, and you shall see if we're forced to submit to brutality. It shall be my first duty after going ashore at Manila to lodge a complaint against you."

"Better keep your tongue between your teeth till we make reasonably certain of ever seein' Manila," Uncle Amos cried, angrily. "I'm not inclined to have my life put in jeopardy through a mutiny fomented by those who haven't sense enough to last them overnight! The captain is right, an' if he has need of help in order to enforce his orders, he can count on me!"

Mr. Osborne did not speak, but he stepped quickly to the side of Uncle Amos, which action was sufficient to show that he also was ready to do whatsoever he might in upholding the captain's authority.

The travelling salesman advanced a pace as if about to make some angry reply, but evidently thought better of it, for he retreated to the lee of the deck-house, where he held a whispered conversation with two others who had been as cowardly at the first moment of danger as himself.

"It looks as if there was more trouble afoot than that of running high and dry on a reef," Sam Currier said in a low tone as he took me by the arm, and I, wondering if it was possible he could have heard what the captain told uncle, asked quickly:

"Why do you think so?"

"A blind man could see what is in the air. If the

crew want to mutiny, they can get a following by coming into the cabin."

I was not inclined to tell him just then of the conversation I had overheard, nor why Mr. Osborne had been summoned on deck, therefore I replied, speaking as carelessly as was in my power:

"Don't go hunting for trouble, Sam Currier, for it strikes me that the steamer has made all we need by piling herself up on the rocks."

"There's no need hunting when it shows so plainly," Sam said, grimly. "I was watching the third mate, and I also saw Mr. Thompson pass a revolver slyly to Miss Hubbard's swell. If I'm not mistaken, your uncle is carrying something in his coat pocket which he thinks may come in handy before long."

I turned upon Sam Currier quickly. I had not given the lad credit for being so keen, and must have shown the surprise I felt, for he said with a laugh which had little of mirth in it:

"I'm not a dummy, Young Amos; but I don't take the credit of being any sharper than ordinary people. Miss Hubbard has just been making much the same remarks, and if the women have reason for believing that being wrecked is not the greatest of our troubles, it should not be difficult for me to guess it. Look at the drummer! I dare venture to say he is trying to stir up a mutiny this very minute, and is doing his best to enlist his cronies."

Sam had noted even more than I. Turning quickly, I saw Mr. Sampson holding forth in whispers to half a dozen, all of whom seemed to be in sympathy with

## 54    **The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"**

him, and my heart was heavy as I asked what might be the result, with one party of mutineers in the forecastle, another in the cabin, and the steamer a wreck upon the rocks.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE ISLAND

THERE was but little change in the situation of affairs during such time as Mr. Jenkins was exploring the island, and when he came aboard again, at the end of half an hour, or less, I ran to the side of Uncle Amos, who was then talking with Captain Bragg, counting that I might hear the mate's report.

Nor was I mistaken, for Captain Bragg did not change his position when Mr. Jenkins came over the splintered rail, and the second officer advanced until he could speak with the commander without risk that the mutinously inclined would overhear his words.

"The island is a small one, sir," the mate said in a low tone. "Hardly more than a reef, little less than a mile long, an' perhaps half as wide. I found no sign of human beings, save at a spring, which looks as if it had been walled up a long time ago. There is a bit of a beach at the southerly end, where I reckon a small craft could work her way in; but other than that, the outlyin' reef extends around the entire place."

"Very well, Mr. Jenkins. You will report to Mr. Thompson, who may need some assistance in pre-

venting the people from going ashore until I am ready for them to do so. One or two of the passengers are showing themselves a bit ugly, therefore you will see to it that every command given is obeyed promptly, even though it becomes necessary to use force."

At this moment Mr. Stubbs, the chief engineer, came up from below, with Mr. Files at his heels, and reported to the captain:

"Even with the tide at its lowest ebb, as it is now, there's too much water below to admit of our getting steam, sir. In case you should want power, however, I reckon I can make shift to work the donkey-engine."

As the engineer spoke Mr. Files stood as if listening intently, and the captain asked, angrily:

"Did Mr. Stubbs ask you to follow him, sir?"

"You told me to report to him, and I have yet to learn what I am expected to do," the third mate replied in a tone which would have aroused the ire of the mildest man who ever drew breath, and Captain Bragg's face was flushed with anger as he cried:

"Go forward, sir, and see if there be not somethin' to which you can turn your hand. And hark ye, Mr. Files, if you have it in mind to turn insubordinate, as I have good reason to expect from what I have already seen and heard, remember that I shall not waste my time tryin' to keep you straight; but will put you out of the way of doing mischief at the first show of your turnin' rusty."

Mr. Sampson, the travelling salesman, had been standing near the port rail amidships, watching



Captain Bragg as Mr. Jenkins and the engineer made their reports, and now he could not fail to hear the warning given the third mate, for the words were spoken in a loud tone. He waited until Mr. Files slouched forward as if trying to show by his movements that nothing save superior force would suffice to prevent him from behaving as he pleased, and when the mutinously inclined officer came up, the travelling salesman linked arms with him, the two moving forward slowly.

Captain Bragg watched these two while one might have counted twenty, and then, turning suddenly, said to the chief engineer:

“It is not likely we shall need steam — at least, not immediately. How many of your force can you count on implicitly in event of trouble such as those two seem inclined to make?”

“No more than the first and second assistants, sir. The remainder of my crew are already hobnobbing with the steerage passengers, who, as you know, are nearly all Filipinos.”

“See to it, sir, that you and your two assistants are well armed, with the weapons concealed from view, and spend your time forward on this deck, where you can lend a hand if needed.”

“May I ask, sir, if you count on lettin’ the people go ashore?” Mr. Stubbs asked.

“As *I* look at the matter, I cannot well refuse, for there is no good reason why I should force them to remain on the wreck. If those who would make trouble are ashore, we shall be the better able to defend that which we must guard.”

"I understand what you mean, sir," Mr. Stubbs replied, and I knew both he and the captain had the treasure in mind, because of that which followed. "The steerage passengers have been makin' a good bit of talk about what we took aboard, an' some of my crew do not hesitate to say that if the ship is a total wreck every man has a right to take what he can get."

"Ay, that's where our danger lies, Mr. Stubbs, and until we can rig up some means of sendin' for assistance, you and your two men will have your eyes open for trouble. I'll prevent the villains from plunderin' this ship so long as I am alive."

Then the captain beckoned for Uncle Amos and Mr. Osborne to follow him into the chart-room, and while they were absent Sam Currier and I went forward to where Mr. Thompson was directing the movements of a dozen or more men.

It was evident from what we saw that the first mate was clearing the steamer's bow of wreckage, and at the first opportunity I made bold to ask:

"Are you counting on patching up the steamer, sir?"

"Hardly that, lad, for she's hurt beyond our fixin'; but I'm makin' ready to set up a ship-yard," and the mate smiled, knowing full well that this reply would puzzle us.

"To build a new steamer?" Sam asked with a grin.

"Somethin' very like that, lad," and now Mr. Thompson spoke in a serious tone. "We're a good bit out of the track of vessels, while this 'ere reef

holds us fast, an' it stands us in hand to get word to Manila, or some other port, as soon as possible. In order to do that, we're needin' what'll serve as a boat, an' I'm countin' on puttin' together somethin' that'll answer the purpose."

We were yet talking with the first officer when the stewards came around summoning the first and second class passengers to breakfast in the saloon, and at the same time announcing that those who belonged in the steerage would be served on deck.

You would hardly have supposed our steamer was a total wreck, if you had looked into the saloon that morning and seen us seated before a most bountiful meal, which seemed to give lie to the report that the greater portion of the provisions had been spoiled by being submerged.

Captain Bragg and his officers appeared to be in the best of humour, as if they had never a care in the world, and those of the passengers as had worn long faces because it was possible we might be forced to stay there several days before another steamer could be summoned to our aid, immediately grew cheerful.

It seemed to me that the meal was prolonged by the slow movements of the stewards, and also by the conversation of the officers, in order that time might be gained for some particular purpose, and then, when some of the passengers nestled about uneasily in their seats, Captain Bragg said, as he arose to his feet:

"It seems necessary we should map out a course of action, for the guidance of all during such time as we may be forced to remain here; therefore I request

that you gather on the upper deck, where the people in the steerage, as well as the crew, may hear what has been decided upon."

Without waiting to learn if there were any who did not choose to go on deck, the captain went up the companionway, followed closely by Uncle Amos, Mr. Osborne, and Miss Hubbard, Sam, his mother, and me.

Without absolutely wheeling about to stare at him, I could see that Mr. Sampson hung in the wind as if not minded to obey what had really been a command for all on board to assemble on the upper deck; but after one or two of his intimates had spoken to him in whispers, he followed the leaders, and, a few moments later, I saw that he had taken a station where he could look Captain Bragg directly in the face.

The steerage passengers and the crew had also been summoned, and we found them waiting somewhat impatiently, but with evident curiosity as to why they were thus assembled.

Captain Bragg did not waste any time after being satisfied that all on board were within sound of his voice, and while it is not possible that at this late day I may set down his exact words, I surely can give the substance of them.

He began by saying that there was no need to speak of what had already happened, since we knew as well as he that the steamer was doomed. He repeated what Mr. Jenkins had reported when describing the island, after his hasty survey, and then said:

"There is no reason why we should not remain quietly on board the steamer until some craft comes to our relief, at least, while the weather holds good,

for there is no danger the ship will go to pieces. Here we shall be comfortable, and with food sufficient to supply all our needs. But it appears that there are some who prefer to go ashore, either as a recreation, or because of distrustin' the wreck as a place of comparative safety, therefore it has been decided that those who choose to do so may shift quarters to the island, putting up the ship's canvas as tents. There is no necessity for me to say that those who prefer to live ashore cannot expect to be runnin' back and forth from the steamer to the island, because the crew will have all they can handle with the great amount of work on hand, and can't spend valuable time hauling idle people to and fro."

"What has been done toward getting us to Manila?" Mr. Sampson asked, in what I thought a most impertinent tone.

"Nothing as yet, and that you know full well, sir," the captain replied in a more temperate tone than I could have employed while speaking to the man who had already shown a disposition to mutiny.

"In order to send word anywhere, we must have a boat, an' until somethin' which will answer the purpose of one can be put together, we must perforce remain idle, so far as concerns sendin' word of our plight to those who may be able to aid us. I assure all hands, however, that no time will be wasted, an' finally, as soon as man can effect it, you will be taken in safety to your destination, with nothing to inconvenience you save the loss of time."

"How are those persons to be fed who prefer to live ashore?" Mr. Sampson asked.

## 62    **The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"**

"When it is known exactly how many decide to leave comfortable quarters in exchange for the discomforts which would necessarily be experienced while living in tents, a proportionate amount of provisions will be sent ashore."

"Do you mean a proportionate amount for one day, or for the entire time we may be forced to stay here?" and as Mr. Sampson asked this question I saw him glance meaningly at Mr. Files.

"How is it possible to say how long we may be obliged to stay here?" the captain cried, with a note of impatience in his voice. "You may rest assured that those who go ashore will have their full share of the provisions; but, as a matter of course, they will be forced to do their own cookin' an' wait upon themselves, whereas, by stayin' in their present quarters, everything will be done as if the steamer was under way."

At this point the captain turned to speak with my uncle, most likely doing so in order to give the people an opportunity to discuss the situation among themselves, and Sam Currier and I watched the travelling salesman eagerly, as, I venture to say, so did several others.

Mr. Sampson did not appear disposed to make a secret of his plans, and by this time Enoch Files was quite ready to venture any show of mutiny which could be indulged in without taking too much risk. He and Mr. Sampson came together in a twinkling, and around them gathered four men from among the cabin passengers, half a dozen of the crew, and about as many more of the steerage people.

“Captain Bragg gave Tony, the Filipino, a bad name; but he don’t seem inclined to side in with those who are bent on mischief,” Sam said to me in a whisper, and, thus reminded of the fellow, I looked around quickly to see what he might be doing.

He was standing near Mr. Thompson, and saying a few words now and then to that gentleman, as if commenting upon the movements of his mates; but showing no disposition to take sides with them.

When Sampson had talked with the third mate five minutes or more, the others of the party listening, as if well content to have the matter settled by these two, the travelling salesman said in a loud voice, as he stepped out from among the throng, that the captain might see him:

“Here are seventeen of us who prefer to have the island under our feet, rather than take the chances of staying on a wreck that must go to pieces sooner or later, and in addition to a supply of food, we demand that our baggage be sent ashore.”

“Permission wasn’t given the crew to make a change of quarters,” Captain Bragg replied, as he wheeled swiftly around, and even a boy like myself could see that he was making strenuous efforts to hold his temper in check.

“Permission is not needed when the steamer is so thoroughly well wrecked as this one,” Mr. Sampson said, with a sneer. “I can’t wonder that the poor fellows are eager to do what they may toward saving their lives, for it is reckless folly to remain aboard this hulk when all hands would be in perfect safety ashore.”

## 64 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

I looked to see the captain burst into a towering rage at this reply, and make no doubt but that such would have been the case had it not been for Uncle Amos and Mr. Osborne. These two actually took him by the arms as he plunged his hand into the pocket where I knew was the revolver, and after a brief, whispered conversation, led him aside, Sampson making a great show of mirth at such proceeding.

Two minutes later the captain stepped forward again where all could see him, and said:

"No permission has been given any members of the crew to go ashore, and, save for the earnest request of some of the passengers, I would not permit it. However, those who are inclined to take sides with fools who would lead them into what may prove worse than folly, should bear this in mind: If they remain on duty, there is no question but that all hands will be taken in safety to Manila; by refusing to act the part of seamen when there is not the slightest reason for mutiny, they not only forfeit the wages due them, but will be arrested as mutineers. If any choose to go on those terms, they will not be molested, although except for the promise I have given some of my friends, I would shoot the first cur who went over the rail against orders."

Sampson indulged in more mirth as the captain ceased speaking, and Enoch Files whispered to the men, after which the seventeen who had declared their intention of going ashore, moved toward the bow as if to show that they were not to be dissuaded from their purpose.



“ Send them ashore, Mr. Thompson! ” Captain Bragg shouted in an angry tone, “ an’ after they are gone, station armed men at the hawser to prevent them from comin’ back. ”

“ We’ll take our baggage with us! ” the travelling salesman cried, threateningly, and the captain replied:

“ You will take with you such dunnage as is in your cabin; that which was stowed in the hold is under water, and may not be come at save by a diver. Mr. Jenkins, go with those idiots to their cabins, and see to it that they do not lay hands on anything save their personal property. Mr. Thompson, break out a fair supply of provisions and send them ashore, together with a couple of spare sails for a tent. ”

I expected Mr. Sampson would have some hot reply to make, and waited breathlessly for the outburst; but to my surprise he meekly followed the second mate, as did his comrades, and we on deck remained as if at station, until the party returned, each carrying his belongings, for Mr. Jenkins made no attempt at assisting them.

It seemed as if nearly all the spectators believed that an outburst of some kind would come before those whom we called the mutineers were sent ashore in the sling, which was hauled back and forth across the hawser, for every one of us stood silent and motionless until the task was finished, and the stores had been landed, after which I question if we could have said whether we were relieved or saddened because of the departure.

Such of the crew as preferred to stand by the ship

performed their work in silence, neither speaking to each other nor those who were going over the bow. It was as if no one cared to begin a conversation which might end in bloodshed, so near were we at that moment to a hand-to-hand encounter. Even the travelling salesman seemed to have lost his courage, and instead of showing himself the bully he unquestionably was when no danger threatened, allowed himself to be swung across the sling as meekly as you please.

It is reasonable to suppose that the task of sending these men ashore was performed in the shortest possible space of time, and yet to me it was as if a full half-day had passed before the last one disappeared amid the foliage of the island.

"You will see to it, Mr. Thompson, that not one of those fellows is allowed to come back to this ship without my permission," Captain Bragg cried, when the work was completed, and his voice was tremulous with suppressed rage.

Then it was that the passengers came out of the trance into which they had fallen, so to speak, the majority of them peering over the sides of the steamer as if expecting to see her high and dry upon the rocks, while not a few, among whom were Sam's mother and Miss Hubbard, went below.

Sam and I were eager to watch the sailors as they set about building a boat with the limited materials at their command, and while we were thus engaged, I heard Tony, the Filipino, say to one of the steerage passengers:

"Me no care, amigo, what the capitan says,

s'pose I was on island an' wanted to come 'board."

"While the sling is kept at this end of the hawser you'd stay there, my man, no matter what heed you gave to the captain's words."

"Why?"

"Why? Because you couldn't leave the island, save by swimmin', an' even if you got alongside, which I misdoubt, how'd you come over the rail unless some one threw you a rope?"

"See here, amigo," the Filipino replied, looking around cautiously, as if afraid some one might overhear him, "me been down on reef while you have siesta on deck, an' me know in how is the bow of this ship. Tufan gale blow hole till can sail eight-oar boat in to forward bulkhead. S'pose me want come 'board, the capitan no save, me wait till high water, swim in far as fo'cas'le hatch, an' crawl up."

I fancied the passenger winked meaningly at Tony, who worked at the task in hand as if he of all others belonging to the *Ocean Queen* was eager to do a little more than full duty.

Calling Sam aft, where we could talk without fear of being overheard, I repeated to him as much as I had understood of what the men had said, and asked if he thought we ought to tell any one about it.

"I'd hold my tongue," Sam replied, without hesitation. "Of course, Captain Bragg knows all about the bow having been carried entirely away, and if you said anything, he might think you were trying to be too smart. It stands to reason he'll have a sharp watch kept; but I can't for the life of me under-

## 68 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

stand why the people shouldn't come back if they want to, except that it was a low-down trick to desert the ship at such a time. This steamer is so much of a wreck already, that a small army couldn't do her any more harm."

I thought the lad's remarks were very sensible, and, therefore, when I had a good opportunity of talking with Uncle Amos, I held my peace, lest he should get an idea that I was meddling simply because of having been allowed to hear what passed between him and the captain.

During an hour or more, the men, working under the direction of Mr. Jenkins, sent ashore provisions, some of which looked rather the worse for water, and then all hands turned to at boat-building, although I believed it would have been wiser had they devoted their efforts to making a raft, trusting that she would be carried by the current in the desired direction.

It was dull sport watching the crew, for there was a large amount of work to be done, in the way of clearing the decks of wreckage, before they could get at the necessary materials, and more than once were they forced to stop and obey some order of the captain's in regard to hoisting out of the hold such provisions as would be spoiled by long submersion, but were as yet little the worse for the salt-water bath.

Tiring of idling on deck when there was nothing of interest to be seen, for never one of the mutineers showed himself, Sam and I went into the saloon where the passengers were trying to amuse themselves, and I was surprised at seeing Mr. Osborne

exerting himself as if he had been hired for just such a purpose, in an effort to entertain the women. He told stories, persuaded Miss Hubbard to play on the piano, and coaxed others to sing. He kept the stewards trotting here or there waiting on some of the old ladies who had a fancy for this thing or that, until I was really ashamed of him, and decided that he cut a better figure while trying to play the dude.

“He’s a jewel, is that man,” Uncle Amos said later in the day when we two were alone in our cabin, and I complained of being disappointed in Mr. Osborne. “The capt’in and his officers have more important work on hand than that of amusin’ the women, an’ yet it is necessary some one should do it, else you might have a hot time down here. I don’t know of anythin’ worse in a muddle like this, than a crowd of females who have worked themselves up into a reg’lar muss, an’ that’s what they will do if you give ’em half a chance. I was wrecked once in the Straits of Sunda, with four women aboard, an’ I tell you what it is, Young Amos, I’d pay a big price if somebody could have chloroformed the whole boilin’ of ’em. It was like this — ”

“The cap’in wants to know if you’ll be so kind as to come into the chart-room, Cap’in Grout?” the chief steward said, as he opened the door of our cabin ever so softly, and thus choked Uncle Amos off in a story which I had heard a dozen times since the day we left home, for, of course, he scurried on deck in a hurry, I following close at his heels in the belief that our mutineers on the island had begun to kick up a row.

## 70 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

Everything looked peaceable enough when I was in the open air. The sailors were working forward as when I last saw them, and no living thing could be discovered among the foliage just over the bow.

Uncle Amos went into the chart-room, shutting the door quickly behind him, therefore I could not follow, and had just turned to go below again in order to find Sam, when Mr. Thompson called me.

The first officer was standing well in the bow, and as I went up to him he said in a kindly tone:

"I thought perhaps you'd like to see how much of the *Queen* we didn't bring with us when we came over the outer end of the reef, lad. It ain't a good thing to show passengers what may give 'em a chill; but if you're half the sailorman your uncle is, it won't do you any harm."

I didn't take the trouble to explain that I was no sailor at all, and had a great deal rather be snug ashore than on the finest ship that ever floated; but, instead, gazed over the rail, seeing that of which Tony, the Filipino, had spoken.

The tide was well up, and the gentle swell rolled into our hull without obstruction, showing only too plainly what would be the result once the wind had raised a fairly heavy sea. It was not pleasant to look upon, that yawning hole, especially while one was pinned down to the wreck as were we all, and I questioned whether Mr. Sampson and his companions had not been wise in going ashore while there was an opportunity.

"When a storm springs up, it won't take long to rip the *Ocean Queen* into old junk," I said, catching

my breath much as one does when he plunges suddenly into cold water.

“ Right you are, lad; but we’re not likely to have a storm very soon on the heels of the monsoon which worked all the mischief, an’ even though one does spring up, we’ll have timely warnin’. You can make certain the old man keeps his eye on the barometer mighty close.”

“ But if a storm should come up in the night — even a little squall? ” I persisted.

“ Well, it might be tight squeezin’, I’ll admit, though I wouldn’t like to make such talk where the old man could hear me. It’s different speakin’ with you, for your uncle seems to have gone in partnerships with Captain Bragg since we piled up here on the ledge.”

Then it was that I bethought me of what Tony had said; but instead of repeating the sailor’s words, and thus laying myself open to the charge of living in the woods to be scared by an owl, I said, carelessly, as if it was no more than an idle thought:

“ If those men who went ashore wanted to come back, it wouldn’t be such a very hard job to swim over into that hole, and come up through the hatch, while the tide is high.”

“ Yes, I reckon it could be done; but there ain’t any among that white-livered gang who’d take the chances, for a stray shark would be likely to play hob with a fellow,” Mr. Thompson replied, with a laugh, and, seeing that he was not disposed to worry over the possibilities, I changed the conversation by asking:

## 72 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

"Whereabouts is the treasure kept, sir?"

"Why do you ask that?" and he looked around quickly, as if to see whether any of the men were listening.

"Simply because I have heard the captain and Uncle Amos talking of the fact that we are a rich ship, and had a curiosity to know where the gold had been stowed."

"It's in the strong-room, just forward of the stewards' quarters, on the port side, an' nearabout there is what gives me more worry of mind."

"What's that, sir?" I asked in surprise.

"The arms an' ammunition we brought away from the Spanish cruiser. If the men turn rusty before we can make the situation known at Manila, those things are like to be more dangerous than all the gold that has ever been shipped into the island of Luzon."



## CHAPTER V

### TONY DISAPPEARS

I CAN'T say that I was any more uneasy in mind, after the first officer spoke of the arms and ammunition, than I had been before, because that would have been impossible. I had had no experience in such matters, but what with the condition of the ship, stranded on a reef far out of the track of vessels plying between Hong Kong and Manila; the greater portion of the stores spoiled by salt water; some of the passengers taking sides with the sailors in what was neither more nor less than mutiny; the steamer certain to go to pieces when the wind should spring up, and with no means of leaving the island, surely we could not have been in worse straits.

That was much the idea I had in mind when I left Mr. Thompson to join Sam, and yet before many days had passed, I came to know that matters could be more serious than on that day after we struck the reef.

Until noon Sam and I found enough to occupy our attention as we watched the men at work, or kept a sharp lookout for those who had gone ashore; but then it grew monotonous, for, so far as could be

## 74 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

learned, the men made no progress with their boat-building, and we saw nothing whatever of the mutineers.

Uncle Amos, Mr. Osborne, and Captain Bragg held many a consultation in the chart-room; those of the passengers yet remaining on board lounged lazily on deck, or amused themselves as best they might in the saloon, while as for Sam and me, it seemed as if we were shut out from everything.

When dinner was served, I decided that we had been told of provisions spoiled by the sea, only to make us more thankful when we saw the table bountifully spread; but I afterward came to know that the cooks were serving the fresh stores lavishly lest they should decay.

According to the statement printed on the bill of fare, supper should have been served that evening about nine o'clock, as it had been the day we left Hong Kong; but before we left the dinner-table the stewards quietly informed us that neither supper nor lunch would be had that night. It was the first step toward putting us on short allowance.

The passengers were weary from doing nothing, and before nine o'clock the saloon was deserted. Sam and I had counted to remain on deck until midnight, pretending to do our share of standing watch; but the moments seemed so long in the darkness and silence, which was broken only by the moaning of the sea as it surged heavily against the reef, that our eyelids were soon so weighted that sleep seemed an absolute necessity.

I was in my berth when Uncle Amos entered our

cabin, and although it was not possible for me to see his face, because our night-lamp had not been lighted, I fancied he was tired and despondent.

“ Has anything new gone wrong, sir? ” I ventured to ask, as he threw himself upon the couch without removing any of his clothing.

“ Why do you ask, lad? ”

“ Because, in the first place, you haven't regularly gone to bed, and then again, I fancied you appeared tired.”

“ An' that's what I am, my boy. It is hard for an old shipmaster like me to rid himself of the idea that at such a time he has an enormous responsibility on his shoulders, an' even if I could do so, Joe Bragg seems determined to make me take my share.”

“ Mr. Osborne appears to be working as hard as either you or the captain,” I said, with a feeble attempt at a laugh.

“ An' that's what he is doin', Young Amos. It's a blessin' that we've got him aboard, for he's a master hand at keepin' the old women quiet, an' how Bragg would get along without him, beats me. To think that I set him down as a worthless sort of a dude, who could do nothin' but try to look pretty! ”

“ The men don't seem to get along very fast with their boat-building,” I suggested, after a brief silence.

“ It's slow work tryin' to make somethin' out of nothin', lad; but they'll fetch it in time.”

“ Then you really believe they can build a boat which will carry some of them to Manila, sir? ”

“ Of course they can, lad, although it may not be necessary to go as far as Manila. Sailormen can do

## 76 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

almost anythin' in which the sea is concerned, an' make a good job of it, too."

"Then, if all we've got to do is wait, I can't understand why you should be so out of sorts to-night, sir," I said, with a laugh which had in it little of mirth, for I was far from feeling jolly.

"Ay, lad, all *we've* got to do is wait; but the question is whether the weather'll wait for us. Then again, I'd feel more comfortable in mind if all hands were aboard."

"Meaning Mr. Sampson and those who followed him ashore?"

"Ay, lad; who else should I mean?"

"But what can they do to work us harm?"

"If I knew, Young Amos, I wouldn't be givin' much heed to 'em; it's what I can't figger out that's worryin' me."

Although my uncle had not made his meaning very clear so far as spoken words went, I understood perfectly well what he meant, and my mind went back to Mr. Thompson's remark as to the arms and ammunition.

I would have continued the conversation, for it had been agreed between Sam Currier and myself that I should make every effort to learn what Uncle Amos thought of the possibility that we might receive the assistance of which we stood in need, within a comparatively short time; but he cut my questions short by saying:

"There is no good reason why we should wag our tongues overly much where it is possible others may hear us. It's a hard problem to solve; but I'm in-

clined to think Joe Bragg will pull through all right, barring such accidents as can't well be guarded against."

With this he turned as if to go to sleep, and I could not well ask more questions, because, as I understood it, he had much the same as told me to hold my peace; but, by this time, my eyes were open wide, for his refusal to discuss the matter seemed good proof that he was anxious concerning the outcome.

During an hour or more I heard measured footsteps on deck, as if those on watch were pacing to and fro, and then a most profound silence reigned; but it was as if the absence of all sounds served to render me more wakeful. I tossed to and fro within the narrow limits of the berth, feeling a certain sense of suffocation, for the weather was very warm and never a breath of moving air came through the port-hole of our cabin.

How long I had thus been awake when I was suddenly startled by an odd noise, it is impossible to say; but it seemed as if the night was considerably more than half-spent when I fancied I heard sounds directly beneath me, as if some one was overhauling the cargo in the hold. Sitting bolt upright, I listened until becoming convinced that it was nothing more than the surging to and fro of the water in the hull, and this was sufficient to have banished any desire for sleep however weary my eyelids may have been, for I began to fear that the wind was rising.

Then came that sound which told that a heavy weight had fallen, and, like a simple, I said to myself that some of the cargo was shifting under the action-

of the waves. Thus it chanced that I did not arouse Uncle Amos, who was breathing heavily as if in profound slumber; but, scrambling softly out of the berth, stood near the door as if believing that there I could hear more distinctly.

Now and again the silence would be almost oppressive, and then I could hear what seemed to betoken that men were at work opening boxes, for the creaking as of iron nails being torn out of wood came plainly to my ears. A dozen times or more did I hear the same sounds, and then persuaded myself that the watch on duty was overhauling the provisions in order to ascertain how much we might have on hand, the work being done in the night lest the more timid of the passengers should be alarmed by thinking we were like to be put on short allowance.

As I look back on the events of that night, which seemed more like a dream than a reality, it is certain that I must have remained crouching by the cabin door quite two hours before the noises ceased entirely, and then there was a faint grayness in the apartment which told that the darkness was being slowly dispersed by the approach of day. Before I finally fell into an uneasy sleep, the measured tread of men on watch was resumed, and I knew the crew were on the alert.

Despite the fact that I had remained awake nearly all night, I was the first to open my eyes when tiny rays of sunlight crept in through the port-hole, and within a very few minutes thereafter Uncle Amos bestirred himself.

"Hello, lad!" he cried, on seeing that I was star-

ing at him. "How long have you been playin' the owl?"

"I wonder that an old sailorman like you could have slept while the men were at work in the hold," I replied, with a yawn. "The noise wasn't so very great; but my eyes were kept open nearly all night because of speculating as to how much of the stores they found fit for use."

"Men workin' in the hold?" Uncle Amos repeated, impatiently. "You've been dreamin', lad, for the stores wouldn't be kept in this part of the ship."

"At least, I was so far awake as to get out of the berth and go to the door that I might hear more plainly, sir," I replied, with somewhat of sharpness in my voice, for it displeased me that he should fancy I was yet so young as not to know the difference between a dream and reality.

"And what was it you heard, Young Amos?"

My uncle was on his feet by this time, apparently more disturbed by my words than I had been by the odd noises of the night.

I described the sounds to him as best I could, an expression of dismay coming over his face meanwhile, and was hardly more than at an end of the story, when, seizing me by the arm, he whispered:

"Come on deck with me at once, lad, an' we'll see what Joe Bragg has to say about it!"

I was forced to accompany him, for he literally dragged me from the cabin, up the companionway to the deck, and thence to Captain Bragg's cabin, which adjoined the chart-room.

The master of the wreck was yet asleep when Uncle

## 80 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

Amos, with me in tow, burst into his cabin; but he sprang to his feet immediately we entered.

"I want you to hear the story which this lad has to tell, an' then I'll make up my mind whether he doesn't deserve a floggin' for holdin' his tongue so long!"

I understood by this time, even though I might have failed of doing so before, that Uncle Amos was seriously disturbed in mind, and, as a natural consequence, stammered and stuttered until the old gentleman shook me impatiently, as he cried:

"Tell the yarn as you told it to me, lad, an' don't chew your words into shoe-strings!"

"Leave him alone, Amos, an' let him spit it out after his own fashion, for then we'll the sooner come to the bottom of it," Captain Bragg said sharply, and I was yet trying to make my meaning plain when he opened the door of the cabin, which Uncle Amos had closed as we entered, and cried to one of the men who chanced to be at work near by:

"Ask Mr. Thompson to step this way in a hurry!"

This done, he fell to questioning me, and I was doing my best to describe the sounds I had heard, when the first officer entered.

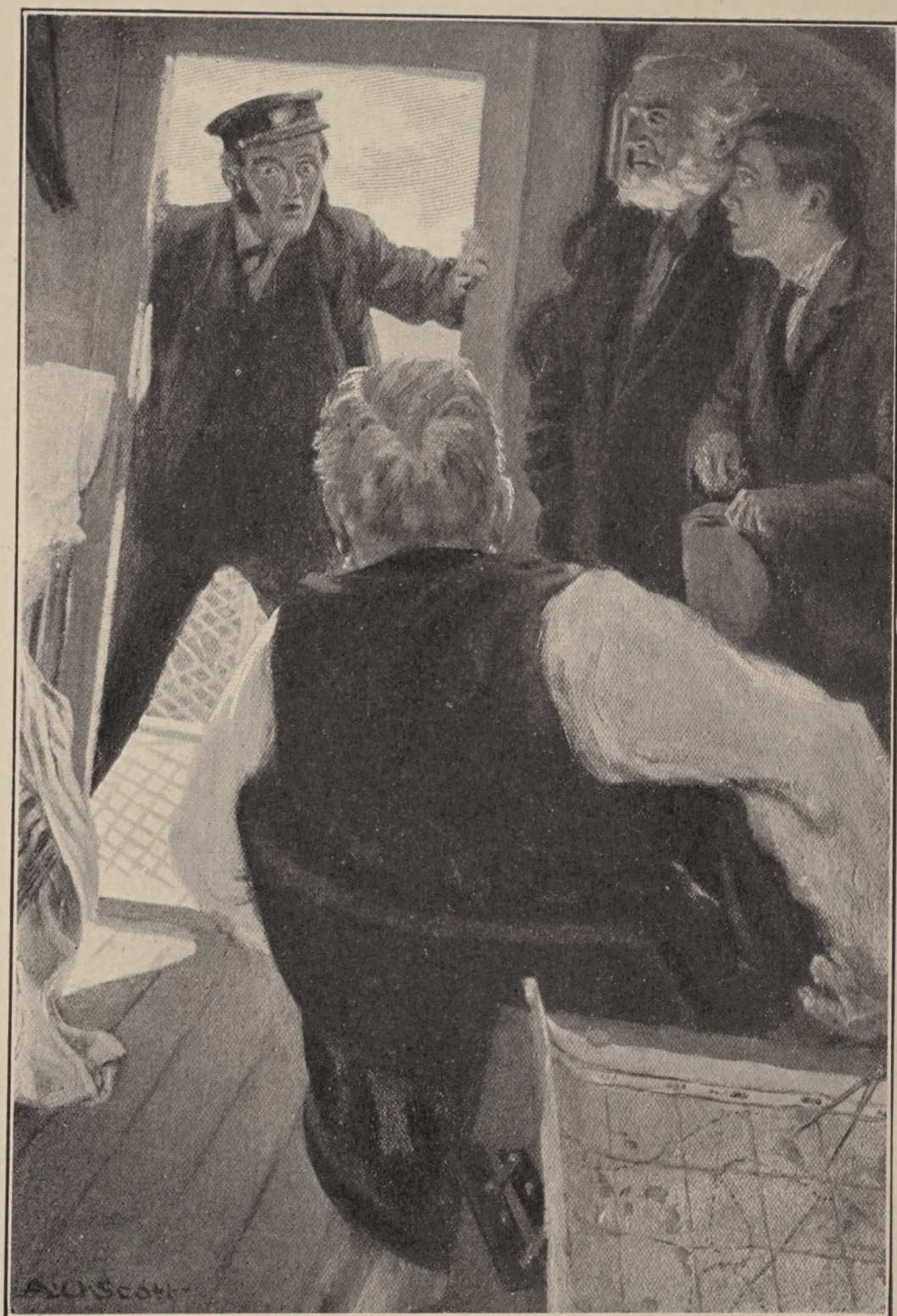
"Who was on duty after midnight, Mr. Thompson?" the captain asked, sharply.

"Mr. Jenkins relieved me about ten o'clock, and Mr. Stubbs insisted on doin' a turn of duty from one until three, when I came on again, sir."

"Do you know if any of the men were at work in the hold after I turned in?"

"It couldn't have been that any person went be-





"HE RETURNED, LOOKING AS IF HE HAD SEEN A GHOST."



low the saloon deck, sir. You know full well the condition of affairs there.”

“Go below, an’ have a careful look around to see if anything has been disturbed, sir. This lad thinks some one was at work there about midnight. Make certain one way or the other before reportin’.”

The first officer gave a hasty glance in my direction, as if to say that things had come to a pretty pass if the mate of a steamer like the *Ocean Queen* was to be sent on a diver’s job simply because a lad like me had gotten a foolish fancy into his head; but he made no delay in obeying the order.

While he was absent neither Captain Bragg nor Uncle Amos spoke, and I stood shifting from one foot to the other in an exceedingly uncomfortable fashion, as I wondered what would be the result, so far as I personally was concerned, if Mr. Thompson reported that there were no signs of any work having been done in the hold, which must have been well filled with water at about the time I claimed to have heard the odd sounds.

The first officer had not been out of the cabin a quarter of an hour, although it seemed a mighty long while to me, when he returned, looking as if he had seen a ghost, and Captain Bragg said sharply, before he could speak:

“Some one has been at the arms, eh?”

“It’s chiefly the ammunition, sir. I should say that all the cases above water have been carried off, or opened an’ the contents taken away, unless they were thrown into the sea,” the mate replied, speaking in a low tone as if afraid of being overheard.

## 82 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

"And the arms, Mr. Thompson?" the captain asked, impatiently.

"Only one case has been opened, sir, and that is floatin' around empty."

"Which means that those villains have twenty-four repeatin' rifles, an' as much ammunition as they wanted to carry away!" and the captain stood staring at me as if I was responsible for all that had occurred.

"It's the treasure they're after!" Uncle Amos exclaimed, and the first officer replied:

"That was in Mr. Files's mind when he took sides with Mr. Sampson; but I can't believe he had enough of courage to come off from the island."

"There are plenty among the gang who would venture into any place, however hot, on the chance of gettin' their hands on that which must needs be put on board so that every tough in Hong Kong could learn of the fact," Captain Bragg cried in a rage, and at that moment the door of the cabin was opened again, this time disclosing the face of Mr. Jenkins.

"Well, sir?" the captain asked sharply, as if in a passion because the door had been opened without warning, and the second officer said, apologetically:

"I knocked, sir; but you must have failed to hear me. I have to report that Tony, the Filipino, is no longer aboard."

"When did he leave?"

"That I can't say, sir. He was here when my watch went off duty, an' the men claim that they have no idea how he got away."

Then it was I remembered what I had heard Tony

say to his comrade, and without waiting to be questioned, I broke in by repeating the words.

“ It seems that you have kept your ears open precious wide, Master Grout,” the captain said, in an odd tone, as if he was vexed because I had heard so much, and my uncle took fire at the tone, as was seen when he cried, angrily:

“ If you’re blamin’ the lad, Joe Bragg, because he doesn’t hang ’round like a wooden boy, with eyes and ears closed against everything which may be done or said, speak it right out, an’ I’ll see that he doesn’t offend again while he remains aboard this steamer! ”

“ Now, now, Amos Grout, don’t fly off at a careless word! ” Captain Bragg said, quickly, taking my uncle by the hand. “ I was findin’ no fault with the lad for thus doin’ us a favour, else would I be worse than a fool; but, worked up as I am — as we all are, it seemed strange that he alone should have information which might at least have been suspected by us. Tony has done the trick, that’s certain. The chances are ten to one he used the raft of life-preservers with which to float his plunder ashore, an’ all this while we were standin’ watch above his head.”

He had no more than ceased speaking when Mr. Jenkins went away very suddenly, to return half a minute later, as he said:

“ The raft has disappeared, sir. It was made fast near the bow in case we might need it again.”

“ Well, we’ve got the whole story now, an’ may lock the stable door after the horse has been stolen,” the captain said, irritably. “ There is no use in cryin’ over spilled milk, therefore you had better

## 84 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

attend to whatever you have on hand, gentlemen. Amos, suppose we have Osborne up here, an' chew over the matter between ourselves? "

This was much the same as dismissing me, and I was edging near the door when Uncle Amos said:

"Lad, ask Mr. Osborne if he will come into the captain's cabin. I reckon you've got sense enough to understand that what you have heard, whether here, or in our room, is not to be mentioned to any save those who have just heard it."

And this was all the thanks I got for giving information to the commander of the steamer which was most important. I had been the same as laughed at by Captain Bragg and Mr. Thompson, and now I was turned out of the cabin as if of no importance. Of course, it was sheer folly for a boy like me to be disgruntled because the officers of the *Ocean Queen* did not go down on their knees to thank me for having warned them of what had been done, but nevertheless, I felt exceedingly sore in mind as I went below.

Mr. Osborne had not yet come out of his cabin, so one of the stewards told me, and while I was knocking at his door, for he couldn't have slept more soundly had he been safe in bed at home, Sam Currier came up.

"Where have you been?" he asked, as if I was in duty bound to keep him informed of all my movements. "I've looked everywhere for you, and had just decided you had gone ashore to join the noble army under command of the travelling salesman."

There was no reason why I should show temper with Sam, who had had no part in my discomfiture;

and by the time it was possible to repeat Uncle Amos's message to Mr. Osborne, my fretfulness had vanished, except, perhaps, that there yet lingered a bit of it deep down in my heart.

Without stopping to think that Uncle Amos might have included Sam among those to whom he cautioned me not to speak regarding what had been heard, I led the lad out on deck and well aft, where it was possible to tell him all the story without fear of being overheard by any one else.

It goes without saying that the lad was greatly astonished, and not a little frightened, by the startling news, and when I had come to an end of the story, he said, as if it was possible for him to know beyond a peradventure exactly what the mutineers counted on doing:

“Now they will prevent us from sending off a boat, in case the sailors succeed in making one, until the treasure has been delivered up to them, and, according to the looks of affairs, it will be possible for them to do exactly as they please.”

As a matter of course, that was a natural conclusion to arrive at, for certain it was that Enoch Files, even if Mr. Sampson was honestly inclined, had made up his mind to have a fingering of the gold which was taken on board the *Ocean Queen* at Hong Kong, and we were discussing how the mutineers would begin to carry out their plans, when the sound of many footsteps on deck caused us to turn suddenly that we might be able to have a view of what was going on forward.

Captain Bragg, Uncle Amos, Mr. Osborne and Mr.

## 86 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

Jenkins had just come out of the chart-room, and were walking forward where the first officer and two sailors stood by the hawser as if waiting to send some one ashore.

"They're going to hunt up the mutineers!" Sam cried, as if in alarm, and I, fancying myself more wise than really was the case, replied, decidedly:

"It isn't possible they are counting on doing anything so foolish. Those on the island are well armed, and, having gone so far, wouldn't hesitate to shoot."

"It may be the captain's party will do their share of the shooting," Sam said, with a chuckle of satisfaction. "You can reckon that each of them has at least one revolver, with plenty of cartridges, and I'll go bail they know how to use the weapons better than do the sailors."

There was no time for me to say anything more, if I would keep my eyes on those who were making the bold move, and, stepping well over on the port side where my view would be unobstructed, I watched eagerly, as, after a brief controversy with his companions, Captain Bragg clambered over the bow in order to get into the sling.

Before he had time to swing himself beyond the splintered timbers, we heard a hail from the island, and there saw the ugly face of Enoch Files amid the foliage, as he shouted:

"Ahoy on the steamer!"

The sailors who had laid hold of the traveller tackle in order to send the captain ashore, dropped their hands as if in alarm, and Captain Bragg cried, angrily:



“ Pull lively, you lubbers, unless you’re minded to take orders from yonder mutineer instead of me! ”

“ Hold hard! ” Files shouted, as if in reply. “ Don’t make the mistake of leavin’ the ship till you know what the cost will be, ” and then it was I saw Uncle Amos bend outboard until he could get a grip on the sling to prevent the captain from working himself along hand over hand, as he appeared on the point of doing.

“ We stand ready to shoot the first man who leaves the steamer, whether by the hawser or by water, ” Files shouted, taking good care, however, to conceal himself behind the foliage before making such a threat. “ You decided to stay aboard the wreck, an’ now by all that’s good you’ll do so, or go into the kingdom come mighty sudden! ”

Captain Bragg pulled a revolver from his pocket while the fellow was speaking, and would have fired in the direction from which the voice proceeded, had not both Uncle Amos and Mr. Osborne clutched his arm, literally dragging him back over the broken timbers, as my uncle said, pleadingly:

“ No, no, Joe Bragg; don’t take it upon yourself to fire the first shot! I’m thinkin’ there’ll be plenty of powder burned hereabouts, an’ that very soon, but it’s not for you to open the battle! ”

“ That’s right, pull him back, for I’m havin’ mighty hard work to keep my finger off the trigger! ” Files shouted, jeeringly. “ More than one of us here has a score to settle with the man who has bullied us in fair weather an’ foul without reason. He’s had

## 88 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

good warnin' now, an' the next time we get a shot at him, he will go down."

The captain struggled to reply to this brutal speech; but Uncle Amos and Mr. Osborne clung to him, talking soothingly all the while, and Mr. Thompson cried:

"What is the meaning of all this, Files? How is it that you have turned villain so suddenly?"

"The meaning of it is that we who are marooned on this 'ere island claim salvage on the gold that was taken aboard at Hong Kong, an' in order to collect our dues, we count on takin' possession of the stuff."

"So you've turned pirates, eh? You and Mr. Sampson gone into partnership with Tony as chief clerk?"

"Look here, Thompson, it won't pay for you to be so free with your tongue, an' that I'm tellin' you because you've always shown yourself a decent kind of a man. There are a dozen rifles aimed at you this minute, an' if I said the word you would go out of this world mighty sudden. There's no good reason why I should wag my tongue overly much about this 'ere business. We've got the upper hands of you all, an' count on holdin' the advantage; the whole boilin' of you could be shot down if you tried to get away on a raft, an' it's a sure thing that you wouldn't live to come ashore on the hawser. It's the gold we want, an' that we're bound to have in the end, whether by peaceful possession, or by killin' you off one by one!"

By this time Captain Bragg had freed himself from those who held him prisoner, and, leaping on the fragments of the port rail with a revolver in his hand,

he cried, while so nearly choking with passion that the words came thick and indistinct:

“ By the heaven above us, Enoch Files, you shall die the death of a dog by the garrote on the parade-ground at Manila, if we don't take your worthless life — ”

He did not finish the threat, for at that instant a bullet whistled past his head at such close range that his cap was carried away, and even as a second report rang out, Uncle Amos had pulled the captain to the deck, as he cried, angrily:

“ Have you lost your wits, Joe Bragg? What right have you to stand there givin' those scoundrels a chance to take your life when all these people aboard are dependin' on you to save them from a miserable death? ”

It was impossible for me to hear what other words were spoken by my uncle, for in a twinkling all was confusion on the deck. The sailors rushed aft to gain a shelter from the bullets, and the reports of the rifles had brought the passengers from below in a living, screaming stream.

The mutineers had opened the battle in good truth, and for the moment it seemed to me as if we on the wreck were entirely at their mercy.

## CHAPTER VI

### BESIEGED

**D**URING a few seconds it seemed as if all our people on the wreck were beside themselves with fear and bewilderment, and then the voice of Captain Bragg, as he called this man or that to some particular duty, quelled the uproar on the instant.

Even a boy like me understood that the first duty was to raise something which would serve as a screen between those on deck and the mutineers, for now that the first shot had been fired, they would probably have no scruples about shooting us down, if by such wickedness their ends could be gained. Captain Bragg turned his attention to this matter at once, and while directing the men would have shown himself boldly; but that Uncle Amos and Mr. Thompson prevented him by threatening to use force if he was not more prudent.

“That precious third mate of yours has given warnin’ that he will shoot you on sight,” Uncle Amos said, as he literally dragged the master of the *Ocean Queen* to a sheltered position behind one of the deck-houses. “It stands to reason that they wouldn’t hesitate to carry out the threat, for, since they are after the treasure, you are the one above all others

who stands in their way. You have got no right to take chances at such a time as this, Joe Bragg, an' I don't count on allowin' you to throw your life away, even if I have to knock you down every half-hour."

Mr. Thompson added entreaties to the threats of Uncle Amos, and between the two they contrived to keep the captain in a place of comparative safety until we were in some sort of condition to stand a siege.

The hatches were set on end across the bow, and fastened securely in such a position that those on the island could not see the steamer's deck from the bow to something abaft of amidships. On the ends of this screen, cabin doors, spare spars, and, in fact, everything which would serve as a shelter were set up along the rails, running aft twenty feet or more on either side, until we appeared to be in a fairly good condition for defence. As a matter of course, the mutineers could see our men while they raised this barrier; but never a shot was fired, although many a life might have been taken.

"They count on having easy work of starving us out," Sam Currier said, when I expressed my surprise because the crew had not been interfered with. "It strikes me that they've got the upper hands of us, just as that miserable Files said, and except in the case of Captain Bragg, against whom they have a grudge, there is no reason why they need do anything more than wait."

"Wait how long?" I asked, stupidly.

"Until our provisions have been eaten, or a storm

comes up. How long would we dare to stay on board the wreck after the sea began to kick up a bobbery?"

"But a vessel of some kind may heave in sight long before that happens," I cried, hopefully, and Sam replied, gravely:

"That seems to be the only chance against them, and if we are out of the track of shipping, as all the officers claim, we can't build any very great hopes on it."

"What's the use of hunting after disagreeable possibilities?" I cried, petulantly, and Sam replied, as if I was only a child and he my grandfather:

"We don't have to do much hunting, Young Amos, and it is better to look danger in the face, than deliberately shut our eyes against it."

I was not disposed to continue a conversation of that kind any longer than absolutely necessary, and to put an end to it, proposed that we go amidships to see what the crew were doing in the hold, now that the screens were in position.

By leaning over the combing of the hatchway it was possible to have a full view of all that was going on beneath us, and we saw that the men were overhauling the cases of arms which had been shipped from the Spanish cruiser. At first I thought it was the captain's intention to take all those rifles on deck, where we might have them ready for use; but soon came to understand that our people were searching for ammunition, in the hope that those who stole into the hold at midnight might not have found the entire supply.

The movements of the men were being watched so

eagerly by Captain Bragg and those in whom he confided, that I soon came to suspect we were not well supplied with ammunition, and such I found was the case, when I questioned Uncle Amos.

“ Yes, lad, we are needin’ powder an’ ball for a fact, an’ it begins to look as if that miserable Filipino, Tony, had made a clean sweep when he overhauled the cargo,” my uncle said in a low tone, after I, having called him aside, put the question plainly.

“ Haven’t we *any* ammunition? ” I asked in surprise.

“ I reckon there’s as much aboard as you’d generally find in a merchantman of this kind — say fifty or a hundred cartridges for the revolvers of the officers. You see there’s no call for any more, an’ I’m allowin’ you wouldn’t find a single charge for the rifles, unless some of the cases were overlooked by the fellow who cleaned us out while we were asleep.”

“ And you do not see any other way out of it for us, than to have a bloody fight with those on the island? ” I asked, despondently, and my uncle replied, as if thinking the question needless:

“ It all depends on them. You’ve heard what they’ve got to say — we must give up the gold, or take the chances, an’ Joe Bragg ain’t the kind of a man to back down while he’s able to breathe.”

“ What about the possibility that we may speak some vessel very soon? ”

“ The chances are so slim, lad, that it won’t pay to figger ’em up. When Bragg got the sun, he worked our position on the most northerly island of the

## 94 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

Batan group," Uncle Amos replied, and was evidently about to say something more, when a cry as of joy from the hold caused us both to run quickly to the hatchway.

As we soon learned, the men had come upon one case of cartridges which must have escaped Tony's eyes, and was so high on top of other freight that the water had not touched it. How many shells it contained I could not say; but it looked small as the sailor held it above his head in triumph, and seemed a poor trophy to excite so much of joy.

After this find, the search went on with renewed vigour; but when night came nothing more of the same sort had been brought to light, and we were forced to believe that the contents of this one case made up our full supply of ammunition, save for such revolver cartridges as might be found in the officers' cabins.

Our dinner on this day offered a striking contrast to the same meal the first day out from Hong Kong. It is true we had sufficient with which to satisfy our hunger; but there was no more than that, and delicacies were conspicuous only by their absence.

It can be safely assumed that care was taken to set a watch such as would prevent the mutineers from getting aboard secretly when night had come. The interior of the hold was lighted by lanterns lowered with ropes, so that those on duty at the hatchway could readily see if any one came inside by water, and that there might be no fear the sentinels would fall asleep at their posts, the men were to be relieved every two hours. Uncle Amos and Mr. Thompson were to take charge during a certain portion of the



time; Captain Bragg and Mr. Osborne were to relieve them, while Mr. Stubbs and the second officer would be in command of the morning watch.

Miss Hubbard had moved into Mrs. Currier's cabin, so that the two might be company for each other, and there was no good reason, so his mother said after he had coaxed her hard, why Sam shouldn't be allowed to sleep with me. I was well pleased thus to have a companion during the hours of darkness, for Uncle Amos couldn't be depended upon now that he had a share of the work to look after.

Perhaps I was particularly sleepy because of having remained awake so long the night previous, for within five minutes after Sam and I turned into the same berth, I was in dreamland, where I remained until aroused by the sun's rays streaming in through the port-hole.

Sam must have slept quite as soundly as I for he did not even know whether Uncle Amos had been in the room during the night, and we made a hurried toilet in our eagerness to gain the deck that we might learn if there was any change in the situation.

Mr. Jenkins was pacing to and fro, well aft where he could have a partial view of the shore, and two men were standing just behind the heavy screens, peering through loopholes which had been made in the hatches by the carpenter. The second officer had shown himself very friendly to Sam and me, therefore we did not hesitate to ask him what had happened during the night.

"Everything seems to be as when you turned in," he replied, cheerily. "The mutinous villains haven't

shown themselves, most likely guessin' some of us would shoot if we saw a target, an' we didn't count on givin' 'em a show at any of our people."

"Have we knocked off trying to build a boat?" Sam asked.

"Not a bit of it, lad. While things were mixed a bit yesterday we took a little vacation, that's all; but you'll see the shipwrights at work as soon as they've had breakfast."

"What's going to be the end of it all?" I asked, feeling just a little disappointed, without knowing exactly why, because there had been no change in the situation.

"You'll have to ask somebody other than me," the third officer said, with a laugh. "They've got the bulge on us just now; but there's no tellin' how soon matters will take a turn for the better. I'm countin' that the gang on the island will get to fightin' among themselves, for, as I figger it, both Files an' that travellin' salesman will want to be cap'in, an' if that happens, it'll most likely be to our advantage."

Even while he was speaking one of the sailors who was watching through a loophole beckoned for the mate, and without trying to shield himself, as he might have done by keeping in a line with the deck-house until he was so far forward that he would have been protected by the screens, Mr. Jenkins advanced leisurely with his hand touching the port rail.

I was looking at him, wondering why he moved so slowly since it was possible the sailor had something of importance to say, when the sharp crack of a rifle

rang out from the island; a tiny wreath of smoke curled above the foliage, and, just for an instant, I fancied that the officer started, as one might who has been stung by a bee. He kept on his way, however, for a distance of perhaps a dozen paces, when he lurched ever so slightly, and, recovering himself with an effort, took another step, after which he sank slowly to his knees.

Even then, so tardily had the bullet seemed to take effect, I could not believe he was wounded; but ran toward him, fancying he had stumbled over something.

While yet some distance away, I saw an ominous blotch of crimson staining the deck, as if it had come from beneath his feet, and, terrified as well as horror-stricken, I screamed loudly for help.

The men on watch came running aft, most likely understanding only too well what had happened; Sam started at full speed after me in order to aid the fallen man, and two or three sailors rushed over from the starboard side; but, quickly though all moved, Captain Bragg was at the side of his stricken officer before either of us could reach him. Where he came from I cannot say, but he must have been in his cabin when the report of the rifle was heard, and, on the alert for danger, it was as if he made no more than two leaps in crossing the deck.

“Are you badly hurt, Jenkins?” he asked with a world of tenderness in his gruff voice, lifting the mate until he could lean against the rail.

“I can't think they have got me very foul, sir,” the second officer replied with a feeble attempt at a

## 98 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

smile. "The odd part of it is I don't know where I'm hit, except that there was a queer twinge hereabout."

He pressed his hand against his right side as he spoke, and I could see the crimson fluid creeping from between his fingers.

"Lay hold here, lads, an' carry Mr. Jenkins to his cabin!" the captain cried sharply to the sailors who had gathered around, and then he ran hurriedly to the chart-room, which adjoined, and communicated with, his own quarters.

Uncle Amos was in the smoking-room talking with Mr. Osborne when the shot was fired, and did not get out on deck until the sailors were carrying the wounded mate forward. In reply to his questions, I told him the little I knew regarding the matter, and instead of hastening to learn if he could be of any assistance to the injured man, both he and Mr. Osborne ran to the loopholes, thinking only of wreaking vengeance.

It can well be fancied that every one was excited. From the main saloon we could hear the screams of the more nervous women; every one seemed to think it his duty either to join Uncle Amos or gather around the door of Mr. Jenkins's room, and what with the noise and the running to and fro, it seemed as if a battle between us and the mutineers had really begun. Then came the reports of two rifles, fired so nearly at the same time that they sounded almost as one, and the smoke curling above the heads of Uncle Amos and Mr. Osborne told who had discharged the weapons.

“ Did you send your bullets where they belonged? ” some one from the after deck-house shouted, and Mr. Osborne replied, grimly:

“ If we didn't, that scoundrel in the bushes had a precious close shave.”

Then it was that one of the sailors came from the captain's room hurriedly, said something to Uncle Amos, and the two ran at full speed in the direction of Mr. Jenkins's cabin. Mr. Thompson now appeared with a revolver in each hand, and stationed himself at the loophole nearest Mr. Osborne, while the passengers gathered in little knots well forward or aft, according to the stoutness of their courage, but all taking good care to keep well within range of safety afforded by the screens. As for Sam and me, we forgot all about the possibility of being killed or wounded, and pressed as near the barricades as might be until Mr. Thompson, seeing us, cried out sharply:

“ Get into the saloon, you young rascals; this is no place for you! ”

There was no idea in my mind of disobeying the command; it was as if I had not heard, although being conscious of dimly understanding the words, and, seeing a rifle which had probably been dropped by one of the sailors at the time Mr. Jenkins was wounded, I picked it up, making certain the magazine was full, after which I stood with my eyes glued to one of the loopholes, fully determined to shoot whenever I saw a target.

The mutineers had no idea, however, of giving us a second opportunity of making reprisals. During

fully an hour at least a dozen of us, either sailors or passengers, stood ready to fire at any human being who showed himself upon the island; but we saw nothing. Then it was that Captain Bragg and Uncle Amos came up, the former saying in what he evidently intended should be a cheery tone, but which really sounded mournful:

"I reckon two men will be enough to stand watch now, an' all hands who belong aft had best get into the saloon for breakfast. We can't afford to let a lot of scoundrelly mutineers starve us, an' there's little show for a shot. They haven't got the stomach for a fair fight; but must wait for a chance to strike a man in the back."

"How is the mate, sir?" one of the passengers standing just behind me asked, and the captain replied, as if the matter was not of much consequence:

"Gettin' along finely; it was little more than a scratch, an' he's likely to be on duty again in a day or two, if we haven't started for Manila by that time."

At this moment Uncle Amos seized me by the arm, in token that I must go with him into the saloon, and as we walked somewhat apart from the others, I asked in a whisper:

"How is Mr. Jenkins, sir?"

"Got a bad wound in the right side just below the arm. If we had a surgeon aboard I dare say there wouldn't be much danger; but it's hard sleddin' for the poor fellow with no one but Joe Bragg an' me to look after the wound."

"Can I do anything for him, sir?"

“ I reckon not, lad. If he grows worse, as now seems to be the chance, we’ve decided to ask Miss Hubbard if she won’t play the nurse; it’ll be better for her to have somethin’ of the kind to do, than be eatin’ her heart out in the saloon.”

The breakfast, which no one enjoyed and which was decidedly scanty, had not yet come to an end when we were startled once more by the report of a rifle, which had evidently been fired from the deck above us, and in a twinkling all of us were streaming up the companionway, believing we had been mistaken as to the courage of the mutineers.

Just as Sam and I arrived on deck Mr. Thompson was rating one of the sailors for having discharged his rifle when no game was to be seen.

The orders were to be sparing of the ammunition; not to shoot in case we saw any of the mutineers, unless they showed themselves rifles in hand, and to avoid exposing ourselves. The case of cartridges which had been found in the hold was carried to Mr. Thompson’s cabin, and he was enjoined by the captain to give those who went on duty no more than a single charge to a rifle, in order to make certain there would be strictest economy in the handling of the explosives.

Two days passed slowly and wearily, during which time we never got a glimpse of those on the island. Miss Hubbard took it upon herself, on the evening of the day he was wounded, to nurse Mr. Jenkins, and in this work she was aided by Sam’s mother. The amount of provisions served to us at table grew less each meal, until Sam said, laughingly, that by the end

## 102 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

of a week we would have put before us nothing save the empty dishes.

Then, the third day after the second officer was wounded, it began to look as if the tedious monotony would be broken, and it so chanced that I was among the first to know of the movement afoot.

I was standing just outside the chart-room, being there by accident rather than intention, when Captain Bragg popped his head out of the door, looking around as if in search of a sailor, and, seeing me, he asked:

"Where is your uncle, lad?"

"In his cabin, I believe, sir," I replied.

"Will you ask him to come here if he has nothin' of importance on hand? An', lad," he added, as I turned to comply with his request, "if you see Mr. Osborne, say the same to him; but there is no good reason why you should let any other person hear you deliver the messages."

I was off at my best pace, hoping that the time was come at last when we would take some action against the mutineers, instead of thus allowing them to have everything their own way while we pretended to build a boat, for by now I was convinced that the work of the carpenters was no more than a pretence.

Uncle Amos was in our cabin, sitting on the couch with his chin in his hands, as was his custom when studying over anything, and he looked up at me oddly when I repeated what the captain had said.

"Is there something in the wind, sir?" I asked, eagerly, and he replied:

"If there is, Young Amos, it is just as well you



shouldn't know of it. I reckon if we ever do get out of this 'ere snarl, it'll be without dependin' very largely on you an' your mate."

"Tell me what it is, Uncle Amos!" I cried, coaxingly. "Even though I am only a boy, it's mighty hard to be loafing around in a scrape like this, when no one seems to be doing anything to help matters."

I could always coax Uncle Amos to do anything I wished, and this time he said in his kindly tone:

"Wait here till I come back, Young Amos, an' I'll give you a smatterin' of what Joe Bragg has got in his head, for I can well believe it ain't pleasant to hang 'round here thinkin' we're not rackin' our brains to get ourselves out of the oddest kind of a mess that ever sailormen fell into."

I hurried away to find Mr. Osborne, and then went back to the cabin to wait for my uncle, knowing full well he would keep, at whatsoever cost, any promise he made.

And now, without telling the plan as it was explained to me, with many a criticism and prediction by my uncle, let me set the scheme down in the fewest possible words.

In the first place, Captain Bragg realized fully that the mutineers held all the advantage, especially while our store of ammunition was so low. He had little hope that a vessel would come our way in time to render any assistance, for immediately a storm broke we would be forced to accede to the terms of those on the island, unless willing to lose our own lives. The boat-building was, as I had suspected, more of a scheme to keep the passengers hopeful, than because

## 104 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

it was believed we would reap any great benefit from it. Therefore, Captain Bragg, his two mates, the chief engineer, Uncle Amos, and Mr. Osborne, had decided to undertake a venture as hazardous as anything well could be, and it was to go over once more some of the details that I had been sent in search of my uncle.

The plan was that on this very night three or four of them were to leave the wreck on the frailest kind of a raft, which had been put together by the carpenters a few hours previous and was swung alongside as if to be used as a staging for the sailors when they strengthened the screens.

These venturesome ones were to go well armed, as a matter of course; endeavour to swing around the outer point of the reef while they could be concealed from view by the darkness, and then land on the island wheresoever might be possible, so that it was nowhere near the wreck. Once ashore, their purpose would be to creep up on the mutineers in the hope of so taking them at a disadvantage that they might be forced to surrender.

It was the lamest kind of a plan, with the odds an hundred to one against success, and yet, wild and perilous though it was, I burned with the desire to take part in it. Surely it was a venture in which, under the leadership of an older person, I might count as a man, and Uncle Amos had no sooner come to an end of his explanations, than I said, eagerly:

"Why shouldn't I have some part in work of that kind, sir? I can do —"

"Have you suddenly gone crazy, lad?" he cried,

sharply, and without giving him an opportunity to say more, I continued, hurriedly:

“ Surely I can fire a rifle with as fair an aim as you, sir. There are more good reasons why I should go rather than you. The raft won’t carry three men dry; you’ll be under water from the time of starting until making the shore, and once you’ve landed, what condition will you be in — you who are doubled up with the rheumatism if by chance you wet one of your feet? I can do as much toward working the raft as you; I can handle a weapon as well, stand the exposure much better, and with no chance that at the very moment when hot work was required, I’d be crippled so that I couldn’t move.”

Uncle Amos looked at me for awhile, and then, rising slowly, as if in doubt as to whether he ought to do that which he had in mind, went hesitatingly out of the cabin, stopping at the door to say, sharply:

“ See to it that you stay where you are till I get back, an’ if that mate of yours shows up, tell him to go on deck till he’s ordered below.”

I felt positive he had gone to suggest to Captain Bragg or Mr. Osborne that I be allowed to make one of the party which was to undertake the adventure, and although there was something very like fear in my heart because the danger would be so great, I could have cried aloud with joy at the idea of being permitted thus to play the part of a man at a time when men were so sorely needed.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE VENTURE

**L**IKE the foolish lad that I was, I failed to realize all the dangers which would be incurred by those who proposed to leave the wreck on a raft in order to take the mutineers by surprise. I believed there was some chance of being shot down by the men who had shown their readiness to shed human blood, but even that peril I passed over lightly in my mind, saying to myself that the chances of being wounded were not more than as one in an hundred, whereas, as a matter of fact, there was every possibility I might be killed.

I gave no heed whatsoever to the dangers of the passage, which, as was afterward shown, were such as might well have deterred the oldest shellback among us, and reckoned that to gain the island was but little more than child's play.

Well, Uncle Amos returned before I had fancied his errand was hardly more than begun, and there was an expression of gravity on his face which startled me, as he said, speaking slowly:

“It is agreed that you shall go in my place, lad, an' now we've made such an arrangement, I'm askin' myself if I have the right to send you off where

the chances are against your comin' back. What could I say to your mother, if I showed up at home without you? "

" But you won't do anything of the kind, Uncle Amos! " I cried, flinging my arms around his neck in token of the joy I felt at being thus numbered among the defenders of the steamer. " We will go home together, or not at all. What could I do if you came to grief? Surely, I'd never be able to find my way back alone, even if I had the money. When are we to start? "

" After the passengers have turned in to-night. Joe Bragg believes you can take my place to advantage, an' you're to promise me that you'll obey him, or Mr. Osborne, on the instant, without stopping to think of, or question, his commands. "

" Of course I will, " I replied, carelessly. " Who else is going? "

" The captain, Mr. Stubbs, the first officer, and Mr. Osborne. I'm to be left here in command, with such of the passengers or crew as I may select, to back me up. "

" Then can't you see that it is better I should go in your place, sir? " I cried, gleefully. " Some one must be left to look after the steamer, and with Captain Bragg away, who could perform the task as well as you? "

" That's what Joe Bragg said; but I've insisted all along it was his duty to remain aboard, leavin' the rest of us to make the venture. He seems to think, though, that he's the only one who can lead the party properly, an' it's no more use arguin' with

## 108 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

him once his mind's set on a thing, than it would be talkin' to the wind."

I came to understand how dangerous Uncle Amos believed would be the task of trying to come upon the mutineers unawares, after he had talked with me ten minutes or more as if there was no probability he would ever see me again, and certain it is he would have succeeded in making me very nearly a coward, if I hadn't reminded him that those who were to be left on the wreck were not in the safest possible situation.

Then Sam came in search of me, and right glad was I to see him, for the conversation with Uncle Amos had been really painful.

I could see that the lad suspected there was something more in the wind than I was willing to tell him; but I dared not even hint at the secret, lest by so doing I should forfeit my right to make one of the party. We two went on deck to stand our share of the watch which was constantly kept from behind the screens, and as we talked of the future possibilities I burned with the desire to tell him what I was about to do.

The secret was kept by me, however, and when night came I was puzzled to know how I could get away without his knowing of my movements, because he and I had shared the same berth since Miss Hubbard moved into Mrs. Currier's cabin; but Uncle Amos soon settled the matter.

"If he is awake when the moment arrives for the party to set off, I'll send you to the cap'in's room, an' take mighty good care he don't follow. Of

course, all hands will know somethin' about the venture, if you're forced to stay on the island over tomorrow, an' then he can be told; but I'm lookin' to see you back by sunrise, if you come at all, for by that time you'll either have worked the traverse, or been done up."

As Uncle Amos said, so we did, and when the appointed time arrived, my uncle asked me to learn if Captain Bragg had any need of his services; therefore I went out of the cabin, my heart beating so loudly it seemed certain all in the saloon must hear the noise. I am not ashamed to admit that just then, knowing we were to set off in a very short time, I wished most sincerely that I had not been so eager to have an active share in the defence of the treasure, for, although we did not admit as much to ourselves, all our acts, and the acts of the mutineers, were intimately connected with those boxes of gold coin that were stowed in the strong-room.

In the captain's cabin I found those who were to take part in the venture, and if I had had any question as to the possible danger, the matter would have been settled when I looked in the faces of those who were to be my companions. They were grave, speaking only when it was absolutely necessary, and saying nothing as to our purpose.

When I entered the apartment Mr. Osborne said, as he handed me a revolver, twenty cartridges, and a square of oiled cotton:

"Your uncle left these for you, lad. Wrap them up well, so there may be no danger the ammunition will get wet, for you are like to go overboard

## 110 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

more than once before we get back to the steamer."

While I was doing as he bade, Captain Bragg made his own preparations for the journey, and had no more than finished when one of the sailors opened the door of the cabin without having given warning of his coming. He nodded, but did not speak, when the captain looked at him questioningly, and Mr. Osborne took me by the hand, leading me on deck to where the screens came to an end on the star-board side.

"Throw off all your clothing save trousers and shirt," he whispered, setting me the example; and while I fumbled at the buttons with trembling fingers, it was possible to see that all my companions were engaged in similar preparations.

The night was as dark as it well could be when there were no clouds in the sky, yet if any of the mutineers were watching, it was not probable we could leave the wreck without their being aware of the fact.

The chief engineer went over the rail first, clinging to a rope which was made fast inboard, and when he disappeared from view, Mr. Osborne motioned for me to follow.

Allowing myself to slip over the rail as I had seen Mr. Stubbs, I dropped down the rope, which swayed to and fro in a very disagreeable manner, until my legs were seized, and I pulled down to that collection of boards which had been given the name of a "raft."

Now it was that for the first time I understood



the rude craft had not been intended to carry us dry shod; but only served to hold our heads out of water as we swam inshore, and my first fear was that I had not wrapped the revolver as carefully as was necessary in order to keep it dry.

It was as if I had no more than made this unpleasant discovery when the remainder of the party had left the steamer, each one clinging to the frail raft with both hands, and striking out with their feet to propel it.

“Give no heed to anything save yourself; the rest of us will be able to furnish the motive power,” Mr. Osborne whispered, and I obeyed, hanging limply to the timbers, wondering why I had been so foolish as to beg Uncle Amos to let me come on such a harebrained expedition.

By watching the line of the shore, I could see that we were moving slowly on a course parallel with the land, and at an hundred yards or more distant from it. If there were sentinels on duty, they must of a necessity have seen us, even though we might have appeared only a black spot on the surges.

Not a sound could be heard save the soft lip-lipping of the water as we advanced, and it may have been ten minutes, or an hour, so little did I realize the passage of time, when I saw what appeared to be a line of faint fire gliding over the waves as if following me.

“What is that?” I asked of Mr. Osborne, in a whisper, partially letting go my grip of the timbers that I might motion with one hand toward the glistening line on the black waters.

## 112 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

He looked as I desired, but made no reply, and I was on the point of repeating the question when I realized that all the swimmers were splashing the water with their feet, although it had been agreed that no more noise than might be absolutely necessary should be made. Then it was that I understood the meaning of it all, and during a full half-minute I ceased to breathe, so great was my fear.

The line of pale fire was the fin of a shark, that, having scented possible victims, was following us until he should find an opportunity to close his jaws upon human flesh. I believe I suffered more mental agony during the next few minutes than would have been equalled by bodily pain if the blood-seeking fish had really seized upon me, and only by the utmost strength of will was it possible to prevent myself from crying aloud in fear.

Beyond splashing the water, my companions appeared to give no heed to the shark, and I wondered how they could calmly continue their efforts to force the raft ahead, more particularly since it was reasonable to suppose that the one we saw was not the only monster in the immediate vicinity.

After a time — I cannot say how long — it was as if I had become accustomed to the danger; it may be that I regained my courage because the fish made no attack. Then I was sufficiently master of myself to take heed as to the progress we had made. Looking backward over my shoulder, I could not see the steamer; the blackness of the night had merged her into the reef until it was as if I gazed at a line of rocks which had no distinguishing form, save that

of a huge, unbroken mass extending from the island far out into the sea.

On one side of us was the broad expanse of waters, rising and falling until one's eyes played strange tricks, and on the other, the deeper black of the land, with the ominous roaring of the surf, through which we must pass if we gained a foothold upon the island.

I fancied we had come a long distance from the steamer; my flesh felt as if I had been in the water many hours, and my fingers were cramped with holding so tightly to the timbers, but yet no one suggested that we might have gone far enough, until another half-hour must have passed, when Captain Bragg whispered:

"We'll do as we are now, I reckon," and Mr. Stubbs replied:

"If they sight us at this distance, we may as well keep on to the next island, for there'll be no show of goin' ashore secretly."

Then the raft was forced in toward the line of surf, and I worked most vigorously with my feet to the end that we might arrive the more quickly, when I could straighten my aching fingers.

It was impossible to make out what kind of a shore we were come upon; but the roaring of the surges told that they must be breaking over jagged rocks, and Captain Bragg said warningly, but in a low tone, lest there be some one on the shore who might thus learn of our coming:

"Let the first who strikes bottom give the word, that we may grapple each other, for certain it is we can't go alive singly through that smother of surf."

The captain had hardly more than ceased speaking when Mr. Thompson said, sharply:

"I'm on the rocks now!"

"We must pull the raft ashore with us, if possible, for it may be that we'll need it in getting back to the *Queen*. Grip hands with Thompson, an' for your lives don't break the hold till we're high an' dry!"

How that landing was made, I can't rightly say. As the captain thus gave the command, Mr. Osborne seized me by one hand, and Mr. Stubbs grasped the other, after which we were thrown headlong by a mighty surge which came up from behind, as if eager to put a speedy end to the wild venture. Whether I might have struggled to my feet unaided, is an open question; I doubt if either of the party could, alone, have made his way to the beach; but we fought together, now beneath the surface, and again puffing and blowing as we came into the air where we could inflate our lungs once more, until, after getting many a foothold only to be dragged back by the undertow, we ran high up on the beach.

Captain Bragg was the last man in the line, and he came ashore still clutching to what was left of our raft after that terrible conflict, struggling quite as hard to hold it in tow as to save his own life.

We were on the island with the mutineers, and it was reasonable to suppose we had come secretly, otherwise the scoundrels would have saluted us with a volley of bullets while we were unable, because of fatigue, to defend ourselves.

The first thing we did, after a short breathing spell,



"CAPTAIN BRAGG WAS THE LAST MAN IN THE LINE."



was to unwrap the cartridges and dry our revolvers as best we might. While this was being done, the captain said, in a whisper:

“Remember that not a weapon is to be discharged unless it becomes absolutely necessary, an’ if we do open fire, there must be no let-up until we have done for that gang of villains, or they have overcome us. I’ll lead the way, havin’ kept the bearin’s fairly well in my head, an’ the rest will follow close at my heels, with Thompson bringin’ up the rear.”

Mr. Stubbs took his place next behind the captain, and Mr. Osborne motioned for me to step in line, he following me, with the first officer, as the leader had directed.

Then began the advance straight into the tropical thicket through which the captain was literally forced to fight his way, but with due care to making a noise, and we kept behind him as best we might. Before twenty yards of progress had been made, I felt certain that every square inch of my body had been cut and torn by thorns, and the whipping-back of the bushes, as the man in front released them, caused such torture that it was only with difficulty I could repress cries of agony.

I had thought the voyage, when we clung to the raft, was as painful as anything could be, and yet we had not been in the thicket ten minutes before I decided that our sufferings then were as nothing compared to what we were now forced to endure. The advance was so slow that, at times, I really believed we were a full half-hour covering a yard in distance, and yet such could not have been the fact,

for I heard Mr. Stubbs whisper that it was not yet midnight, very shortly before the captain halted suddenly, parting the bushes in front of him until I could see the gleam of a fire around which were the forms of human beings.

There was little need to ask if these were the mutineers, for we knew there were no others on the island, unless Mr. Jenkins had made a most grievous mistake when he was sent to explore the place, and I wondered how it could advantage us now we had found them.

Now and then the night breeze brought to our ears the hum of voices, therefore these scoundrels were keeping watch, or their consciences troubled them so badly that they could not sleep, which was hardly probable, and I asked myself again and again if we had not come on a wild-goose chase — if, now that we were on the island while our enemies remained in ignorance of the fact, there was anything for us to do save go back as we came, if indeed that would be possible?

With the exception of myself, all our party crept up to where a view of this encampment could be had, and there gazed so eagerly that curiosity overcame fear until I also advanced, taking my place by the side of Mr. Osborne.

From this position I could see the tent which had been made of the spare canvas sent ashore, and, because of being able to make out no more than five around the blaze, which was evidently kindled that the smoke might drive away the flies, I believed these wakeful ones had been posted as sentinels.



The encampment was in the midst of the thicket, where was a small place left bare by nature, or cleared by those who had visited the island some time previous, and the shelter was set up with one end amid the bushes, as had been necessary in order to leave space for a fire.

“The ammunition is under cover, of course?” I heard the captain whisper to Mr. Osborne, as if giving words to his thoughts. “It shouldn’t be difficult to crawl through the bushes until a view of the inside could be had.”

“I’ll make a try for it,” Mr. Osborne said, eagerly, and was on the point of moving away, when the captain said in a hoarse whisper:

“It is for me to take all the risks. You are to stay here with the others.”

To this Mr. Osborne objected, and the two had a whispered controversy, of which I was unable to hear a single word, at the close of which the captain motioned for all of us to follow.

Then came another time of creeping amid the piercing thorns and stinging bushes, when we moved even more slowly than before, because of being so near the enemy, and an hour must have been spent in making the short *détour* which was hardly more than a stone’s throw.

Once more we could see the fire, but from a different point of view, for we were almost directly behind the tent, and I pressed forward as eagerly as any of the others to learn what change might have been made in the position of affairs while we were circling through the thicket.

There were now only four men near the fire; two of them walking to and fro as if fighting against the desire for slumber, and the other couple seemingly discussing some question. This second position of ours was so near the mutineers that no one ventured even to whisper, and in silence we gazed, each, most likely, asking himself how it might be possible for us to gain any advantage over an enemy who was not only stronger in numbers, but so much better armed.

I finally came to understand that Captain Bragg remained inactive because he was waiting for the man who had entered the tent while we were creeping over to this second position, to fall asleep, and that he determined not to make any waste by too much haste, was shown by his remaining silent and motionless until it seemed to me that the new day must be very near at hand.

Then, suddenly, he laid his hand on Mr. Osborne's shoulder, motioning him to remain where he was, and, with no more noise than might have been caused by the night wind, he was lost to view amid the shadows.

I have often heard story-tellers speak of the awkwardness of a sailor in the wilderness, when silence was necessary, but if all seamen are able to display as much of woodcraft as Captain Joseph Bragg did the night when we risked our lives on that island of the Batan group, then I say the old-time frontiersmen are bunglers as compared with them.

My three companions seemed to understand exactly why the captain had thus suddenly disappeared, but I was wholly at a loss to even guess at

his purpose until a faint rustling of the undergrowth told that he was returning, and when he came into view, it was possible to make out that he carried a heavy package of some kind in his arms.

Not until he had placed this on the ground almost at my feet, did I make out that he had taken from the tent, where it was guarded by a dozen or more of the mutineers, one of the cases containing rifle-cartridges, and then it was I understood what he would do. If we succeeded in carrying away, or destroying, the greater portion of the ammunition stolen from the steamer by Tony, then indeed would our venture have been a success, and we warranted in taking yet greater risks than any we had faced.

Captain Bragg made no delay after bringing out the wooden case, but putting it on the ground near me, disappeared once more, and I felt a glow of triumph, although I had contributed nothing leading to the victory, because we had so far gotten the best of the mutineers.

Four times did the captain disappear amid the shadows, and three times he returned with a heavy box which we knew to be filled with what was just then more precious than the gold in the hold of the *Ocean Queen* — ammunition; but, while we waited with beating hearts for his next coming, saying to ourselves that if matters progressed thus rapidly we would have the mutineers at our mercy by daybreak, a cry of anger came from the tent, then a sound as of scuffling, the report of a weapon, and instantly the encampment was in an uproar. Men ran in and out of the tent, looking wildly around as if it was

## 120 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

possible for them to distinguish objects in the gloom with eyes that were blinded by the glare of the fire, and I saw more than one discharge his weapon at random, so excited and bewildered were they.

"Stand ready to shoot, an' don't waste a cartridge!" Mr. Thompson said, in a low, sharp tone, for while the excitement was so great, we could speak without danger of betraying our whereabouts. "The cap'n has got away, but he'll soon show up here, an' we must be ready to make a desperate stand!"

Then came several reports from the edge of the clearing opposite where we stood, and Mr. Osborne said to me, with what was very like a chuckle of satisfaction:

"They should have better sense than to think he ran that way, for it would have been necessary to pass those who were standing guard. He is close about here; keep your eyes open, for quick work will be needed if they are at his heels."

Strange as it may seem, I was in no wise frightened, now that death was so near at hand, and I believe that my comparative calmness was born of the excitement, even fear, of which the mutineers were giving token.

During two or three minutes, perhaps four, the scoundrels ran here and there wildly, accomplishing nothing save the hindering of those who might have been able to follow the captain by the waving of the foliage as he forced a passage through, and then the voice of Sampson, the travelling salesman, could be heard:

“Don't lose your heads, you fools! Hold your peace till we find out what raised the rumpus!”

“Some one tripped over me,” a voice cried.

“And that is all?” Sampson shouted. “Has this row been kicked up simply because some one happened to stumble over you?”

“But whoever it was had a box of cartridges in his arms,” the man replied, angrily. “I could see it by the light of the fire, an' if sich a thing was possible, I'd say that old man Bragg was holdin' the box!”

“Don't be a fool!” another voice cried. “How can the captain be here when he's the same as marooned on the wreck?”

“Marooned nothing! If I'm marooned with a four-inch rope swung between the ship and the shore, I'll never turn a hair. I didn't say the old man was here, though it might be he's been fool enough to sneak ashore while our lookouts were snoozin', but the face I saw looked like his, an' there's no backin' me down on that.”

“Bring a burnin' stick here!” Sampson roared, and now I fancied it was possible to detect a tremor of fear in his tones. “If anybody has been fooling with the ammunition, it shouldn't take us very long to find it out.”

Then there was more running to and fro as this order was being obeyed, and we four in the foliage stood silent and motionless, ready to sell our lives dearly if so be the villains should discover us. The reflection told when a brand from the fire had been

## 122 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

carried into the tent, and almost immediately thereafter came a cry of rage from Sampson.

"Either that blundering idiot Jenkins lied when he reported that there was no one on the island, or the man at watch on the point has fallen asleep long enough for some one to come ashore from the wreck!"

"How do you know?" one of his companions asked, shrilly, and the salesman replied with what I can liken to nothing less than a roar of rage:

"How do I know? Because some of the boxes are missing! Do you allow I'm such a fool as to let matters go at haphazard, the way some of you would have done once you found yourselves free from that bully of a captain? I took account of all that Tony brought ashore, and had a hand in stacking the stuff up, so it is easy to see whether anything has been disturbed. If you don't want to be shot down like dogs, get a move on, for I tell you there's mischief. Files, go out and see what has become of the man we put on guard —"

"There's no need of troublin' yourselves about me, for I've come to find out why you've been raisin' such a bloomin' row," a voice in the distance cried, and we in hiding did not need to be told that the old shellback, the only white man in the crew, who had been watching at the shore-end of the hawser, was speaking.

"How long did you sleep?" Sampson cried, furiously, and I believed, because of the noise, that he had rushed forward as if to strike the sentinel.

"Hold hard, matey!" the man cried, warningly.

“ There’ll be considerable trouble here, with you in the thick of it, if you try any funny games like that. We’re on equal footin’, an’ there’ll be no knockin’ about, if you please.”

“ How long were you asleep? ” Sampson demanded.

“ My eyes have been open wider than yours, I’ll go bail, else there wouldn’t be sich a mix-up here. I haven’t even wanted forty winks, for with thinkin’ of what would be the end of this ’ere traverse if things didn’t go as you an’ Files figgered, an’ the bloomin’ flies that would have kept a stone image wide awake an’ stirrin’, I wasn’t in condition to take my ease. What’s workin’ on yer? ”

“ Will you swear that no one has come ashore from the wreck since you went on duty? ” Files asked, and the sailor replied with an oath:

“ Swear it, of course I will, an’ on a stack of Bibles as high as your head. This ’ere cruise that we’ve started on is likely to have an endin’ sich as keeps a man from slippin’ up on his duty, no matter how hard it may be. I ain’t runnin’ the risk of hangin’ in Hong Kong, or bein’ garroted in Manila, to run any way crooked — ”

“ Hold your tongue about hanging and garrotting! ” Sampson cried, in a rage. “ If no one has come ashore from the wreck over the hawser, then it’s time we made ready for trouble. Let each man arm himself, an’ with plenty of ammunition. We’ll soon find out what’s on this island! ”

## CHAPTER VIII

### A RUNNING FIGHT

**N**OW was come the time when it seemed as if a pitched battle could hardly be avoided, because until the captain joined us we were not at liberty to make any attempt at regaining the wreck, no matter how much of danger might threaten.

The pity of it all was that we were forced to remain there amid the foliage, idle, when we should be seeking some place in which a successful stand might be made. There was no question but that our leader was as eager to come upon us as we were to see him, and if we moved from the spot where he had left us, it would render his search all the more difficult. We knew beyond peradventure that he was hunting for us, because he must have heard the conversation of the mutineers, as did we, and could well understand how necessary it was that we come together, whether for battle or flight.

I was not the only member of our small party whose heart beat loudly with mingled fear and anxiety. I could understand, even in the darkness, that the others were equally distressed in mind, for they moved to and fro nervously, as if it was impossible to remain long in one position, and all the while



we heard plainly the movements of the mutineers as they made ready to search the island. However carelessly this last might be done, there was no question but that they would stumble upon the raft, even though we, ourselves, succeeded in remaining under cover, and once it was known beyond question that a party from the steamer had come ashore, Sampson and Files would give their followers no rest until we were hunted down.

We had three boxes of cartridges as spoils of war, but could not hope to carry the heavy cases with us in our flight, for I counted that we would avoid a pitched battle as long as possible, and the question in my mind was as to how the possession of the ammunition might advantage us. Just at this moment, I saw Mr. Stubbs kneeling by the side of the boxes as if busily engaged, and, stooping over, learned that he was hacking at the covers with his pocket-knife.

“What are you trying to do?” I whispered, softly, although the mutineers were making such an uproar that I might have spoken in ordinary tones without attracting their attention, and he replied, grimly:

“It isn’t likely we can carry this stuff away with us, even though we contrive to leave the island, an’ I’m not allowin’ that the ammunition shall be left for them to use against us.”

Even as he spoke, one of the covers yielded to his efforts, and he said hurriedly to me:

“Bury the cartridges in the dampest place you can find, an’ then rake the leaves over them as well as you may.”

## 126 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

Digging away the moist, wet soil with my fingers, for I had nothing which would serve as a tool, I soon succeeded, at the expense of scraping a goodly amount of skin from my hands, in making a hole sufficiently large to contain the contents of one case, and when I had covered the cartridges with four or five inches of sand and decaying leaves, I smoothed the top as well as possible in the darkness, until I thought the stuff safely hidden from any save an exhaustive search.

In the meanwhile, the engineer had opened the other two boxes, and whittled a portion of the dry wood of which they were made, into fine shavings, on which he piled the cartridges loosely, that the air might have free entrance among them.

I was at a loss to understand the purpose of his work until later, when the mutineers were ready to begin their search, and then I could have laughed with wicked glee at the thought of the surprise we might be able to give them.

While burying the ammunition from the first box, I had observed that Mr. Osborne and Mr. Thompson were talking eagerly together, and Mr. Stubbs had no more than finished his task than the first officer motioned for us to come closer to him. When we stood with our heads so near his that the lightest whisper could be heard by all, he said, calmly, as if proposing some ordinary, harmless scheme:

"Mr. Osborne an' I believe the cap'in must be between us an' the hawser, since at the first alarm we failed to see him leavin' the tent, an' most likely he ran in the opposite direction, lest he bring all the

villains down upon us. We will work cautiously toward the point where the wreck lies, an', if we find him, it may be possible to gain the steamer, with the aid of those on board."

"Suppose we don't run across him?" Mr. Stubbs asked.

"Then we'll stay on the island an' take our chances, for I'm not of the mind to desert the leader."

The engineer pointed toward the ammunition which he had piled on the shavings, and, understanding at once what he would do, Mr. Thompson said, gleefully:

"We'll first make certain whether they count on leavin' any behind to guard the tent, an' if that be done, you shall set off your fireworks. I reckon it'll give 'em a scare, to say nothin' about lessenin' the supply of ammunition."

Then it was that the first officer led the way cautiously up toward the tent, but advancing no more than a dozen paces, for then we could have a fairly good view of the encampment.

A fresh supply of fuel had been thrown on the fire, and, by the glare of the flames, we could distinctly see Sampson and Files forming their men in a thin line, as if bent on sweeping over a broad area in their search.

"We could easily pick off the two leaders where they stand, and once they were out of the way the others would listen to reason," Mr. Osborne whispered, and for a moment I believed Mr. Thompson was in favour of the plan, but after hesitating an instant, he replied:

## 128 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

"If we were armed with rifles, there would be a chance, but as it is, one or both of the shots might miss, an' then we would be in a bad snarl. There is too much risk while we have no idea where the cap'in may be."

There was no controversy; the first officer's decision was accepted by the others as if he had been in command of our party, and we gave all our attention to watching the mutineers, none of whom appeared very eager to enter the thicket in the darkness.

I counted the men in line, and found that, with the two leaders, there were thirteen. Lounging near the fire were four who seemed to have no share in the making ready, and I decided that these were to be left to guard the tent. One of them had his arm in a sling, and it was reasonable to suppose he had been wounded by our fire when Mr. Jenkins was shot.

Before setting his force in motion, Mr. Sampson must needs make a speech to his men, most likely believing, and with good cause, that it was necessary to bolster up their courage a bit before ordering them into the thicket where it was possible they might meet an overwhelming number. As nearly as I can remember, he told them something of this sort:

"We know to a dead certainty that one or more from the wreck have come ashore, or else there are other people on this island who knew we had a lot of cartridges in the tent. If we count on handlin' the gold that's aboard the steamer, we're bound to know who is near by, an' that before there's a chance to do us more mischief. We can sweep the island, by marchin' as you're now lined up, an' nothin' larger

than a rabbit should be able to escape you. Keep your eyes open, an' fire at the first movin' thing you see."

"We're not like to see very much," one of the men said, with a nervous laugh. "It'll be darker'n a pocket among the bushes, an' we might run on to the full crew of the steamer without knowin' it."

"All the more reason why you should keep your eyes open," Sampson said, sharply. "A lot of treasure, such as we know is to be found aboard the wreck, isn't to be handled by us unless we take some chances; but if there are any here who are afraid to go on the hunt, let them fall out of line an' give up their share of the gold to those who are willin' to work for it."

No reply was made to this suggestion; not a man left the line, and after waiting while one might have counted twenty, in order to make certain that all were minded to obey orders, Sampson gave the word to advance.

"Don't be in too much of a hurry," he said, cautioningly. "Keep the same distance apart, and if one stops, all must do the same, for it would be awkward if some of us got so far ahead as to be mistaken for the enemy."

Then, slowly, as if each man was reluctant to enter the thicket, but not willing to admit it, the mutineers advanced, and the four men who were lounging near the fire remained behind. I noted that each of these guards had a rifle in his hands, and it was reasonable to suppose that the magazines of the weapons were filled to their utmost capacity, therefore our chances

## 130 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

would be slim if we were discovered even by this small party.

The main body of the mutineers numbered thirteen, as I have already said; there were four left behind, therefore all the party were accounted for, and there could be no guard at the point where the hawser from the wreck was made fast, as I reckoned it, but I failed to take into my calculations Tony, the Filipino, who made up the number to eighteen.

Until this moment I had not ventured to say anything which savoured in the slightest of advice or comment, but now I called Mr. Osborne's attention to the fact as set down above, concluding by saying:

"Those who are making the search are going directly away from the steamer, and if we can find the captain, it shouldn't be such a hard job to get aboard the wreck without swimming."

"That isn't a bad suggestion, lad," he said, heartily, taking me by the hand as if I had done him a favour, but forgetting Tony, as had I. Then he whispered to the first officer, who nodded his head emphatically in reply.

"If you can hold back your portion of the show ten minutes, Mr. Stubbs, it will give us a big advantage," Mr. Thompson said to the engineer, and the latter hurriedly set about perfecting his plan by putting up a screen of bushes between the collection of cartridges and the tent, to prevent the blaze from being seen, as I afterward came to know.

Two or three minutes later Mr. Stubbs stepped forward, as if to say that his arrangements had been

made, and the first officer gave the word for us to follow him.

I saw the engineer delay sufficiently long to light a match which he must have had wrapped in the waterproof covering of his cartridges, otherwise it would have been useless after the long submersion while we were coming ashore, and as we left the place, a tiny curl of smoke could be seen wreathing among the bushes.

If everything worked as we intended, there ought to be a pretty scene of confusion near the tent when the flames ate into the powder of the cartridges, and the explosion would unquestionably be sufficient to bring back the searching party in a hurry; therefore, we might count on having considerable time in which to make our way across the island before the mutineers were in shape to make much trouble.

The only drawback to our scheme was the fact that we had no idea of where Captain Bragg might be. If we failed to meet him during the journey from the tent to the point where the steamer lay, then all our advantage would be lost, for, as Mr. Thompson had said, we would not leave the island without him.

Far in the distance could be heard the shouts of the mutineers, as if they were eager to advertise their coming so that an enemy might have opportunity to escape, and from the voices, it was possible to say that they were moving slowly, therefore, we need have no fear they would march the entire length of the island before the explosion which Mr. Stubbs had arranged would call them back on the double quick.

## 132 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

"Move as far apart as possible without losin' sight of each other," Mr. Thompson said, as he began the advance through the tangled foliage. "The captain *must* be between us an' the point, an' it would be hard luck if we passed near his hidin'-place without knowin' it."

There is no need for me to say we made all haste to get away from the neighbourhood of the tent, knowing, as we did, that when Mr. Stubbs's fireworks began to explode, the bullets would whistle around right lively, and if the guards left by the mutineers had been attending to their duty, they must surely have heard us as we forced a passage through the tangle.

As the moments passed, bringing nearer the time when the engineer's scheme would startle the enemy, we pressed forward, regardless of the noise that might be made, and were well up to the reef, without having seen or heard anything of the captain, when a single cartridge exploded. Then came a regular fusilade, followed by a roar which seemed to shake the very earth, and we knew that the mutineers had been weakened by the loss of just so much ammunition as had been contained in two of the cases.

Following this deafening report, and as if set in motion by it, came the sound of some one running straight toward us, from the direction of the reef, and I half-halted to raise my weapon, when Mr. Osborne cried, sharply:

"Hold up, captain! There is no reason why you should come this way any further!"

I could not at once believe we had had such good



fortune as to come upon our leader at the very moment when it was most important we should find him, and yet I might have known, when the sound of footsteps was first heard, that it must be him, believing as I did that all the mutineers were in the opposite direction. It seemed as if we were already in a place of safety when he joined us, but without stopping, for Mr. Thompson explained, while we pressed forward, what had been decided upon, and then all our party broke into a run, for even the seconds were precious if we would gain the wreck without a battle.

We could hear the shouts of the mutineers while we ran, and by such words as it was possible to distinguish now and then, knew they were wholly at a loss to understand the meaning of the explosion. There was every indication that they were in a panic of fear, as we had believed might be the result, and so long as they remained in such condition, we would be able to do much as we pleased.

In fact, so thoroughly were we convinced of this that Mr. Osborne halted, as he cried, exultantly:

“Now is the time when we may go back and wipe out that gang of scoundrels, before they have recovered from their fright!”

“It won't pay to press our luck,” Captain Bragg replied, grimly, as he urged Mr. Osborne on. “They are in a panic because of hearin' what must have sounded to them as if a regiment of soldiers had fired a volley; but, instantly they get sight of a human bein', the fear will leave them. It is the unexplainable which causes the greatest alarm.”

## 134 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

He had no more than ceased speaking when a second explosion rang out with a roar not unlike that of a heavy peal of thunder, and the tremor of the air had not yet ceased when came a third crash, as heavy as the others.

"What is the matter?" I cried, in terror, for by this time I was so thoroughly alarmed that my hands trembled until it was not possible to hold the revolver, and it fell to the ground, giving me much trouble in the recovery of it.

"The mine which Stubbs sprang has started a blaze, and the cartridges in the tent have exploded," Mr. Osborne replied, with a laugh as of satisfaction. "We'll hope that with all those bullets flying around, some of our blooming mutineers have got a dose!"

We had halted involuntarily when these last explosions rent the air, and now Captain Bragg urged us forward yet more swiftly, crying as he ran:

"All that we could have hoped to accomplish, even with fortune favourin' us at every turn, has been done, an' it would be folly not to take advantage of this opportunity to get aboard the steamer!"

Within three minutes after he had thus spoken we were come to the point, at the very spot where the hawser was made fast, and Mr. Thompson was standing waist-deep in the surf as he hailed the wreck.

"Ahoy on board!" he cried, in a guarded tone, and almost on the instant came back the reply:

"Ahoy! What's wanted?"

"Those who went off on the raft are here. Lend a hand lively to fetch us aboard!"

"Is there any gammon about this 'ere business?"

the sentinel, one of the second-class passengers, asked, suspiciously, and the first officer replied, angrily:

“ You should be able to tell by the sound of my voice who I am! ”

“ Yes, sir, now I’ve made you out all right,” came back in cheery tones, and then the soft rubbing of ropes as the sling was hauled ashore could be heard.

“ Work lively, lads,” Mr. Thompson continued, “ for there’s no tellin’ how much time we’ve got to spare.”

We could hear the sentinel calling softly for assistance, and before the sling was within reach I made out my uncle’s voice, as he exclaimed:

“ Thank God, they are safe after the maddest venture that ever tempted sailormen ashore! ”

It so chanced that Mr. Osborne was standing nearest the end of the hawser when the sling came to hand, and, without stopping to parley, Captain Bragg literally forced him into it, as he cried, cautiously:

“ Haul in lively, lads! ”

In the darkness I could see the form of the plucky passenger as he swung to and fro on the hawser, and a hymn of thanksgiving went up from my heart as the shadowy mass disappeared over the shattered plates of the *Ocean Queen’s* wounded bow.

Before one could have taken a long breath, the swish of ropes told that the sling was being hauled back again, and Captain Bragg seized the man nearest him, to make certain there would be no delay at our end of the hawser. This person chanced to be

## 136 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

the engineer, and I heard him say in protest to the captain's rough handling:

"Take the boy next, sir. He should have been sent aboard first."

"This is no time for pickin' an' choosin'," Captain Bragg said, sharply, and before he ceased speaking, Mr. Stubbs was being hauled aboard so swiftly that I fancied it was possible to see the hawser smoking under the friction.

There were now but three of us on the point, and if the mutineers delayed six minutes longer the venture would be ended in the most successful manner possible; but it was not to be that we should come out of the perils into which we had plunged, without a battle.

The sling was being sent back to us for the third time, and Captain Bragg had me by the arm, that he might force me into it as expeditiously as he had Mr. Stubbs, when we were startled by the report of a rifle as a bullet whistled through the air unpleasantly near my head.

"Turn about, an' be handy with your weapons!" the captain cried, as he let go his hold of my arm and set the example. "Make a rush for the villains, an' we should be able to wing three or four at the first fire! Get into that sling, lad!" he added, in a low tone to me; but I was so excited that I failed to understand his meaning, and instead of obeying the command, followed close by his side, ready to shoot at the first glimpse of a target.

He did not take heed of my disobedience, for just then the bullets came rapidly through the foliage,

evidently sent at random, and because of the regularity of the reports, it was reasonable to suppose that as yet we were beset by only one man.

The first officer dashed through the underbrush without apparent thought of what might be the result, and before I had been able to see the flash of a weapon, I heard him firing slowly, saying as he did so:

“ Take that, you cowardly beach-comber! ”

Three chambers of his revolver were emptied before I was by his side, and no sooner had I gained such position than a cry of pain rang out a few paces in advance, followed by the sound as if a heavy body had fallen.

“ What have you brought down? ” Captain Bragg cried, as he came toward us at his best pace, and the first officer replied, as he sprang through the thicket in the direction from which the cry had come:

“ Unless I’m way out of my reckonin’, I’ve potted that precious travellin’ salesman! If my bullets went wide it’s — Hello, you miserable villain, I *did* get you, eh? ”

“ You’ve killed me! I’m dying,” came in faint tones, and as Mr. Thompson raised something in his arms I heard him say, grimly:

“ It’ll be mighty lucky for you if I have, for it’s savin’ the hangman a job.”

Captain Bragg was by the mate’s side almost as soon as the latter had raised the wounded man, and after a brief silence, during which time I fancied he was trying to learn how badly the fellow had been hurt, he said:

## 138 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

" We'll send him aboard, an' I sha'n't mind stoppin' here a spell longer if we can serve Files in the same way."

Mr. Thompson began dragging his prisoner toward the hawser, and, pressing close to him, I could see Sampson's face, showing ghastly white even in the darkness, with red stains upon it.

We had no small job to get the helpless man into the sling, and before our task was finished Uncle Amos asked, impatiently:

" What are you doin' there? Was anybody hurt in that last round? "

" We're sendin' you a gentleman by the name of Sampson; but how much life is left in his miserable carcass I'm unable to say," Captain Bragg replied. " Haul away, an' work lively! "

Whether Sampson had been tied in the sling I could not say, but it did not seem as if there had been time for any such careful work as that, and I watched breathlessly as he was being drawn across the space where a fall would dash him upon the rocks below.

" Suppose he should tumble out? " I said aloud, speaking only to myself, and the first officer replied, as if believing I had asked the question of him:

" So much the better, for the worthless life would be knocked out of him to a certainty, an' we wouldn't be put to the trouble of lookin' after the scoundrel, as may be possible if he lives to be taken aboard."

We had heard no sound from the rear when the sling came back to us again, and I had no choice but to get into it when the captain thrust me forward; but was like to have fallen with the first tightening

of the ropes, for my hand grasped something sticky which showed black in the gloom, and I knew it to be the travelling salesman's blood.

It soon became apparent that Sampson was not the only mutineer who had started toward the reef as soon as the first alarm caused by the several explosions had subsided, for while I was yet no more than half-way from the shore to the wreck, a volley of shots rang out, and I heard Captain Bragg cry, passionately:

“ One more dash, an' we'll get another prisoner to be hanged when we've time to spend on such villainous trash! ”

Then came the fainter reports of the revolvers, and although knowing full well how much of danger was threatening those who remained at the shore-end of the hawser, I wished most fervently that I was with them to share it. To my mind it was cowardly for any of us to leave the island while there was a possibility an attack might be made, and yet at the same time I knew full well that some of the party must go first, however sorely pressed those who remained behind might be.

Such thoughts as these were in my mind when Uncle Amos, dragging the sling over the shattered bow, pulled me out to hug and kiss me as if I had indeed, as perhaps really was the case, come from the valley of the shadow of death.

“ Can you make out if either of them has been hurt? ” I asked, as soon as it was possible to release myself from the almost painful embrace.

“ It don't sound that way, lad; but no one can say

## 140 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

what may be doin' over there in the darkness. Thank God, you have come back unhurt!"

"It is of the captain and Mr. Thompson that we should think just now!" I cried, in an agony of grief, for the thought had come to me that he who was left behind alone, if it so happened that we brought on board one more, would be exposed to almost certain death, since it was reasonable to suppose all the mutineers would make their way toward the reef as soon as the reports of the fire-arms were heard.

Uncle Amos did not have an opportunity to reply, for just then, and while those who were stationed at the hawser were sending back the sling as rapidly as possible, one of the men came up to ask:

"What shall be done with the man that's wounded, sir?"

"Is he still alive?" my uncle asked, as if angry because Sampson dared to live so long.

"Mr. Osborne has been lookin' him over, sir, an' says he's got nothin' worse than a hole through one of his cheeks, an' a broken arm. Where shall we put him? He's in the way on deck here, an', besides, is sheddin' his blood so as to make a nasty mess."

"If you've got a place in the fo'cas'le where you can make certain he won't be able to give us the slip, shove him in there till the cap'in comes aboard."

I did not give heed to what was done with the prisoner, for at that moment the firing began on shore again, and from the sounds it became certain that our friends were being hardly pressed. When Mr. Stubbs suggested as much, Uncle Amos appeared



to arouse himself to what was going on, and gave commands thick and fast until eight of us were stationed in front of the screen, rifles in hand.

“ Fire a volley, takin’ care not to shoot too high, but on either side of where the hawser is made fast. Then count five, an’ blaze away again, keepin’ it up till the magazines are empty,” Uncle Amos said, sharply, and then raising his voice, cried, “ Drop on your faces, an’ if it so be you can roll over to the sling, make ready to come aboard! ”

Then, waiting five seconds as if for this last order to be obeyed, Uncle Amos gave the word for us to open fire, and we discharged volley after volley according as he had directed.

Before the last round of cartridges had been expended, a jerk of the line attached to the sling told that one of our friends had done as was commanded, and my uncle cried cheerily as he laid hold of the rope to help the crew:

“ Rouse her in handily, lads! Smoke her up as you never did before! You on the firin’ squad are to refill your magazines as soon as they have been emptied, an’ keep up that target practice till we can haul one more aboard. Pump in the lead so lively that the rascally mutineers won’t dare to raise their heads.”

By this time the sling was inboard, and we knew that Mr. Thompson was in it when he said:

“ The cap’in ordered me to come, otherwise I’d never left him, for the chances of savin’ his life, now all the gang of villains have come up, are mighty slim.”

## CHAPTER IX

### INVALID AND PRISONER

**W**HEN the first officer came over the rail, leaving Captain Bragg alone on the point with the mutineers close behind him, there was no hope in my heart that we would see him again, alive. If he made a dash for the sling, and succeeded in getting into it, his body would be a fair target for the scoundrels, however lively the men at the pulley might work, and it was to me much the same as if he was already dead.

His only chance lay in the possibility that the mutineers believed he had one or more companions, in which case they would be careful about showing themselves recklessly, owing to the love they had for their own villainous skins, and because of this possibility Uncle Amos did not dare shout to him in explanation of any plan he may have formed.

After Mr. Thompson had been hauled inboard, and until our rifles were empty, we continued to pour in volley after volley with fair regularity, and the bullets flew so lively that the scoundrels ashore did not dare face the music long enough to return the fire.

I was wondering what would be the result when our weapons had been emptied, and was saying to myself that the cessation of our fire would be the

signal for the captain's murder, when from behind the screen came two sailors bearing revolvers enough to give each of us a spare one.

"They are loaded," Uncle Amos cried, "an' you're to continue the fire as before. I'm hopin' one of the curs will give you a show to put him out of the world, for it's a shame to waste so much ammunition when there are those within range who ought to be killed offhand. Why don't you send aboard two or three of your party, Bragg?"

Uncle Amos raised his voice as he spoke, the question being intended to tell the captain that the moment had come for him to use the sling, and at the same time deceive the mutineers into believing there were a number of our men yet on shore.

"Pile the lead into 'em, lads, an' shoot a little faster!" Uncle Amos cried, after a brief time of silence, and I knew that Captain Bragg had signalled his readiness to make the passage.

Even amid the noise of the firing I could hear the footsteps of the men as they tailed on to the rope in order to run aft, thus making better time in bringing the sling aboard, and a second later it was possible to see the captain swaying to and fro as he was hauled across the hawser.

"Shoot faster, an' bring a few of the villains down!" Uncle Amos screamed, and we obeyed until the sling came inboard, and the last of those who had made the desperate venture was on the deck of the steamer, apparently uninjured.

"A close shave; but a miss is as good as a mile, Joe Bragg," Uncle Amos said exultantly, as he

## 144 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

gripped the captain by the hand, and we who had been exploding cartridges at random, as if we had an abundant supply, came behind the screen mighty lively.

As if to show what they might have done had their courage been a little stronger, the mutineers opened fire on us within two minutes after we ceased work; but it was too late to do any harm, for all hands were sheltered behind the heavy timbers.

"Shoot away, you miserable curs!" Uncle Amos cried in derision. "Why didn't you try that game when our people were standin' where a gang who had blood instead of milk in their veins might have cut them down to the last man!"

Captain Bragg was not disposed to spend much time crowing over his escape, or what we had succeeded in doing; but immediately set about his task of defending the wreck as if he had never absented himself, and, in fact, very many of the passengers were wholly ignorant of our venture until the story was told them next morning in explanation of the prisoner's presence.

Uncle Amos and the captain had a long consultation in the chart-room while I was allowed to cool my heels outside, and then the two went into the fore-castle, I following close behind, as I believed was my right after having done a full share of dangerous work.

"Where are you bound, lad?" my uncle asked, catching a glimpse of me just as we entered the un-inviting place where the sailors lived.

"I want to know what you are going to do with

Mr. Sampson," I replied, trying to speak boldly, but fully expecting the captain would order me to go on deck and never dare to follow him until I had been invited; but instead of showing anger because of my thus venturing unbidden, he gave no heed whatsoever to me.

The prisoner had been taken into the fore-castle and left in a bunk which had formerly been occupied by Tony. There was no need to take any steps toward guarding against his escape, for he was in no condition to stand alone, therefore would have made a poor fist at running away. When Captain Bragg raised the lantern which he had brought with him, I was near to crying aloud with horror, for it really looked as if the man's face had been shot through and through a dozen times, so hideous was he with blood and grime.

"It's a case of our playing surgeon, Amos Grout," the captain said grimly as he rolled back his shirt-sleeves, and then he ordered one of the men to bring water and a sponge.

"It's a shame to waste labour on such as him," Uncle Amos replied brutally. "We'd be savin' time for ourselves, an' trouble for the villain, if we let him die, as I reckon he would in time, in case we went away as we'd be warranted in doin'."

"That would be to show yourselves worse than savages," Mr. Sampson said feebly, and I really believe he thought for the moment that Uncle Amos had made the proposition in all seriousness.

"Is it your idee that we ought'er coddle you up like a baby after you've nearly killed Jenkins, an'

## 146 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

would have served the rest of us in the same way if we'd given you the chance?" my uncle cried, angrily.

"It wasn't me who fired the shot," the wounded man said quickly, as if thinking he deserved credit for not having massacred us. "It was intended for the captain, and the man who did the job believes he had good cause for taking Bragg's life."

"I'll go bail that he don't have the chance, no matter what kind of a grudge he's got against me," the captain said grimly, and then, a basin of water and a sponge having been brought, he set about washing the prisoner's face, working as gently as a woman might have done.

I could not stand it to watch these two as they dressed the wounds; my stomach rebelled at the disagreeable spectacle, and I stepped outside the fore-castle, where it was not possible to see what was going on, although I could hear distinctly all that was said.

Much to my surprise, Sampson, instead of feeling grateful for being thus taken care of after what he had tried to do, complained bitterly because the men had not carried him into the cabin he occupied before joining the mutineers, and even made threats as to what he would do after arriving in Manila.

Captain Bragg gave no heed to the words, but continued his work of mercy in silence. Uncle Amos did not have such good control of his temper, and when the prisoner spoke of bringing a suit against the steamship company because of not being allowed to go into his cabin, he cried, angrily:

“ If you ever see Manila, it will be as a prisoner who is to be tried for his life, an’ there’s no question but that you’ll be found guilty. They garrote people, instead of hangin’ ’em, in this part of the world, an’ you’ll have a chance to find out just what kind of a death that is.”

“ The law can’t touch me for going ashore!” Sampson cried, with more energy than I believed him capable of showing, taking into consideration the extent of his injuries. “ All I did was to leave the wreck in order to save my own life, and you can’t prove more.”

“ Don’t spend your time arguin’ with the scoundrel, Amos Grout!” Captain Bragg said, sharply. “ If he keeps on in this strain much longer I’ll have to throw up the job of surgeon. It’s hard enough to work over him, knowin’ what he’s tried to do; but when he talks about his rights aboard this steamer, I’m tempted to give him a square chance to see just what they are.”

“ Don’t you expect a man will defend himself?” Sampson asked pertly, and the captain replied:

“ If you open your mouth again I’ll put you in irons, you miserable whelp! It won’t hurt my conscience a little bit to let you bleed to death.”

I fancied that this threat frightened the travelling salesman, for he did not venture to speak again, and a few moments later Captain Bragg asked:

“ Where’s your nephew, Amos?”

While uncle was looking around in search of me, I stepped into the room, taking care not to gaze at the wounded man, and Captain Bragg said:

## 148 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

" I wish you would go to Mr. Jenkins, lad, an' ask him if he'd be willin' to take this scoundrel into his cabin — "

" Are you countin' on coddlin' him up to that extent? " Uncle Amos asked, in mingled surprise and anger.

" I don't care to leave him where he can get at the men with his tongue, for there's no tellin' what he might be able to do. We must make sure of holdin' him prisoner, for, despite his wounds, I have an idea that he can still make good use of his legs. It strikes me Jenkins would rather enjoy lookin' after him, for it must be mighty lonesome all alone in a small cabin just now."

I did not wait to hear the conclusion of what bid fair to be a discussion; but hurried on deck, and, on coming to the second officer's quarters, found him exceedingly eager to know what was going on.

" I'll come straight back and tell you the whole story," I said, hastily. " But I can't stop now, because the captain is waiting for me."

Then I delivered the message, and, to my surprise, learned that Mr. Jenkins was by no means averse to playing the part of jailer.

" If you'll come back here an' tell me all that's been done this night, an' explain how, if it ain't a part of the reg'lar story, the travellin' salesman was made prisoner, I'll do as the captain asks."

Half an hour later, his wounds having been dressed, Sampson was forced to march out of the forecastle to Mr. Jenkins's cabin. At first he positively refused to do other than go below in the saloon, " where he



belonged," as he put it; but when Uncle Amos pricked him with the point of his pocket-knife, threatening to shove the blade its whole length into the most convenient portion of his body, the mutineer concluded that it would not be wise for him to hang back any longer.

Two of the sailors were ordered to follow, after having gotten some ratline stuff from the carpenter's room, and I went with the party, not minded to break the promise I had made.

"If it is likely to disturb you, Mr. Jenkins, we'll carry this miserable swab somewhere else," the captain said, as he stood by the side of the mate's berth. "It struck me, however, that lookin' after him might take up your mind, so to speak, an' it's important we hold him close prisoner, for I count him the one who has stirred up all the trouble."

"If keepin' a sharp watch will prevent him from gettin' away, I can tackle the job all right," Mr. Jenkins replied, grimly; "but I can't be depended upon if he makes any row, for I ain't as spry as before he an' his mates tried to kill me."

"Here is a revolver," the captain said, as he laid a weapon within reach of the invalid. "You are to fire, without makin' any talk, if he does that which gives you the belief he's tryin' to get away. Don't take any chances; but shoot to kill in case he gives the least show of a break, for I count on carryin' him back to Manila dead or alive. You needn't be backward about puttin' a bullet into him, for killin' such as he has shown himself to be can't be called murder."

## 150 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

Then the captain ordered the sailors to lash the prisoner up with the ratline stuff in such a manner that he could not by any possibility leave the couch on which Uncle Amos had placed him, and the men seemed to enjoy making him fast. In a very short time he was powerless to move either foot, and his injured arm was bound in such a manner that he could only use it from the elbow to the hand. Then the others made ready to leave the cabin, and, seeing that I had taken a seat by the side of the second officer as if it was my intention to remain some time, Uncle Amos said:

"After what you've done this night, lad, it strikes me the sooner you turn in the better."

I explained what it was my purpose to do, and promised to go to my cabin as soon as Mr. Jenkins's curiosity had been satisfied, whereupon uncle and Captain Bragg went away, the sailors following.

Then I gave the second officer a full account of what had been done, and, if I do say it myself, it was a good yarn, taking a long time in the telling.

Sampson had not ventured to interrupt while I was talking, but the story had no sooner been brought to a close than he exclaimed, in a rage:

"So there were only five of you! An' we had you right under our thumbs, if we'd only known it!"

"That's the truth," I replied, growing angry because of the tone in which he spoke; "but some of you would have come to grief before we were wiped out, and I'm thinking that you and Files might have had the worst end of that bargain."

"And I was fool enough to think one of the men

had set the tent afire while smoking inside!" he exclaimed.

"It's Mr. Stubbs who is to have the credit of that, and I reckon there isn't much left of the ammunition which Tony, the Filipino, stole."

"If we haven't got a match to your supply, I'm way off my guess," the wounded man said, with a bitter laugh, and Mr. Jenkins exclaimed:

"So you still count yourself as one of 'em, eh? I wonder that a man like you would have turned pirate on such short notice! But for Files an' you, the sailors never would have had the nerve to make a play like this, an' you two should be made to suffer for all."

"You people are bragging as if the whole plan was done for, when you haven't bettered yourselves very much by what you're crowing over," the scoundrel said, with a laugh, and from that moment I ceased to have any pity for him, even when I knew he was suffering severely. "How can you ever leave this wreck while Files and his men are on guard ashore, armed with rifles to shoot the first who makes an effort to go over the rail?"

"Five of us went last night, and there wasn't much shooting done," I cried, unable to remain silent any longer.

"Yes, I'm bound to admit you're right; but it's safe to say that the plan won't work a second time. We were careless, else it couldn't have happened. Wait a couple of days, till you're on short allowance, with your tongues swollen for lack of water, and I reckon you'll not only be glad to turn over the

treasure to Files, but will send me ashore as carefully as if I were an egg!"

"It'll be a long day before our tongues will swell very much on account of not havin' any water," Mr. Jenkins said, with a laugh. "There's enough below to drown all hands, an' then leave as much as would be needed for a couple of weeks."

"I wouldn't be so sure of that," the wounded man replied, with a grin which caused the bandages to slip from his face. "Better have a try at some of them casks, before you crow so loud!"

"What? Did that sneakin' Filipino dare —"

"That's what he did," Sampson cried, with a horrible leer, too impatient to tell of the villainy to wait until the second officer had ceased speaking. "He claims to know where every water-cask was stowed, an' unless he lied, the supply in the pantries is all you have got. What's better yet, with the engines useless, you won't be able to condense so much as would wet the tip of your tongue!"

I was literally speechless with rage and astonishment, that he, so completely in our power, should dare boast of such villainy. If he told the truth, and I did not question the statement, then were we in a worse plight than even the most cowardly had suspected.

"What do you think of it now?" he asked, after waiting a moment for Mr. Jenkins or me to speak.

"Think?" the second officer cried bitterly, raising himself on one elbow that he might look at the wretch. "I think that there is no punishment likely to overtake you which will atone for such work."

Even though we should be taken off this wreck within the hour, never havin' suffered from lack of water, the crime is none the less."

"Perhaps you believe now that I'll be forced to stay here many hours? You're beginning to understand that for the privilege of getting from the spring on the island all the water you'll soon be needing, I'm likely to be the master?"

"I'm beginnin' to understand that if I was dyin' for a drink, an' Cap'in Bragg offered to give you no more than the liberty of the deck, I'd be willin' to breathe my last rather than knuckle down to you! What do you think the crew will say when they know what you've been crowin' over? I tell you, man, you wouldn't live long enough to mutter the shortest prayer, if they could have their will with you! Instead of sendin' you ashore, the officers of this steamer will be called on to protect you from the wrath of those you've wronged, unless they come to believe, as I do, that the best thing is to leave you in the fo'cas'le to take your chances!"

I could see that the prisoner had not looked at the matter in this light before, and now the cur was beginning to be afraid. He must have known Mr. Jenkins had said no more than the truth when he declared that the sailors would avenge themselves for the dastardly work, and I fancied the fellow's lips had grown white on the instant.

"I'm going to find out if he has told the truth," I said, in a whisper, as I bent over the invalid, and he added:

"Go straight to the cap'in with the story; but on

your life keep a still tongue before the passengers or crew! ”

Nodding my head in token that I understood his meaning, I went quickly out of the cabin, not daring to look at the wretch who lay on the couch, lest I be tempted to do that which I might regret all my life long.

Uncle Amos was in the chart-room with the captain when I burst in, so burdened with the evil tidings that there was no thought in my mind of ceremony, and the two men must have seen the horror written plainly on my face, for they started up in alarm, while I could only repeat again and again:

“ There is no water aboard! There is no water aboard! ”

“ What do you mean, lad? Have you lost your wits? ” and Uncle Amos shook me vigorously, while Captain Bragg raised the water pitcher, as if to assure himself I had spoken falsely.

“ Sampson says that Tony let out all the water! ” I screamed, and the two men looked quickly at each other, with more of fear on their faces than I had ever seen either display.

“ Tell us what you mean, lad! ” Uncle Amos cried, sharply, as he forced me down on the cabin couch. “ Take all the time you need, but make yourself plain! ”

Then it was that, after a few seconds, I succeeded in repeating the boasts made by the prisoner, and Captain Bragg fingered his revolver nervously, as if making ready to use it.

“ Wait here, ” he said, hoarsely, when I was come

to an end of the dreadful story, and after he had gone out of the cabin Uncle Amos and I stared at each other in silence, for at such a time words were well-nigh impossible.

It must have been many minutes, perhaps more than an hour, before the captain returned, for I know that Uncle Amos finally threw himself down on the couch beside me, and then got up again to pace the floor with desperate energy, doing this again and again.

When at last he returned to us, there was no need to ask if Sampson had had good grounds for his boasts, because we could read the answer on his face, and Uncle Amos said in a half-whisper, as if in answer to some statement:

“ Then it’s all gone? ”

“ Every cask that can be come at is empty — the heads bored through with one of the carpenter’s augers. We never carried any very great supply, because of dependin’ on the condensers for what we might need. There is, perhaps, fifty gallons in the pantries.”

“ Then we are likely to make it lively for the villains ashore, since it don’t stand to reason we can hold out very long without water, an’ he’s a poor man who wouldn’t fight at such a time, knowin’ there’s plenty to be had on the island.”

The captain made no reply to this remark, but suddenly opened the cabin door as if to go out.

“ The stewards must take every drop from the cabins, that we may deal out to each person an equal amount,” he said, looking back at us. “ We should

be able to gather up twenty or thirty gallons which would otherwise be wasted."

"Are you countin' that we can hold out any length of time, with every one aboard stricken by a ragin' thirst, such as will be excited by the knowledge that the water supply is short?"

"You are an old sailorman, Amos Grout, an' know full well that at sea matters often take surprisin' turns. I count on holdin' out as long as man may, with the hope that some craft heaves in sight. The boy had better go to bed, an' you an' I'll chew this over in the hope of lightin' on some plan that can be worked to our advantage."

Then the captain went out, and I said, taking uncle's hand in mine as if there was comfort to be had by thus grasping him:

"I can't sleep, sir, even if I go into the cabin."

"That I can well fancy, my lad; but you'd best turn in, an' I'll come before long."

While speaking, he had taken me in his arms as if I had been a baby, and then he kissed me, much as mother might have done. I believe I realized more keenly how desperate he thought the situation to be when he, who was not given to a show of affection, thus embraced me, and without other protest I went out of the cabin; but once in the open air, lingered, dreading to shut myself in at such a time.

I wandered around the deck, not daring to speak with any of the crew lest I should unwittingly disclose the terrible secret, for ten minutes or more, and then, much against my inclination, went below.

To my great surprise the passengers acted as if, in



some way unknown to me, I had become a hero, and Sam's mother took both my hands in hers, as she said:

"I am truly glad that a friend of my son's is so brave!"

"Brave?" I repeated, stupidly, unable to understand her meaning because, after hearing Sampson's boasts, I had almost forgotten that I was one of the party who destroyed the ammunition stolen by the mutineers.

"Of course you're brave!" Sam cried, as he came across the saloon. "Who would have thought you could keep your mouth closed against me, when making ready for such an adventure as Mr. Osborne has just been telling about?"

By this time I began to gather my wits somewhat, and was ashamed that so much fuss should be made over what Sam, or any other lad, for that matter, would have done as well and as readily as had I.

"There was no bravery about it," I said, stoutly, believing my own words, and determined that the people should understand the matter exactly as it was. "I did nothing, and, but for Mr. Osborne, might have brought all the party to grief through awkwardness. Captain Bragg and the engineer are the ones who should be praised, for they did all the work. When we were clinging to that little raft, with a shark swimming close alongside, I was so cowardly that my teeth chattered."

"You must have kept them closed tightly, for I didn't hear them, and my own were clicking like a pair of castanets," Mr. Osborne cried from the other

side of the saloon, where he was sitting very near Miss Hubbard. "I pity you, Young Amos, if you had a worse case of fright than I was suffering from just then. Deny it as much as you please, I shall still maintain that a lad shows himself brave when he holds his own as you did this night!"

I knew Mr. Osborne had told the story of our venture only to prevent the passengers from brooding over the desperate situation, and that he would never have spoken of the poor part I played, had it not been necessary in order to occupy a longer time in the telling.

"Where is Sampson?" Sam asked of me.

"In the second officer's room. The captain thought the invalid would have something in the way of amusement, if he was allowed to guard the prisoner."

"I'm going to have a look at him!" Sam cried, as he turned quickly, and I seized him by the shoulder, saying excitedly:

"Don't go, Sam! You mustn't go! The captain wouldn't be pleased, and — and — Well, I don't think Mr. Jenkins is in a fit condition to see any one!"

I probably spoke wildly, and acted in an odd manner, for Mr. Osborne's suspicions were aroused on the instant, and he said in a queer tone:

"You shall stay here, Master Currier, and I will bring you all the information that can be gained."

## CHAPTER X

### RAFT - BUILDING

I COULD not have prevented Mr. Osborne from going on deck, even if I had done my best, and I made no effort. It seemed probable Captain Bragg would have confided in him before many hours had passed, and all I regretted was that I had been so unsuccessful in keeping the secret as really to betray it while making every effort to prevent others from learning that a fresh disaster had come upon us.

As a matter of course, Sam was eager to know why I objected to his going on deck, and my only show of preventing him from asking awkward questions, was to insist on telling in detail the story of the expedition, to which he did not listen very attentively because of having already heard it from Mr. Osborne.

The passengers had been so thoroughly excited by the efforts made to bring us off from the island while the mutineers were close at our heels, and also by the fact of our having taken a prisoner, that it did not seem possible for them to retire quietly to their cabins, therefore, as if by agreement, they remained in the saloon discussing the possible change

## 160 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

which might have been effected in the situation, owing to what we had done.

Sam stretched himself at full length on one of the sofas while I spun my yarn, and I made it so long that before coming to an end his eyes were closed in slumber.

My eyes were heavy with sleep, and I was so weary that under almost any other circumstances I would have thought it necessary to gain some rest; but the knowledge that when the sun rose we must be limited to a very small allowance of fresh water, which could be used only for drinking, caused me to believe that it was absolutely essential I should have a talk with Uncle Amos.

Therefore it was that as soon as Sam had fallen asleep, I crept softly up the saloon companionway, and on gaining the deck saw two figures standing well aft, as if engaged in earnest conversation.

As I suspected, they were Uncle Amos and Mr. Osborne, and neither of them appeared to give any heed when I came up just as the latter was saying:

"It is not reasonable to suppose that we can now remain idle on the poor chance of being discovered by some vessel. I tell you, Captain Grout, we have come to the point where big risks must be taken! It is better half our force be shot down in a battle with the villains, than that we wait until it becomes necessary to yield to their demands."

"Joe Bragg will never give in to 'em, an' I shall uphold him in standin' out, no matter what straits we fall into!" Uncle Amos said, emphatically.

“ And will you do so when you see these women suffering — dying for need of water? ”

To this question my uncle made no reply; he knew full well that in a very short time the sufferings of all on the steamer would be terrible, unless help in some form came speedily, and he, better than any, save the officers of the ship, understood how slender was the hope of our being sighted by a passing vessel.

“ We can, as I told the captain, contrive to gain the shore even though the mutineers keep close watch, for it has already been done,” Mr. Osborne continued eagerly, determined that his plan should prevail, and by his earnestness he proved himself to be a brave fellow. “ Once on the island, even though we are armed only with revolvers, I’ll guarantee that we get the best of them, for there are many of the sailors who will not fight very desperately.”

“ A man will put forth his best licks when he fights with a halter around his neck, as they are doin’, an’ you may depend upon it that Files has taken good care to make them understand how deep a hole they are in. Then again, it will be a different job to land a dozen or more of our party — an’ the traverse couldn’t be worked with less than that number — now they have good reason to expect we will try somethin’ of the kind.”

“ Then you are in favor of our settling down here like cowards until it is no longer possible, because of weakness, to raise a hand in defence? ” Mr. Osborne cried passionately, and Uncle Amos replied slowly, as if weighing well every word:

“ I don’t say so; but I am against a plan by which

## 162 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

our force is likely to be so weakened that the cowardly villains can work their will without opposition. Would you rather the women on this steamer fell into the power of those murderers to-morrow mornin', than that they should die of starvation or thirst? "

" Now you are painting the picture too black! " Mr. Osborne cried, but I understood very well that he had begun to waver in his purpose. " It is not reasonable to suppose all of us would be killed! "

" True for you; but if the mutineers cornered on the island those of us who were left alive after such a battle as you would fight, preventin' us from regainin' this wreck, as they well might do, it would be much the same as if we were dead, so far as concerns comin' aboard. Now Joe Bragg an' I were talkin' over a scheme before you came into the chart-room, which can be tried at the last pinch, but only then, for sailormen know better than others how desperate would be such a course."

" What is it? " Mr. Osborne asked eagerly.

" Allowin' that we stay here as long as the water holds out, in the meanwhile buildin' a raft which would carry us all if it was made up largely of casks an' the ship's life-preservers, an' if nothin' turned up to our advantage, puttin' to sea on it. The women would be no worse off in such a venture than if your plan went wrong."

" But I have been given to understand that there is not sufficient material in this iron steamer to build such a raft."

" I'm claimin' that by usin' the empty water-

casks, with as many others as may be come at among the cargo, takin' all the woodwork in the saloon and cabins for a double deck, puttin' the life-preservers between, it could be done. Takin' to a raft is the last thing a sailorman will do, for he knows only too well what may be the result; but Bragg an' I spoke of such a plan only as somethin' which might be done when there was nothin' left save trust to the mercies of those wolves ashore."

"It would take a long while to build such a raft!" Mr. Osborne said thoughtfully.

"Ay, if we called only on the crew to do the job; but there are fourteen men among the saloon passengers, countin' the two boys, an' why shouldn't all hands be called on, especially when it's to save their own lives?"

"Of course they should!" Mr. Osborne said emphatically, "and if there be any among the number who refuse to work, shut off the supply of food and water from the drones. But could you control the course of such a craft?"

"Somethin' might be done towards it with the steamer's fo'sail; but it would be largely a case of takin' the chances. So long as we had a favourable wind, it should be possible to hold her somewhere near to a course; at any other time we'd be powerless. What I'd figger on largely, is the fact that a current sets to the southward down past these islands; but whether we could fetch the land at will, is another matter."

"You say the captain is favourable to such a scheme?" Mr. Osborne asked, thoughtfully.

## 164 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

"No, I ain't allowin' to give you any idea of that kind," Uncle Amos replied with a mirthless laugh. "What I did say was that he'd be willin' to give it a trial at the very last moment, when he was convinced we were at the end of our rope; but as soon as the sun rises, you'll be called on, with the other men aboard, to lend a hand, takin' turn an' turn about with the crew."

Mr. Osborne seemed to be thinking over the plan for a moment, and then, without a word, wheeled about, going toward the deck-house from which led the companion-way to the saloon, and Uncle Amos said grimly as he laid his hand on my shoulder with a gesture as of affection:

"This 'ere meetin' hasn't broken up any too soon, Young Amos, for day will dawn in less'n an hour. You an' I had best toddle down to our cabin with the idee of gettin' forty winks before the call comes for all hands, an' by the time the sun sets again I'm allowin' that some of our passengers will know what it is to feel tired from workin'."

I followed my uncle into the saloon, where we found Sam sleeping as when I left him, and because there seemed no good reason why the lad should be awakened to turn into a bunk for only an hour, we did not disturb his slumbers.

After I was stretched out in the berth without having taken the trouble to remove the clothes I wore on the expedition, and which had dried on my body, I said to Uncle Amos in a whisper:

"It's likely our travels end right here on this reef,



sir, an' the folks at home will wonder whatever became of us."

"There's no good ever comes of huntin' for trouble when you're in a bad scrape, lad. I'm willin' to allow what you already know full well, that we're in a tight place; but we're called on to put the best foot for'ard, an' do it cheerfully. It's no more than right, Young Amos, that you should have considerable credit for the way you've carried yourself since we struck this snag, an' I'm proud that a nephew of mine has shown himself to be a man."

To be thus praised may seem a trifling matter, and yet at the time there was nothing else Uncle Amos could have said which would have gone so far toward soothing the ache in my heart. I gave myself up to slumber as peacefully as ever in my life, and when next I was conscious of my surroundings, one of the stewards was pounding on the cabin door, shouting in a loud voice that the captain wished to speak with all the male passengers on deck.

"Joe Bragg is goin' to spring our plan of buildin' a raft," Uncle Amos said with a chuckle of satisfaction, "an' he'll give all hands to understand that we'll leave the wreck as soon as one can be made ready."

"I wonder how many of the men will refuse to lend a hand," I said half to myself.

"We'll hope there ain't any such foolish ones aboard; but if it should turn out there are, they'll soon find that at a time like this the fact of havin' paid for a passage don't count very big."

Because neither of us had taken off our clothing,

we were among the first to enter the saloon, where we found Sam blinking and winking as if such an early summons was not to his liking.

"I wonder why we're to go on deck," he asked sleepily. "Has anything new turned up since you nearly talked me to death?"

"We can find that out soonest by going on deck," I replied, not minded to tell all I knew, and without further delay we followed Uncle Amos up the companionway.

It was soon understood that some of the passengers were unwilling to cut short their morning nap, even though the word had been passed that all the men were to come on deck, for when the greater number were mustered forward, behind the screen where there would be no danger the mutineers could see us, it was found that several were missing.

"Mr. Thompson, give my compliments to the passengers who have not obeyed the call, an' say that if they are not on deck in five minutes I will have them brought here with but scant ceremony," the captain cried angrily, and I hoped most sincerely that the first officer would repeat the message without any attempt at softening it.

I am inclined to think he must have done so, for within the specified time the gentlemen were on deck looking sadly disgruntled, and one of their number said quite sharply, as he marched up directly under the captain's nose:

"By what right, sir, do you claim any authority over passengers who have paid their money, and a

good deal of it, for transportation from Hong Kong to Manila? ”

“ Under ordinary circumstances you know very well that the captain of a ship has full authority over every person aboard, passengers as well as crew,” Captain Bragg replied, curtly. “ If I exceed my powers, you have your remedy after we have landed; but not before. With the steamer the same as a wreck, and the lives of all hands dependent upon our efforts, I not only claim unquestionin’ obedience from every one, but shall enforce any commands it may seem necessary for me to give.”

Then, turning from the disgruntled gentlemen to face those who had been waiting his pleasure some time, the captain told what it was his purpose to do, repeating the plan for building a raft in much the same words Uncle Amos had used while talking to Mr. Osborne, save that he let it appear as if we were to leave the wreck as soon as the task had been completed. He also stated that he expected the passengers would willingly work side by side with the crew, since such labour was necessary for the safety of all.

“ Have you stopped work on the boat which was begun when we first struck the reef? ” asked one of the passengers.

“ Yes, for such a craft as it was then proposed to build would carry but two or three men, and would have been sent out only in order to summon help from Luzon, if so be it proved possible to get there. The conditions have changed since then; we now know that our supplies will not be sufficient to pro-

## 168 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

vide for the absolute needs, and we must be in shape to abandon the wreck as soon as may be."

I was watching the passengers narrowly when Captain Bragg made this statement which was well calculated to carry dismay to the hearts of all, and saw many a face pale at the intimation that we were facing *all* the dangers of shipwreck.

"If the supplies are running short, why did you send so much ashore?" another passenger asked angrily, and the captain replied, as he evidently made every effort to control his temper:

"At that time the water had not been wasted by the mutineers, sir. Since you insist on full explanations they shall be given: We did not learn until last night that when the Filipino stole ammunition from the hold, he emptied all our water-casks, and from this on only one quart of water per day will be dealt out to each person on board. And now, gentlemen, breakfast will be served at once, and I caution you to bear in mind that one quart of water will be all the liquid you will receive during the day, with the exception of two cups of coffee each morning. In an hour we shall be ready to begin work, and I request that you present yourselves here to take part in the labour which cannot be performed within the necessary time, save by your assistance."

For breakfast each person had bread with but a small piece of butter, two slices of fried salt pork, a portion of fish about the size of my hand, and a large cup of fragrant coffee. This amount was placed in front of every passenger, as if to make certain that no one received more than another, as might have

been the case had it been put on the table in the usual manner, and the stewards, evidently acting under orders, suggested that what we did not eat at that meal be taken to our cabins. We were also told that at ten o'clock the supply of water would be dealt out in the main saloon.

Of a verity we got a full taste of shipwreck on this morning, for it was as if we had not fully realized the situation until the food was thus portioned out.

I was not minded to miss anything which was coming to me by right, therefore drank two cups of coffee, and observed that Uncle Amos and Mr. Osborne did the same.

Sam and I hurried through with our breakfast in order to have an opportunity to call upon Mr. Jenkins before it was time to begin work, and found him watching the prisoner as a cat watches a mouse.

"How are you getting along?" I asked, thinking he had need of cheering, and determined to do what I might toward livening him up.

"I'll be on my feet in a couple of days; but I believe I'd go crazy at bein' forced to lie here when all hands are turnin' to with a will, if it wasn't for the hope that yonder cur may move in such a way as to allow me truthfully to say I believed he was tryin' to escape. If I could put a bullet into his cowardly carcass it would do me solid good! How did the passengers take bein' put on short allowance of water?"

I told him what I had seen and heard, not forgetting to go into every detail.

After talking with Mr. Jenkins a few moments regarding his own condition, I turned to go, and then

## 170 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

it was Sampson said in a matter-of-fact tone, as if believing there was no question but that his wants would be gratified immediately:

"Tell one of the stewards to bring me something to drink; it seems as if I was all afire inside."

"The water is not to be dealt out until ten o'clock," I said, and it did me solid good to give the information to such a villain. "The passengers are to have but a quart each day, and it isn't likely that you, who are responsible for the suffering which is to come, will be allowed as much."

"You can't put that on to me! It was Tony who tapped the casks."

"Last night you boasted of the deed, as if claiming a part in it, and I'm hoping you come to know what real thirst is, before the rest of us have suffered very much."

"I'll bear you in mind, Young Amos, when the captain of this ship has made the bargain he'll have to make whether it pleases him or not, and then we'll see if you'll talk so pert," Sampson cried savagely, and I had no desire to longer bandy words with such a scoundrel.

"Unless the captain keeps us jumping too lively, we'll see you again before noon," Sam said to Mr. Jenkins, and then we went out on deck, Sampson glaring at us until, by turning the corner of the deck-house, we shut him out from view.

Captain Bragg and Mr. Thompson directed the work, which was begun promptly at the time set, although each did his full share of the labour, and one could readily see that all the details of the plan

had been worked out clearly before we were called upon.

The sailors were set at the task of overhauling the dunnage between decks in order to break out the empty water-casks, and when these had been brought on deck by means of a fall and tackle rigged to the ruins of the bridge, each was examined carefully. The treacherous Filipino had not bored the holes so near the edge of staves that every drop of water could run out, therefore in each was found a few quarts or gallons, which went to increase the amount in charge of the chief steward.

After this was done, the men went to work on the submerged cargo, hoisting out the freight in the hope that provisions might be found, and when they sent on deck a case of pickles, our joy was great, for such things would go far toward relieving our thirst when the regular allowance of water had been consumed.

While the sailors thus worked, the passengers were given the task of removing the doors from the cabins, and ripping off the sheathing of the different rooms, all of which was to be used in the raft-building. We had no fear the mutineers would suspect what we were about, for they must naturally suppose, if indeed it was possible for them to make out that we were taking stuff from the hold, that it was done with the hope fresh water might be found beneath the cargo.

Goods of all kinds were brought on deck; such as might possibly be useful were stacked up to strengthen the screens, and that portion which could

## 172 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

not serve us was thrown overboard as if of no value.

The weather was exceedingly warm, as may be supposed, and long before the time set for us to go into the saloon after our rations of water, it seemed as if my tongue was like a piece of leather in my mouth. The call from the stewards to come below was most welcome, and I was pressing forward among the foremost, when Uncle Amos gripped me by the arm, saying as he dragged me back to the rear:

"Hold up a bit, lad. You've been thinkin' that the supply of water was low, an' have thus excited a thirst which ain't natural. You're not in as bad a way as you believe. Take it easy, an' when you get your share, do no more than moisten your mouth, for it'll be a long time 'twixt now an' ten o'clock to-morrow."

It was difficult to follow his advice; but I succeeded in restraining my desires, and right thankful was I before the second quart had been dealt out to me.

The stewards supplied each passenger with a pitcher, and then, as we stood in line around the saloon, Captain Bragg himself measured out the allowance.

We were allowed to remain idle an hour, and I spent a full half of it sipping the water, taking no more than three or four drops in my mouth at a time. When the chief steward observed what I was doing, he was so kind as to whisper:

"Enough in the way of pickles have been found



to give each person a large jar. They will be dealt out at dinner-time, and you can thus save your water, for you'll be needing it sorely late in the afternoon."

I thanked him for the information, and then went across the saloon to find Sam, who had gone into his mother's cabin that he might the better enjoy his portion of the water. Miss Hubbard was there also, and she said, holding her pitcher toward me:

"Have some of my share, Young Amos. You who are doing the work need more than the women who are idle. Don't be afraid to take it, for I have more than enough, and Mrs. Currier can share hers with Samuel."

Instead of taking it I told her of the pickles which were to be served at dinner-time; but she insisted that I have at least one long drink, declaring she was not thirsty, whereupon I said, not with any idea of confusing her, but because I had come to love the brave man:

"Keep what you can spare for Mr. Osborne. He has been working like a beaver, giving no heed to himself, and if there is one man aboard this wreck who deserves more than another, it is he."

On the instant her cheeks grew rosy red, and she turned her head quickly lest we should see them.

## CHAPTER XI

### SHORT ALLOWANCE

**A**T no time during the morning spell of work had we seen any signs of the mutineers. It goes without saying, that we kept sharp watch all the while, for no one could say when they might make an attack upon us in revenge for our having made Sampson a prisoner, although how it might have advantaged them I am unable to guess; but never one showed his head from amid the foliage. That some of them had their eyes on us all the time, we had good reason to believe, but so long as they did no more than spy, we were content to have them see all within view past the line of screens.

Shortly after we had received our rations of water, those at work in the hold came upon several cases of preserved beef, and since there was no possibility this could have been injured by submersion in the salt water, we hailed the find quite as joyously as we had the discovery of the pickles.

At twelve o'clock all hands were allowed to cease work, and it was announced that we would not be called upon again until three in the afternoon, for if we had remained on deck during the hottest part of the day, more than one would have been candidates for a hospital.

“ You an’ Sam had best crawl into your cabin, Young Amos,” my uncle said to me when the word had been given that we were to enjoy the “ noon-ing ” customary in those latitudes. “ Sleep is what you need after the labour an’ excitement of last night, an’ you’ll forget that there isn’t as much water aboard as you’d like to drink.”

I was more than willing to act upon this suggestion, and it seemed as if I had no more than fairly closed my eyes in slumber when the stewards aroused us to another time of hard work. Ship-biscuit and canned beef were served as a luncheon before we were obliged to go on deck, and as a relish a quart-jar of pickles was given to each one.

How we feasted upon the sour contents of those jars! It seemed to me that I had never tasted anything more palatable, and, as Sam said, each mouthful was worth a cup of water.

We laboured industriously, the crew in the hold searching under water for eatables, and the passengers piling up lumber on the starboard side to be used in making the raft.

Late in the evening Captain Bragg came up to us, and, looking around to make certain no one could overhear him, said:

“ There’s nearly an hour before we’re to knock off for the night, an’ till then I’d like to have you two lads help me with a private job on the next deck. Go down through the stewards’ quarters till you come to the strong-room.”

He passed on without waiting to see if we obeyed, and before gaining the main saloon, through which

## 176 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

it was necessary for us to pass in order to obey the command, I heard him shouting for Uncle Amos and Mr. Osborne.

"I wonder what's to be done in the strong-room?" Sam said curiously, as we made our way along the gangway until arriving at the pantries, where we were stopped by the chief steward, who, in a kindly way, told us that passengers were not allowed in that quarter of the ship.

"The captain's orders are for us to go to the strong-room, and I reckon he's coming close at our heels," Sam explained. "If you say the word, though, we'll wait here for him."

The steward was quite willing for us to pass after this, and when we were come to the place designated, I replied to Sam's question by saying:

"I reckon he wants to overhaul the gold, so that we can put it on the raft handily when we are ready to leave the wreck."

"It's pretty early to do that, when they haven't yet begun to put the raft together," Sam said, with a laugh. "I should say that three days from now would be soon enough."

Just then the captain, followed by Uncle Amos and Mr. Osborne, came up, and the door of the room was opened at once, giving us the opportunity of seeing bag after bag piled in a stack as if the contents were of no special value. I had often thought how jolly it would be if some one should give me all the gold I could carry away; but now I had more interest in the pickles than this heap of money, for the gaining of which the mutineers stood ready to

sacrifice everything that a fellow should hold dear.

“What I want to do, while all hands are on deck, is to carry into your cabin, Amos Grout, as much of the stuff as we can stow away there, an’ put the balance in Mr. Osborne’s room. Then, if the odds are goin’ against me, you four could slip below an’ drop the whole boilin’ of this treasure out of the port-holes, for I’m determined to sink it all rather than have those scoundrelly mutineers put their hands on a single dollar.”

“I don’t blame you a little bit, Joe Bragg, an’ I ain’t so certain but that you’d be warranted in pitchin’ it overboard this blessed minute, in sight of all on board, so it might be known that there was no longer anythin’ to be gained by doin’ murder,” Uncle Amos said heartily, and Mr. Osborne added:

“I’m of the same opinion, and would have made such a suggestion last night if the time had been ripe for it.”

“I’ll hold on to the stuff till the last gasp,” the captain said grimly, “an’ when that comes, if we men don’t see the chance to throw it over, the lads can do the job. I’ve told the stewards to pile up the cabin tables so the women can’t see what we’re carryin’ aft, an’ if you’re willin’ to lend a hand, we may as well tackle the work.”

Uncle Amos set the example by taking one of the small bags in each hand, and I was surprised to see him stagger as if overburdened, until I tried the same plan, when I found that a single bag was quite as much of a load as I could walk with comfortably.

## 178 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

It had not seemed a long or difficult task to carry a lot of money from amidships to the two cabins that were not more than fifty feet away, and yet the work was not completed until nearly time for all hands to come below.

Mr. Osborne's and uncle's cabins were uncomfortably full of bags; but there was sufficient room to admit of our going from the door to the bunks, and more than that would not be needed while we remained on board the wreck.

"It seems that we've got gold to sink, if not to burn," Sam said, with a laugh, as we halted for a moment in Mr. Osborne's cabin to recover our breath, for all hands had been moving to and fro at a swift pace in order to finish the work before the passengers came below. "Of course I'll do my share of throwing it overboard if the word is given, but I shall regret that I couldn't have filled my pockets once in a lifetime."

"Do not so much as stop to look into the bags, if the order is to dump them overboard," Uncle Amos said, gravely. "In case we should succeed in gettin' to Manila, we'll have to give a mighty sharp account of how and why we sunk the treasure, an', 'cordin' to my way of thinkin', each of us must be able to swear that he did not meddle with a single seal."

"I'm countin' on carryin' every ounce of the stuff into Manila, even though I lose the last shirt on my back," Captain Bragg said, grimly. "There is a chance, though, an' I'd be a fool not to reckon it in on the figgerin', that a lot of these men may get the upper hands of me, which is why I've

had it shifted where those I can depend on will do as I ask, rather than let it be taken by the scoundrels ashore."

"Give me twenty-four hours and eight men, after the raft is ready for sea, and I'll guarantee the mutineers won't have such a thirst for gold, or else your craft will float the higher out of water because of the eight who remain on the island," Mr. Osborne said suddenly, for until this instant he had been gazing moodily at the bags of treasure, apparently giving no heed to what was said around him.

"Have you hatched up another scheme for fightin' with the odds ten to one against you?" Uncle Amos asked with a laugh.

"It's a scheme for fighting all right; but the odds wouldn't be as heavy against us as you imagine. Suppose the raft was built, and lying alongside where we could embark by jumping over the rail? Then you see, everything would be in shape for those left behind to save their lives if we lost ours, which I don't allow as probable. Divide the party of eight into couples; let them get ashore in some way — there's no need of figuring how at present — and circle around the island until each couple could come upon the mutineers' encampment from a different quarter. If every man had two revolvers, don't you fancy he might make such use of them that the villains would believe they were completely surrounded? I claim that some of the gang have no stomach for fighting, and at the first show of strength and determination on our part would surrender. Within five minutes after we had opened fire, we'd have rifles instead of

## 180 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

revolvers, and could then fight on even terms, so far as weapons were concerned."

I fully expected to hear both Captain Bragg and Uncle Amos cry out loudly against such a plan, for it was quite as desperate as the venture in which I had taken part, but much to my surprise uncle nodded his head approvingly, and the captain said:

"If nothin' turns in our favour, an' we find it's a case of takin' to the raft, you shall make the trial, Mr. Osborne, for I'm certain there's no man on this steamer who could handle an affair of that kind better than you."

"I'm not so sure of that, Captain Bragg," Mr. Osborne replied, with a laugh; "but this I do know: there is no one who would work any harder to make it a success. I'll do my best at figuring how we may be able to get ashore with less of risk than when we went last, for I have begun to despair of any aid coming to us from the outside."

"It won't do for us to be seen closeted here, or some one may think we're plottin' to steal the steamer," Uncle Amos said, speaking in a more cheery tone than he had used since the hour when it was first decided to land on the island in the hope of being able to destroy or bring away the stolen ammunition.

And for some reason which I can't explain, it really seemed as if all hands of us were more cheerful at the close of this day's severe work and scanty fare, than at any time since the steamer piled herself up on the reef.

When the passengers came down from the deck



Miss Hubbard was playing a merry tune on the piano, and this she continued to do all the while we were partaking of the short allowance, which was short indeed. Two ship-biscuit, a slice of preserved meat, a slice of fried salt pork, and a cup full of canned corn made up the bill of fare, with the whole amount served at the same time to each person. Of course we were allowed to eat as many pickles from the jars previously distributed as we pleased, but he who was greedy would come the soonest to the end of the store.

At the head of the table sat Captain Bragg, as affable as on the day we left port, when every delicacy to be found in Hong Kong was before him, and at his right hand Uncle Amos, who munched away on the salt pork as if counting it the sweetest morsel ever a sailorman came across.

Having performed on the piano as long as she thought was necessary to show the male portion of the passengers that the females were not eating their hearts out, even though they were on a wreck with a lot of scoundrels close at hand ready for any villainous deed, Miss Hubbard took her place at the table opposite Mr. Osborne. Then, to my disappointment, instead of eating as if she was nearly famished, the young woman pecked here and there like a canary bird, destroying Osborne's appetite entirely, for he could do nothing but stare at her, although the brave fellow had done the work of a 'longshoreman all day, and should have eaten like a pig.

Miss Hubbard carried away to her cabin a full half

## 182 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

of her scanty allowance, for it had been announced that each person might save for future needs as much of their portion as was uneaten, and I had no doubt but that she would try to give some of it to Sam and me when next we saw her. I would have been mighty hungry before taking from her what I knew she needed as much as any one of us.

Sam and I went on deck, having nothing better to do, and once in the open air I proposed that we pay a visit to Mr. Jenkins.

Sam was all the more eager to accede to my proposition because of the fascination which Sampson had for him, hideous as the villain was with his face bandaged until nothing could be seen but the evil-looking eyes, and we started toward the second officer's room just as one of the sailors on watch at the loopholes of the screen cried shrilly:

"Have a care aft!"

At the same instant he discharged his weapon, and I thought the report sounded oddly until becoming conscious that a bullet had whistled past my face, thus telling that the mutineers had fired almost at the same moment, the two reports blending into one.

"What is going on now?" Sam cried, excitedly, and he would have run forward without heed to the danger, had I not pulled him backward to the deck.

It was lucky for him I moved quickly, otherwise he would have stood a good chance of being hit, for a second bullet came screaming along in much the same path as the first.

"Get under cover, you lads!" one of the senti-

nels shouted. "Can't you see that they are firin' at you?"

It did seem very much like that; but what puzzled me was how it might be possible for them to see us, and I wriggled along the deck, calling for Sam to follow my example, until finding partial shelter behind a corner of the after deck-house.

"Have a care aft!" came from the sentinel again, and this time I saw a tiny curl of smoke from the top of one of the tallest trees.

"They are beginning to think we don't die of thirst soon enough, and count on killing us," Sam said, grimly, as he cowered behind the shelter which was none too complete.

By this time Captain Bragg was at the loopholes, evidently questioning the sentinels.

"Don't try to get below, lads," he shouted, after a few seconds. "If you hear any one comin' up from the saloon, warn them to stay under cover till I can take a hand in this game!"

Having said this he ran hurriedly across the deck to his own cabin, returning an instant later with the rifle which I had often seen in his room, always supposing from the fact of his never offering to use it when the mutineers were making trouble, that it was out of order, or lacked cartridges.

He was a long while taking aim, and more than once did he lower the piece as if believing the distance too great, and then, when I was so impatient as to be almost tempted to ask him to do one thing or the other and make an end of it, he fired.

At the moment my eyes were fixed upon the

foliage of the tree from which I had seen the smoke rise, and in an instant it was shaken violently; then the head and shoulders of a man appeared; the arms were outstretched as if trying to grasp something, and he pitched head foremost to the ground.

There was one enemy the less, and he who had been shot richly deserved his fate, yet the cold-blooded taking of a human life seemed almost like murder, and I covered my eyes with my hand, well-nigh overcome by nausea.

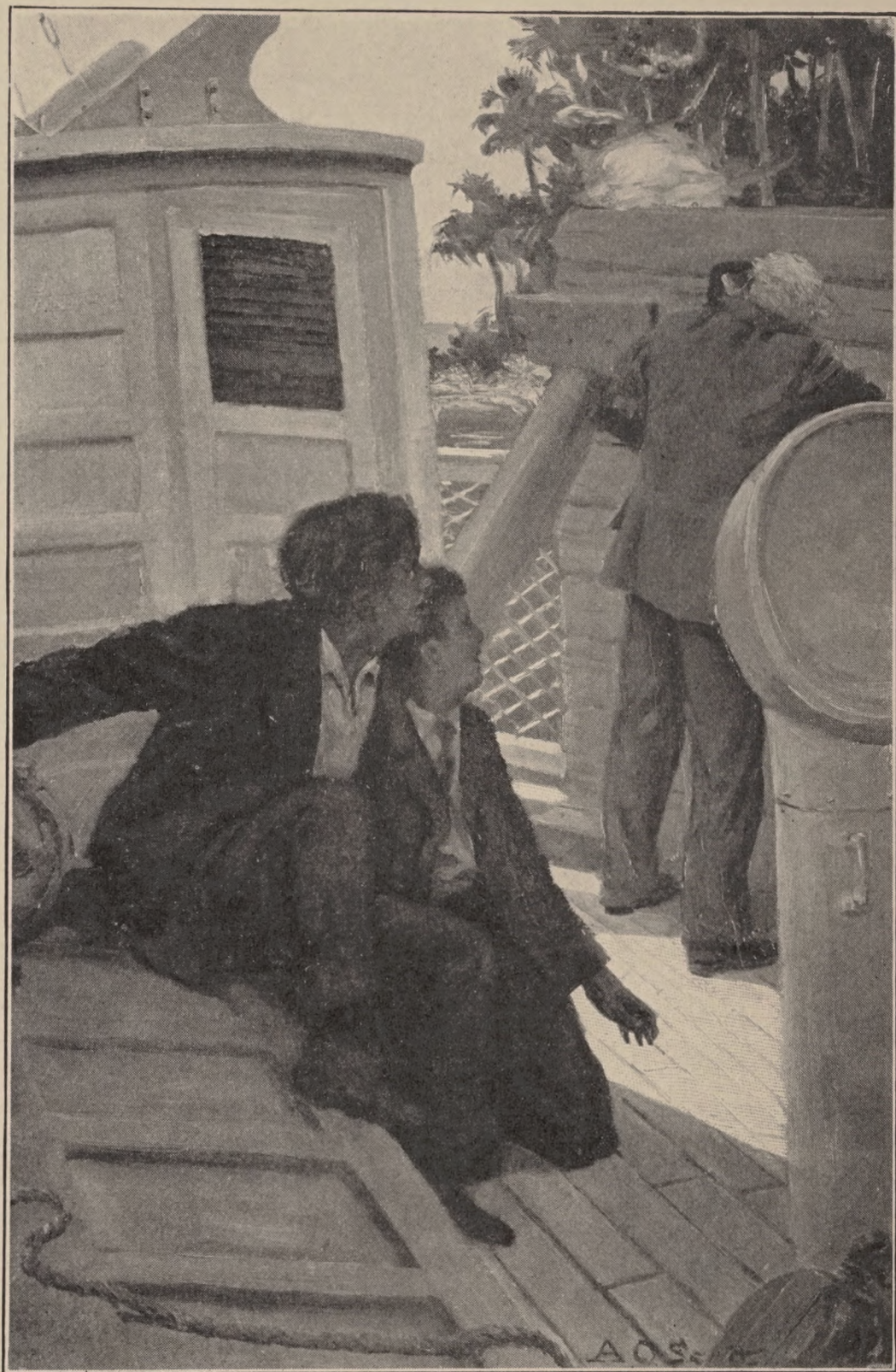
"Are you hurt, Young Amos?" Sam cried, solicitously, passing his hand across my face as if expecting to find it covered with blood, and I replied like a simple:

"It is horrible to see a man killed in that manner, as if he was no more than a squirrel!"

"It would have pleased him right well if he could have killed one of us, and he didn't fail for lack of intention, if firing three shots is any proof," Sam cried, angry with me for being so chicken-hearted, when that which had been done was absolutely necessary if we would save the lives of those aboard the steamer.

"I know he deserved it, and that we must do all we can to shoot them down, unless we are willing to die slowly of thirst; but — Well, Sam, I've grown cowardly, that's what's the matter. I always knew I had a yellow streak somewhere in my make-up, and that's when it showed itself."

"You're tired, Young Amos, and it's no wonder, when you think of what was done last night, and the way you stuck to it all day. We'll just look in on



“THE ARMS WERE OUTSTRETCHED AS IF TRYING TO GRASP SOMETHING.”



Mr. Jenkins, and then you shall go into our gold-lined cabin."

By this time the passengers were coming up from the saloon to learn the meaning of the firing, and, since the mutineer in the tree had been brought down, I did not consider it any longer necessary to warn them against showing themselves. Mr. Osborne and Uncle Amos were foremost, and after telling them what had been done, I walked forward with Sam, but it is very certain we took good care to keep within the line of shelter from the screens, lest there should be others who were ready to lessen our number.

"I rather like the looks of that," Mr. Osborne said in a tone of satisfaction when I had told the story, and Sam asked with a laugh:

"Which part of it? Our being shot at, or the captain's skill as a marksman?"

"Your being shot at," he replied, greatly to my surprise. "It begins to look as if those blooming mutineers were tiring, with nothing to do, and had become eager to bring their scheme to a speedy close."

I was so perplexed by his answer that it must have been apparent in my face, for he added with a laugh, speaking as one might who has just received good proof that all his plans are working favourably:

"It is not because you two lads were the ones he tried to kill, that pleases me. It is the fact that they have begun to make an effort to shoot us down. Yesterday those fellows were so certain, knowing Tony had emptied our water-casks, that they were

## 186 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

perfectly willing to wait until we should be forced to come to terms. Now it looks as if they questioned whether the Filipino had shut off our water-supply as thoroughly as was at first supposed. The fact that we have been at work, minding our own business, apparently satisfied with having taken Sampson prisoner, puzzles them not a little, and when I carry out my scheme, they will be all the more likely to fall into the trap."

I now understood something of what he meant; but all his meaning was not plain, and I would have pressed for a better explanation but for the fact that just then Miss Hubbard showed herself in the companionway, and he leaped toward her as if a new danger had suddenly risen.

"Don't come up here! I beg of you to stay below, at least until it is dark!" he cried, excitedly. "Some of the mutineers have climbed into the trees that they might be able to look over the screen, and it is not safe for you to venture out."

I could not hear what reply the lady made; but it sounded to me as if she asked whether they would be any more likely to shoot the women than the men, and then the two went down the stairs, Mr. Osborne holding her firmly by the arm and looking into her face as if he would say something mighty sweet, but that he lacked the courage.

"Suppose you and I turn in?" I said to Sam. "Since you reminded me of it, I begin to feel very tired, and I surely don't want to look at that wretch of a Sampson yet awhile."

Sam had made up his mind to see the prisoner,



however, and finding that I would not accompany him, he started off alone, promising to join me before I had time to fall asleep.

I was in my berth, realizing to the utmost how delicious it is to stretch one's limbs out on a soft bed after a hard day's work, when Sam came in.

“ Mr. Jenkins is watching his prisoner as a cat watches a mouse,” he reported. “ There's no question but that he has thoroughly frightened Sampson, who hardly dares to breathe lest the mate should pretend he thought the movement of his chest some part of an effort to escape. That particular mutineer is being punished in right good fashion, and deserves it, for he and Files, so Mr. Osborne insists, are wholly responsible for all this trouble.”

## CHAPTER XII

### A RECRUIT FOR THE MUTINEERS

**I**T was anything rather than pleasant to turn out at daybreak next morning when the stewards pounded on the cabin doors. It seemed as if I had had no more than half as much sleep as was necessary, and my joints were so stiff that for a few moments it was almost impossible to move.

“ I reckon we don't have any choice in this matter,” Sam Currier said ruefully as he rolled slowly out of the bunk, for since he slept with me, and on the outside of the berth, it was necessary for him to get up before I could move. “ The only thing a fellow can look forward to with any degree of pleasure, is that at ten o'clock we are to have another quart of water.”

“ How much have you left of what was dealt out yesterday? ” I asked, removing from my pitcher the towel Uncle Amos had tied around the top to prevent evaporation, as he said:

“ Not more than half a pint; but I'm going to take a bath in the hold, and that should relieve the thirst a good bit,” Sam said cheerily as, with only his trousers on and the remainder of his clothing bundled under his arm, he ran out of the stuffy cabin.

I followed as soon as possible, in much the same

fashion, and during ten minutes or more we swam or waded around the hold amid the cargo, where the sea had free entrance and there was nothing to be feared from sharks. It was most refreshing, this bath, and while we were at the height of our enjoyment Mr. Osborne peered over the combing of the hatchway.

“That’s not a bad idea, lads,” he said approvingly. “I have a mind to try the same plan myself.”

“Come on,” I cried invitingly, for I had conceived a great admiration for this man whom I had looked upon almost with contempt when he was playing the part of a swell.

In a twinkling he was with us, and I venture to say that if a stranger, knowing of the dangers which threatened all who were virtually imprisoned on the steamer, could have looked down upon us just at that moment, he would have said that the horrors of shipwreck, as ordinarily painted, were greatly exaggerated.

“I wanted a drink when we came in here; but the thirst has vanished, and there’s a chance I’ll be able to save a few drops of yesterday’s rations,” Sam said cheerfully, as he climbed up on a half-submerged box to watch Mr. Osborne and me while we had a boxing-match in deep water. “When we knock off work again, I’m coming here for another bath.”

“One each day is as much as you should take in this climate,” and Mr. Osborne put an end to the rough sport by climbing up beside Sam. “I’ve been thinking, however, that it would be a good idea to sponge our bodies with salt water whenever the

## 190 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

thirst is great. Now let us get into our clothes and go to breakfast."

Nearly all the passengers were at table when we entered; at each person's place was the scanty amount of provisions allotted for the morning meal, and not a few were dawdling over the food in order to prolong the pleasure of eating. Sam and I soon finished our scanty meal, and spent a long time in the open air speculating upon the possibilities as we had speculated so many times since the *Ocean Queen* struck the reef.

Then we were called to work, and the several tasks were performed in much the same way as on the previous day, except, perhaps, that we were all a trifle more careful not to offer our bodies as targets to those on the island. We knew beyond a peradventure that the mutineers understood we were building a raft with the intention of trying to gain some port, and it was only reasonable to suppose the scoundrels would do everything within their power to prevent us from accomplishing our purpose.

Before we were summoned below to receive the day's allowance of drinking water, the raft had begun to assume shape. Three spars, each thirty or forty feet long, were brought aft ready for launching, and to these were lashed empty casks, carefully headed and plugged to ensure their being water-tight. Five casks to each spar were thus put in place, and then cross-pieces of heavy timber taken from one of the bulkheads were made ready to be lashed in place, that the spars might be held firmly not less than ten feet apart. Thus the bottom, or hull, if it could so be called, of our craft would be not less than thirty

feet square, and I understood from Mr. Thompson that the upper works were to overhang the lower part three or four feet.

As yet, however, only the casks had been fastened to the spars, the task having been done with infinite care lest the lashing should slip; but the fact that we could see the work shaping itself into something like what we expected, heartened us all to such an extent that we were quite a jolly party as we lined up around the saloon, each holding his pitcher to receive the precious liquid measured out by the captain himself.

I was standing next Mr. Osborne, with Miss Hubbard on the other side of him, and I heard her ask how Mr. Jenkins was getting along.

“That fellow is a marvel,” the gentleman replied. “I have never seen any one recover from a wound so quickly. Captain Grout, who appears to come nearest to a surgeon of any on board, declares that but for the necessity of watching over the prisoner, there is no reason why the mate could not move around, and I have little doubt but that a change of scene would benefit him wonderfully. It would make a strong man ill to lie there looking at such a miserable specimen of humanity as Sampson has shown himself to be since taking part in the plot to steal the treasure.”

“Why do they keep the wretch on board?” Miss Hubbard asked, with just a touch of petulance. “If he is injured as badly as you seem to think, he would be unable to work us any harm, and we would all feel better in mind if he was sent ashore.”

"Why, he is our prisoner — a spoil of war, so to speak, and surely you wouldn't have us give up any advantage we have gained by hard knocks."

"What advantage can he be to us?" the little lady asked in surprise. "He has sinned against us all; but we cannot claim the right to punish him, therefore what is to be gained by holding such a man? You can only look after him as you are doing now, and when we take passage on the raft, you can't leave him here helpless."

I understood by the expression on Mr. Osborne's face that the young lady had given him something serious to think about; but it never entered my head that we might free this fellow who had been one of the prime movers in the plot against us, until later in the day.

After the distribution of water we went back to our tasks as usual, except that the sailors no longer worked in the hold because it was believed they had taken everything from there which could be of benefit to us. With all hands at the raft it grew very fast, and when the time came to cease labour for the long "nooning," the spars were in shape, held by the cross-pieces, and floating alongside under the star-board rail.

"Now it stands us in hand to raise and lengthen the screen on this side, else the mutineers will have a chance to pick us off when we venture outboard to lay the first deck," Mr. Thompson said to the chief engineer, and as the two walked forward to figure what could be done on the lines suggested by the mate, I observed that Mr. Osborne was making

motions to Uncle Amos and Captain Bragg, as if asking them to a private interview.

Then it was the thought came that it was his purpose to speak about Sampson, much in the same strain as Miss Hubbard had talked, and, hurriedly telling Sam what I had heard earlier in the day, I proposed that we hear as much of the conversation as might be possible, even though by so doing our dinner-hour was delayed.

The three gentlemen went directly to the chart-room, and because the weather was so hot, or, perhaps, heedless as to whether the conversation could be overheard, the door was left open. It was only necessary Sam and I should lounge idly in that vicinity in order to hear every word as plainly as if we had been members of the party.

“Anything wrong?” we heard the captain ask, nervously, when Mr. Osborne had followed him and Uncle Amos into the little room, and my gentleman replied with a laugh:

“Not a bit of it, captain. On the contrary, I believe all hands are in a more cheerful mood than they have been since the wreck. Your pretence of building a small boat did not deceive any one, because you never got beyond a certain point with the work; but it is possible to see this one take shape, and if matters grow desperate every one knows that we can leave this hulk, even though at the cost of being fired upon by those on the island.”

“Was that all you had to say?” Captain Bragg asked, petulantly, and Mr. Osborne, still laughing, replied:

## 194 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

" I'll soon prove that it wasn't. One of the passengers asked me this morning what you proposed to do with Sampson, and I'm asking you the same question? "

" Do with him? " the captain repeated, as if puzzled because Mr. Osborne should be such a simple as to ask what he himself might have been able to answer. " I count on makin' that fellow suffer for what he has done. He is more responsible than any of the sailors who followed him, because of knowing better what must be the inevitable result of such a crime. "

" How do you count on being able to make him suffer, other than what he is now undergoing by being in mortal fear lest Jenkins should shoot him? "

" How? Why, by makin' a complaint against the villain, an' turnin' him over to the officers of the law at the first port we make! "

" Which means that we must tend and feed him until all is in readiness to leave the wreck, and then he is to be shipped as tenderly as a wounded man should be, sharing our small store of food and water. I fully agree with you that he ought to be punished; but it will be awkward, to say the least, to get him into the custody of those whose duty it is to punish criminals. "

" Look here, Osborne! " the captain cried, sharply. " What are you drivin' at? What do you mean? "

" I'm wondering why you don't send Sampson ashore, Captain Bragg? I'm asking what sense there is in burdening ourselves, especially after we have



taken to the raft, with a prisoner who must not only be watched carefully lest he do us a harm, but be nursed at the same time, for we're not quite heathens to leave a helpless man unaided?"

"Why don't you gather all our weapons, while you're patchin' up matters, an' send 'em across to Files?" Uncle Amos cried, angrily. "Sampson needs hangin', an' we'll put him on the right road to get it!"

"In that case, since you have made up your minds that we can afford to expend so much labour, and share with him food and water, in order to carry him into the clutches of the law, I'll make no more talk about it," Mr. Osborne said with a smile, as he stepped outside the room. "It had come into my mind that he would get plenty of punishment sooner or later if we sent him across to Files, thereby saving just so much of our stores, and at the same time relieving Jenkins of what must be a disagreeable duty."

Then Mr. Osborne walked away whistling, as if having dismissed the matter from his mind entirely, and, running after him, I asked in a whisper:

"Why didn't you keep on with your talk? It wouldn't have taken many words more to bring them around to your way of thinking."

"I came away because there was no need of saying anything more. Those two old shellbacks hadn't thought of the matter in that light, and when they've had time to chew it over a bit, they'll be as eager to ship the commercial traveller as I am."

"And Miss Hubbard will feel a good deal more

contented in mind," I said, with a laugh, whereupon he looked down upon me sharply, a smile beginning to creep over his face.

"So you are keeping your eyes open very wide?" he replied, after a time.

"It's better to have something of the kind to amuse a fellow when he's wrecked, than go mooning around the deck wondering how long it will be before the mutineers get their hands on the treasure," I said, and he winked at me in what I called a friendly manner.

A right pleasant fellow was Mr. Osborne, and while I have no desire ever to be wrecked again, if such fate should befall me, I hope most sincerely I may have as agreeable a companion in misery as he showed himself to be when the *Ocean Queen* was piled up on one of the Batan islands.

Captain Bragg and Uncle Amos did not come into the saloon until nearly all the passengers had finished lunch and gone to lie down; but Sam and I were yet at table, and we noticed that the two gentlemen talked together very earnestly in whispers.

There was no need for any one to advise that we two lads get what rest might be possible before it was time to resume work, and when the scanty meal had come to an end we went into our cabin, where we fell asleep without giving more heed to the bags of gold piled up around us, than if they had been filled with sawdust.

It did not seem possible that it was time for the siesta to come to an end, when I heard a knock on the door, and, without opening my eyes, I called

out "Come in," hoping it might be possible to get a few more winks of sleep before going out again into the scorching hot sunlight.

"Perhaps you won't thank me for disturbing you, lads," a familiar voice said softly as the door was opened; "but the fact of the matter is that Captain Bragg thinks it wisest to send the prisoner ashore, and is about to open up communication with the island. I thought, since you had already taken the trouble to learn so much regarding the matter, you might like to see the finish."

It was Mr. Osborne who thus spoke, and he had not finished before both Sam and I were out of the bunk, as wide awake as we ever had been in all our lives.

"It's mighty good of you to give us warning," I said, following the gentleman out into the saloon, and from there to the deck. "We should have felt badly if he had gone without our knowing how it was done. So the captain came around to your way of thinking?"

"You mean to Miss Hubbard's ideas," he replied, with a laugh. "We can't say as to that; he sent me word a few moments ago that he had decided to send the prisoner ashore, if it could be done."

"I reckon Sampson won't put any obstacles in the way," I replied, and then came the desire to see what the travelling salesman would say when it was announced that he might rejoin his companions in crime. "Let's go straight to Mr. Jenkins's room."

"You and Sam can do so; but I'm bound to see

## 198 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

the captain first, in case he is expecting some reply to his message."

Having said this, Mr. Osborne went into the chart-room, while Sam and I kept on to the second officer's cabin, finding matters there much as when we last paid the invalid a visit. Mr. Jenkins, revolver in hand, was still watching Sampson keenly, and the pallor of the prisoner's face told that the strain was wearing on him severely; he no longer blustered or threatened, but held his peace, striving without success to prevent a nervous twitching of his lips.

I had an idea that the second mate was looking the worse for thus acting the part of jailor, but he assured me that he was feeling very well indeed.

"In fact, I'd be on deck this minute, if it wasn't for that wretch," he cried, flourishing the revolver in the direction of the prisoner, who seemed to be straining at the ropes on his ankles and wrists, as if to get out of range. "It's a big pity he hadn't got a bullet entirely through his head, an' then he wouldn't be takin' a share of the water when he deserves to be killed by thirst."

"It isn't my fault that I'm here," Sampson whimpered, and as he spoke it could easily be seen that his spirit was broken entirely. "Why didn't they kill me on the island, and have done with it? I'd rather be shot a dozen times than tied up here with him fingering the trigger of that revolver!"

I was tempted to ask why he hadn't behaved himself like the gentleman he professed to be, and then he wouldn't have fallen into such a wretched plight; but no good could come of going all over that mat-

ter, therefore I went out on deck again, not minded to look longer at the miserable wretch.

It was well I left the second officer's cabin just as I did, otherwise Sam and I might have missed some portion of the performance, for Captain Bragg, Uncle Amos and Mr. Osborne were just going toward the forward portion of the screen where were the loop-holes.

The latter winked knowingly at me as the captain cried loudly:

“ Ahoy on shore! Ahoy! ”

“ *Now* what's the matter? ” came the question. “ Are your bloomin' passengers beginning to find out that we're gettin' the best of this 'ere business? ”

We could see no one, but knew, as a matter of course, that a sentinel hidden among the foliage had answered the hail.

“ We want to speak with Files,” the captain cried grumpily.

“ What for? Have you got ready to come to our terms? ”

“ None of your — Tell Files that we have a proposition to make him,” the captain shouted, angrily, and he added in a lower tone, “ He'll come at that, thinkin' we're ready to buy water with the treasure.”

In this Captain Bragg must have been correct, for the leader of the mutineers hailed in a very few seconds, speaking masterfully, as if believing he had at last brought us to terms.

“ Ahoy! ” he shouted. “ Held out as long as you could, eh? ”

## 200 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

"Don't flatter yourself that we shall ever offer to make the bargain you're sellin' your souls to bring about," Captain Bragg cried, no longer trying to mask his anger since the leader of the scoundrels had answered his summons. "We have one of your gang here, an' are willin' to turn him over if you agree not to fire while we're puttin' him in the sling."

"Who do you mean? Sampson?" came from the shore.

"Ay, your mate, or leader, I don't know which, an' care less."

"Well, you can keep him; we've got no use for him here!"

The reply astonished me; I had supposed the mutineers would be rejoiced to have Sampson released, and yet they were refusing to receive him.

"Files knows that he will have to share the command, and a good slice of the treasure, if they ever get it, in case Sampson is sent ashore, so he prefers that we keep him," Mr. Osborne whispered as if answering the question he saw in my eyes.

"We'll bring the man here, an' let him talk with you," the captain said, now more eager to rid the ship of the prisoner since understanding that he was not welcome on the island.

The travelling salesman must have heard all that was said before two of the sailors brought him out behind the screen, and there was an expression of mingled rage and despair on his face. He had sold himself to the devil, and persuaded others to do the same, only to find that those whom he had led into a crooked path were glad to be rid of him.

“ Hello, Files! ” he cried, feebly, for fear and suffering had weakened him to an alarming extent, and he was by no means the man I had seen bullying the captain into sending him ashore.

“ What’s the matter with you? ” came the sulky reply.

“ You’re not the man to go back on a friend after all we’ve sworn to be to each other, are you? ”

“ Why not? ” was the mocking answer. “ What good can you do us, half-dead, as we’re told you are? ”

“ I’m far from that, Files, and even though it was true, you took your oath that we would stand together as long as there was breath in our bodies. ”

“ That may be; but since then I’ve took an oath that I don’t want any part of you, so stay where you are! ”

I could not if I would, set down the torrent of bitter, angry, profane words which burst from Sampson’s lips when he thus learned that the man who had promised such friendship was ready to leave him among enemies. It was as if he would burst with rage, and I looked to see his wounds open because of the violent exertions he made to speak sufficiently loud for those ashore to hear him.

It was necessary to stifle the abuse by actual force, for the language was such as no self-respecting person could listen to, and, besides, the women, hearing the outcries, were coming on deck. Mr. Thompson placed his hand over the fellow’s mouth, holding it there until he could make him understand that he was not allowed to disgrace the ship by such a

## 202 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

tirade, and when it was possible for the prisoner to speak again, he said eagerly, turning toward the captain:

"You have said you were willing to send me ashore. I'm ready to go with half a chance for making land; give me a plank no more than large enough to keep my head above water, and I'll guarantee that you'll never see me again!"

"There is no reason why I should have any care as to what may be your fate, for I hold you, more than any other man, responsible for the plot to steal the treasure; but it would be the same as sendin' you to your death if I set you ashore."

"I'll take the chances of going across on the hawser!"

"An' if you try it I swear we'll put a dozen bullets into your body before you're half-way across!" Files cried from the shore.

"Give me a chance to make my way ashore on a plank?" Sampson pleaded as if begging for life. "You want to be rid of me, therefore why should you care what they do to me?"

"What good can you do yourself by goin' among those who will kill you so that their share of the treasure which they expect to get may be the greater?" the captain asked curiously, and Sampson replied, as he shook his fist in impotent rage in the direction of the island:

"I want to square matters with that thief of a Files, and then it makes little difference what becomes of me! Yes, I've thrown away my life like an idiot, cursed by the desire to make myself rich in a



moment, when if I had stopped to think the matter over seriously, I must have understood that I would not be allowed to enjoy it among those of my own class. Take off this rope, an' I'll go over the rail, trustin' to the chances of swimming across. The tide is high now, an' I'll be able to make the shore, for, so great is my desire to stand face to face once more with Files, that I can do what would be impossible under almost any other circumstances!"

It was painful to hear the poor wretch pleading so earnestly for an opportunity to bring about his own death, for it seemed to me that he had no chance against his former companion, even though he succeeded in gaining the island.

Uncle Amos stepped forward and whispered in the captain's ear, Sampson watching eagerly meanwhile, and then a glow of savage joy overspread his wounded face as Captain Bragg said to Mr. Thompson:

"Nail a couple of boards to that empty beef cask which we threw aside because of bein' too small, an' let him go over the rail at whatsoever place pleases him best."

"That's a wise decision!" Mr. Osborne said as if speaking to himself, but I heard the words, and immediately asked why he believed it was wise.

"If they don't shoot him before he gets a foothold ashore, they're bound to kill him afterward, and it would be more humane if we were to hang him at once," I said, bitterly, for I was sick at heart with all I had heard and what I believed would take place.

## 204 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

"There's where you are in the wrong, Young Amos, and Sampson has sense enough to understand the matter as it really is. From what he said to Files, we know they took some kind of an oath to stand by each other once they were committed to the plot, and the sailormen of that party will not be willing to break their solemn word, as is the respectable Mr. Files. There will be more than one lend him a hand, and if either gets the toughest end of the snarl, I'm predicting it will be our former third officer."

It made little difference what I thought of allowing the wounded prisoner to take his chances of reaching the shore when a strong swimmer would have thought the passage difficult, for Captain Bragg had given his word that he be allowed to try, and it was evident, from what I could read on his face, that Uncle Amos was in full accord with the decision.

It was but the work of a moment for Mr. Thompson to nail a couple of boards across the cask which stood on the starboard side amidships, and this done he beckoned for the men to bring Sampson to him.

Then, in obedience to a whispered command, after Sampson had been taken to where the poor apology for a raft stood on the rail, one of the sailors cut the ropes from the prisoner's wrists and ankles, but without any great care as to gentleness.

Then a rope was brought, and Mr. Thompson asked, when everything was ready for lowering the cask into the water:

"Where will you start from, Sampson?"

"One place is as good as another, so that no time

be wasted!" the man cried as if he was burning with the desire to gain the shore, and indeed he was. "Let it go over where you are."

Mr. Thompson gave the word for the sailors to lower the cask, and as this was being done turned toward Sampson, to help him over the rail, as I fancied; but the enraged mutineer had not waited for assistance. He was in the water at the same instant with his raft, and before I could take a dozen steps in order to look over the rail, he was swimming vigorously, pushing and pulling the cask along with him in such a manner that his body was partially screened from view of those who might be watching on the island.

"That fellow is no fool, even though he be a villain," the first officer muttered as he watched the movements of our late prisoner. "He must have figured the plan out since learning that Files didn't want to see him again, an' yet he couldn't have done better if he had studied over it for a month."

"He don't act as feeble as when he was brought out of Mr. Jenkins's room," Sam said, and Mr. Osborne replied:

"His desire for revenge is what gives him strength just now, and if he does succeed in making the land, I'm of the belief that he'll do us a big lot of good."

"Do us good?" I cried in astonishment. "How would it be possible for him to do that, even though he might be inclined, which I doubt?"

"He and Files will be seeking each other's life, in case Sampson gains the shore alive, and the chances are that some of the gang will take sides

## 206 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

with our prisoner, in which event there's likely to be a pretty fight which must work to our advantage."

By this time Sampson had made his way well past the shattered bow of the steamer, so energetically had he worked, and no sooner was the cask thus in view of those on shore than a couple of shots were fired, the bullets skipping along the tops of the waves within a few inches of the swimmer's head. Then we could hear the voice of the old white sailor:

"Hold hard, Mr. Files, there's some of us here won't stand for sich work as that, an' if you raise your rifle again we'll try our hand at shootin'; but it won't be at a poor fellow to whom we're bound to lend a hand!"

"There!" Mr. Osborne cried as he clapped me on the shoulder. "I wasn't so far out of the way, it seems, for already has Sampson found a friend, and if he can hold the stroke as he is doing now, there'll be more than one hand stretched out to help him through the surf."

Although Sampson would have worked us so much harm, and regardless of the fact that through him were our mouths parched with thirst, I found myself watching eagerly, hoping most fervently he would succeed in gaining the shore, and, later, when he staggered to his feet, struggling against the force of the surf after getting into shallow water, I cried aloud in triumph as two men came out waist-deep and hauled him up beyond reach of the waves.

## CHAPTER XIII

### A CHANCE SHOT

“**T**HE ship is the cleaner for being rid of him,” a voice just behind me said as the traveling salesman disappeared, and, looking around, I saw Mr. Osborne, who had been watching the struggles of the wretch. “We now have none on board who are not in accord with anything which may be proposed by Captain Bragg, therefore we know exactly where all our trouble will come from.”

“It is well that you can find anything satisfying in that fact,” I said with a laugh in which was little of mirth, for it seemed to me as if, between what was to be feared from the sea itself, and the danger to be expected through the mutineers, we had as much to contend against as could well be met. “I have been wondering, while watching Sampson, how we can hope to get away from here, unless a vessel of some kind sights us.”

“We shall go by the raft, of course, and a right seaworthy craft she will be, if I’m any judge of marine architecture,” Mr. Osborne replied cheerily.

“But how are we to get her beyond range of the mutineers’ rifles? It stands to reason we must leave in the night, the better to remain hidden from view; but now that Sampson knows what we propose

to do, the villains ashore have such warning that a sharp watch will be kept."

"All that is true, lad," and now Mr. Osborne spoke in a more serious strain. "There is little chance that we shall succeed in leaving this wreck, save under their fire. The women are to be sheltered by such a barricade as can be put up, and we men must take the risks. We'll make it so warm for those beauties ashore, however, that they will not find it as easy to shoot us down as may be fancied."

"We shall still be within range of the rifles after getting so far from the shore that our revolvers will be useless," I said gloomily, as if it gave me pleasure to seek out obstacles, although indeed such was not the case. I was simply saying what came into my mind, knowing full well that it was safe to talk freely with a brave fellow like Mr. Osborne.

"You forget, Young Amos, that I have much the same as the captain's promise that I be allowed to go ashore with seven or eight who can be depended upon, and I shall take good care the promise is kept when we are ready for departure."

"And how will that advantage us?"

"If matters go as I believe they will, we shall be able to get our hands on as many cartridges as will be needed for a short engagement. I'm not counting that they are supplied any too generously with ammunition since our famous raid; but each man has most likely got all that can be carried conveniently, and I propose to have my full share."

"If you are not killed offhand," I suggested, looking up quickly to see how he took such a foreboding,

and, much to my surprise, he was smiling placidly, as if his death counted for little.

“ If we are careful, the villains cannot slaughter all our party, for we shall have the advantage of taking them by surprise, and, so that these women and half the men get away safely, we who remain behind have sold our lives at a good price.”

“ I have believed you to be a brave man, ever since our troubles began, Mr. Osborne; but you have more courage than I had fancied any man could show, and from this out I won't try to find bugbears,” I said, speaking from my heart as I took him by the hand, and he replied cheerily:

“ Don't give me more praise than I deserve, Young Amos, for what you call bravery is only the most intense desire to shield some people from possible harm, and, that done, I am content to pay the price, if it be necessary.”

“ You mean one person only, I reckon.”

He looked at me quizzingly for an instant, and then with a mirthful laugh cried:

“ You are a chip off your uncle's block, Young Amos, and have your eyes open wide mostly all the time.”

Failing to understand his meaning, I would have asked him to explain, but just then we heard the report of weapons from the island, sounding so far away that we knew the sentinels were not firing at us, and Mr. Osborne said in a tone of satisfaction:

“ You see that I was no false prophet, Young Amos; my predictions have been fulfilled a little sooner than I expected. We set Sampson free, much

## 210 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

to our own advantage, and he has already begun to stir up trouble for Enoch Files."

"Do you believe they are fighting now?"

"Ay, else what is the meaning of those shots? There's another! and another! I hope most fervently those fellows are good marksmen, for the more that are knocked out, the better chance will we who go ashore have!"

During five minutes or more the reports could be heard at intervals of twenty or thirty seconds, and then came a volley. There was no longer any question but that the mutineers were fighting among themselves, and it was equally certain Sampson had stirred up the row.

Even Captain Bragg was in a high state of excitement, as he well might be, and, with Uncle Amos and Mr. Thompson, was standing at the loopholes, as if believing it might be possible to get a view of the combatants. Even the women came out of the saloon, to learn the cause of the uproar, for the detonations could be heard all over the wreck, and when Miss Hubbard appeared with the others, Mr. Osborne had no further desire for my company; but went at once to her side, the two standing within the shelter of the after deck-house talking in whispers.

We remained idle, officers, passengers, and crew, a full half-hour, listening intently to the sound of the firing, and then, no report having been heard for five minutes or more, Captain Bragg said, speaking that all might hear him:

"Those scoundrels couldn't work more to our advantage than by shootin' each other down; but



we cannot afford to spend our time listenin' to them. There is very much to be done before we can say that it is safe to leave the wreck, an' it stands us in hand to make the most of the young day, before the sun gives down too much heat."

"I'd give a good deal to know certainly whether one party has won a battle, or if they have decided to be friendly again," Sam said nervously, and I replied:

"I don't understand how the knowledge would benefit you, for our situation must remain the same, no matter what has happened."

"We'd have the satisfaction of knowing that some of them had been whipped, and there's a good deal in that."

I believed the mutineers were yet at war, and the cessation of fire was due to the fact that all hands were in hiding, awaiting an opportunity to shoot down those who did not agree with them as to Sampson's taking up the reins of power once more, therefore gave the matter very little thought until word was passed that the day's work had come to an end.

Then it was that, instead of going directly into the saloon, where I knew the heat must be intense, I walked aimlessly forward until coming to the end of the screen on the port side, where I leaned carelessly over the rail to catch the first night breath which came over the sea.

"What are you mooning about?" Mr. Osborne called as he halted at the saloon companionway, and I replied, finding it an exertion even to speak, so great was the heat:

## 212 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

"There's a tiny bit of air stirring here, and although I'm as hungry as I well can be, the coolness is better than food."

"If you have found anything that can be called cool, I'll take my share, for it seems as if I was baked brown way through to my bones," he cried laughingly as he came toward me, and I wondered how it was he could always appear cheery, no matter what might be the discomforts or the danger.

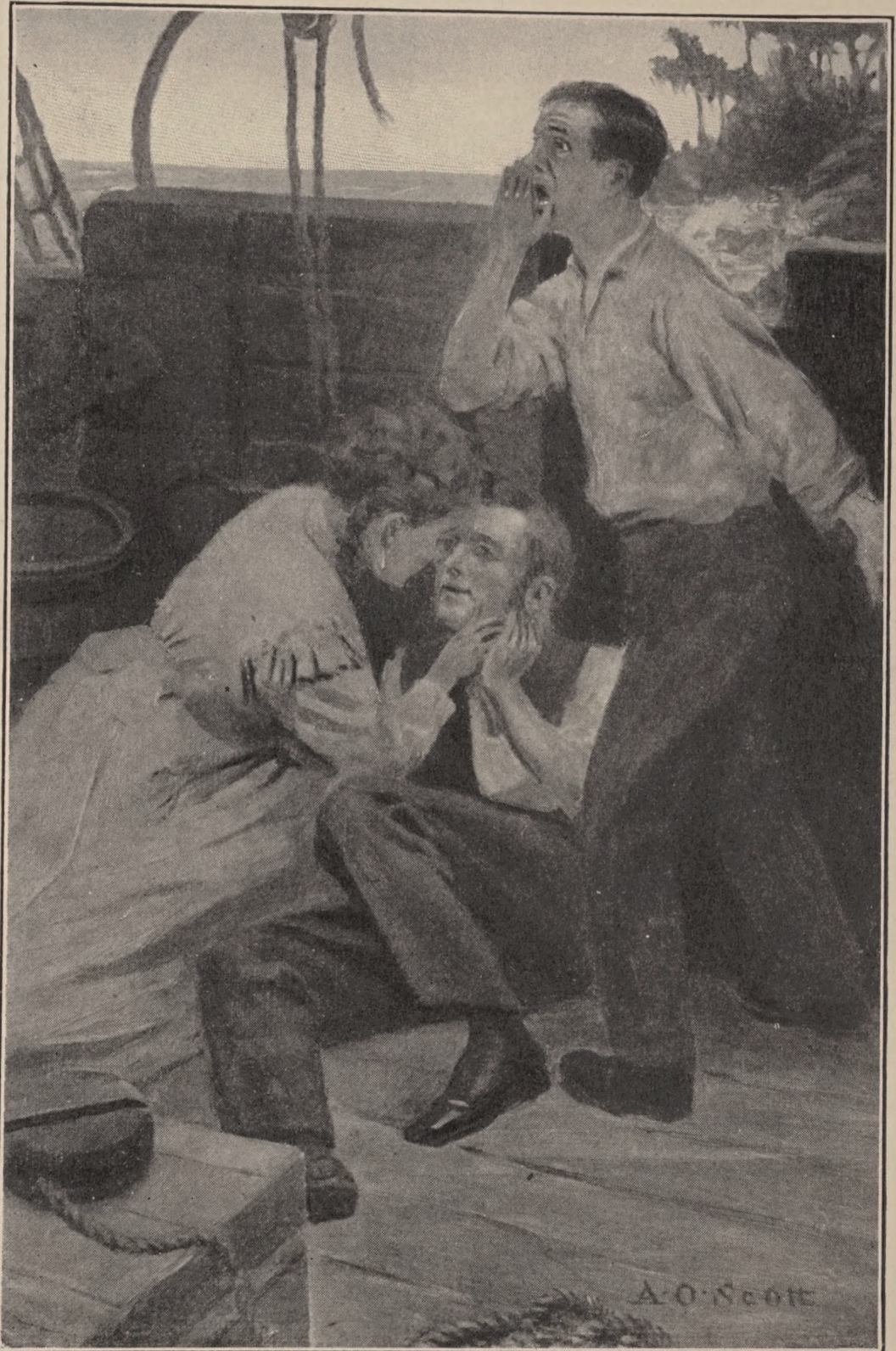
He stood by my side, both of us gazing landward without really trying to see anything in particular, when suddenly the report of a rifle rang out, Mr. Osborne staggering back, his hand to his neck, and even while springing toward him I could see something red oozing from between his fingers.

"Get down here under cover!" I cried, actually forcing him behind the rail without once thinking that I was in the same danger of being shot as he had been, and then I cried at the full strength of my lungs, for the deck was entirely deserted save by us two, "Help! Help! Mr. Osborne is shot!"

"Don't kick up a row, lad. It can't be more than a scratch; but it has jarred me a bit. I thought the villains were so busy trying to kill each other off, that they were paying no attention to us."

"Mr. Osborne is shot!" I cried again, growing frightened because the red stain was rapidly increasing despite the fact that he pressed his hand firmly against his neck where I knew the wound must be.

To my surprise, but not greatly to my relief, Miss Hubbard was the first to answer my summons, and as she threw herself down beside him, her face so pale



“HELP! HELP! MR. OSBORNE IS SHOT!”



that it seemed certain she was about to faint, I cried petulantly:

“What is the matter with everybody? Why don't some of the men come?”

“There's no need of any one else, lad,” Mr. Osborne said, and I was thoroughly vexed with him because he seemed so content to lie there unattended, save as she pressed her hands against his cheeks.

It was my fear and nervousness which caused it to seem as if the men were a long while in answering my summons, for when Uncle Amos came up the companionway he was puffing and blowing as if putting forth every effort to move rapidly, and immediately behind him were Mr. Thompson and Captain Bragg.

“Take him into his cabin,” Uncle Amos said, as soon as it was possible for him to speak. “Can you keep up the pressure on the wound, Osborne?”

“Ay, that I can, and there's no need of any fuss about this thing, for what I have got is no more than a scratch.”

“You would say the same regardless of what you believed,” Miss Hubbard whispered, bending over him till I fancied her lips touched his cheek.

Then she stepped aside, that the men might do what was necessary, and in a twinkling Uncle Amos and Mr. Thompson were carrying the poor fellow below, I following mournfully as I kept in mind what he had said regarding the worthlessness of his life if so be the women could be assured of safety.

Although it is safe to say that every one of us was as hungry as people well could be, never a single person sat down to his rations which were awaiting

## 214 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

him until something definite was learned regarding Mr. Osborne's condition. Then Captain Bragg came into the saloon from the wounded man's cabin, and reported:

"Captain Grout, who is the best surgeon we have aboard, has examined the wound, and feels positive it is not dangerous. The bullet passed through his neck very near the skin, and if proper care is used, Mr. Osborne should be around again within forty-eight hours, none the worse, save that he is likely to have trouble in movin' his head."

With this assurance, which was given in a tone which told that the captain believed he was speaking nothing more nor less than the truth, the passengers were satisfied, and they gathered around the table; but I had no desire for food until having spoken with the injured man, who, next to my uncle, I considered the best friend I had on the wreck.

When I went into the cabin Uncle Amos had just finished bandaging the wound, and Miss Hubbard was holding the poor fellow's hand as if she had the best right to be by his side.

"Don't fret about me, Young Amos," Mr. Osborne said, with a cheery smile, as I stood by his side. "I heard what Captain Bragg said, and every word was true. The wound isn't so bad that I need stay in bed; but I always did like to be coddled, and shall claim to be on the sick-list a day or two."

"Do you believe all he says about himself?" I asked of Miss Hubbard, and when she told me there was no question but that the wound was a trifling one as compared with what was at first feared, I

went back to the saloon, following Uncle Amos, with the belief that it would please Mr. Osborne best if none save the young lady remained with him.

We were not a cheerful party at table that evening. I fancy that all of us, hearing the tokens of battle ashore, had allowed ourselves to believe there was no longer any great danger of being shot down by the mutineers, and this last blow, having fallen upon the one above all others who ever strove to keep up our spirits, brought home the fact of the dangerous situation more forcibly than anything else could have done.

Sam and I went into our cabin, where was so much treasure that we could not move around freely, when the pretence of a meal was come to an end, and although we had topics for conversation such as would ordinarily have caused our tongues to run freely, neither spoke as we crawled into the berth where the air was much the same as in an oven that has been heated.

Uncle Amos followed us very shortly afterward, and as he threw off his clothing he puffed and blowed like a porpoise until, despite the sorrow and anxiety in my heart, I could not refrain from laughing.

“Awake, eh?” he asked, as if I had done something wrong in thus allowing my eyes to remain open.

“I can’t sleep, sir, though it would please me mighty well if for no other reason that then I wouldn’t know how hot it is. Did you see Mr. Osborne since dinner?”

“I’ve just come from his room, an’ we need have no anxiety concernin’ him, though Miss Hubbard

## 216 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

seems to take pleasure in believin' he is at the point of death. It is no more than a flesh-wound, an' if he don't get too much nursin', as seems to be the fear now, he'll be as sound as a walnut by the time the raft is ready for sea."

"And when is that likely to be, sir?"

"In a couple of days at the longest, an' it won't be any too soon, for we're liable to have a strong wind which will kick up such a sea that this old kettle will be knocked into junk."

"If Mr. Osborne counts on taking a party ashore to get the best of the mutineers, he'll need to mend right fast, according to your figuring," I said half to myself, and Uncle Amos replied with a gesture of impatience:

"He'll give over that notion, unless we're held here longer than now seems possible, for he won't be able to turn his head, an' I'm allowin' that a stiff-necked fellow, however brave he may be, wouldn't cut any very respectable figger among such a gang as are holdin' down this island."



## CHAPTER XIV

### OUTFITTING THE RAFT

**W**HEN Sam and I went on deck next morning to take a bath in the steamer's hold, we were thoroughly astonished at seeing Mr. Osborne sitting there, with Miss Hubbard beside him. He did not look much the worse for having stopped a bullet, save that his throat was bandaged, and he made no motion to turn his head.

“ We counted that you would be in the hospital till we got ready to leave the wreck! ” Sam cried in surprise, and Mr. Osborne replied with one of the cheery laughs which did a fellow good to hear:

“ I'm a long distance from belonging to an hospital, lads, though I will confess that it isn't overly pleasant to tip my head around very lively. When Amos Grout comes on deck I expect to be raked over the coals, for he gave orders that I should be kept in bed forty-eight hours; but that couldn't have been done unless I was willing to be both roasted and boiled. Miss Hubbard and I came on deck before daylight.”

It seemed to me that he looked unusually cheerful for a man who couldn't turn his head ever so slightly; but I set it down to the fact that he was always putting the best foot forward, and allowed he wanted

## 218 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

all hands to think he hadn't been more than scratched.

If I had suspected the truth then, it wouldn't have surprised me to have seen him dancing a jig, for Miss Hubbard was the nicest woman, next to mother, that I ever knew.

It goes without saying that the first matter we spoke of, after asking how he felt, was as to what the mutineers might be doing, and he told us what he had already heard from those who stood watch during the night, which was that they had not shown themselves since the shot which wounded him had been fired.

"I'm allowing that they'll be right lively to-day, if they have got through fighting among themselves, for they know what we are doing, and will make every effort to stop it. If we could only have gone ashore while they were having a battle, matters hereabouts, save the ability to get away, would be to our liking!"

"You were in condition to have gone then, and run the chances of getting a more serious wound; but now you are down and out. We shall slip away on the raft, and the mutineers never will know how near they were to being wiped out by Mr. Osborne's party."

"Why do you think that, lad?" he asked with a laugh.

"Because uncle said last night that our craft would be ready for sea in two days."

"I mean, how do you know that I'm down and out?"

“ Because it is possible to see that much; you won't be well in two days.”

“ You'll find that a scratch on the neck can't prevent me from doing what is needed in order that our people may have a fair show of getting away, and if the raft is outfitted by to-morrow afternoon, I'll call on Mr. Files, or Mr. Sampson if he has succeeded in regaining command, early that same evening.”

I looked at him in astonishment, and might have said something rude, but that Miss Hubbard whispered a few words in his ear, and then her cheeks flushed such a rosy red that I forgot all about what he had said, because of admiring them.

When Sam and I had finished our bath the wounded man and his nurse had gone below, although it was no cooler than when they came on deck, and we called upon Mr. Jenkins to learn how he was getting on now that there was no prisoner to watch.

He was sitting in the door of his cabin, where could be felt just the faintest suspicion of a breeze, and appeared very much amused when we stated the purpose of our visit.

“ I reckon I lost my head over that scoundrel,” he said laughingly. “ While he was in this cabin, where I couldn't help seein' him all the time, he came near settin' me wild, as I thought of how much mischief was rightly charged to his door. I believe I'd gone daft an' murdered the sneak, if he hadn't been let go just as he was.”

“ You've gained fast since he left,” Sam said,

## 220 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

intending it as a joke, and the second officer replied, gravely:

"There's no question about it; I began to pick up within an hour after he went over the rail, an' am countin' I'll be able to do a full share of work when we pull out from here, as Mr. Thompson allows we'll do to-morrow night."

Then he asked us what the opinion was regarding Mr. Osborne's condition, and by the time we had come to an end of telling him, the gong was sounding for breakfast.

Mr. Osborne had insisted on coming to table, and Miss Hubbard seemed to think she was forced to wait upon him as if he had lost the use of both hands, instead of his neck, until I got quite tired of seeing her make such a fuss over a fellow who declared he was all right, therefore hurried through my share of the meal at such a rate that Sam's mother stared at me as if she wanted to ask whether I'd forgotten how to behave.

There was no necessity on this morning for the captain or Mr. Thompson to remind us that it was time to go to work. Now that the labour of building the raft was so nearly at an end, every one was eager to see the last touch put on, and all hands hurried up the companionway the instant they had finished the meal.

It was not a bad looking craft, even for rough usage, which we had built of odds and ends, and she looked seaworthy enough for a long voyage as she rose and fell on the swell just astern of the wreck, where she had been moored to prevent her from

being dashed to pieces during the night, in case the wind sprang up. Thanks to the empty casks, she rode high out of the water, and because of the double decks with their lining of life-preservers, there was good reason for believing we would not be in danger of shipping a sea while the weather was anywhere near decent.

Under Mr. Stubbs's direction two spars had been set up, and on these the sailors were already bending small lug-sails. A heavy oar, hewn with great labour from one of the bulkhead timbers, was to serve us as a rudder, and it was held in place by a mat of braided rope strong enough to resist anything short of a living gale.

Our work for the day was to set up a screen all around the craft, so that the mutineers might not be able to aim directly at us, and since there would be no need of this once we were beyond range of their rifles, it was built with but little regard to strength, for the captain's intention was to pitch it overboard when it could no longer serve us.

Directly behind what we called the foremast, and lashed securely to it, was a water-cask, into which would be poured our small supply of the precious liquid shortly before we set sail, and aft of that was a sort of pen, built of very stout timbers, the purpose of which I could not so much as guess, until Sam said, with the air of a fellow who had just solved a difficult riddle:

“They count on putting the treasure there, of course! Captain Bragg wouldn't think of leaving all that gold behind.”

## 222 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

"If we'd never taken it aboard, just think how much more comfortable we might be at this moment!" I cried angrily. "There'd have been no occasion for a mutiny; the passengers would be living on the island peaceably, with plenty of cold water to drink, and we needn't take the chances of putting to sea on a raft."

"There's no sense in counting chickens that never could have been hatched, lad," a cheery voice behind me cried, and there was Mr. Osborne, with Miss Hubbard at his side, come to have a look at our new ship. "A very decent sort of a craft, eh? though I've reason to believe her cabin accommodations are none of the best; but so that on her we make some part of the island of Luzon, we're not the ones who should be complaining."

It wasn't for me to stand there idle, tongue-wagging, when there was so much work to be done, and I left him and his nurse to watch proceedings, as I lent Sam a hand at dragging from below boards which had been ripped out from the steward's quarters.

Matters went along much as usual on this day. We had our meals, such as they were, at the regular hours, and did the best we could while our tongues were literally dry — parched with thirst, for it was bitter hot, with never a breath of air stirring to temper the burning rays of the sun. The mutineers had given no signs of life, and it was certain a battle had been fought to the finish, or that the two factions had made a treaty of peace.

When we went into our cabin that night, and tried

to sleep at the same time that it was necessary to wipe the perspiration from our faces continually, lest it flood the berth, I speculated as to whether Sampson had succeeded in regaining command, and Uncle Amos said in a positive tone, as if he had reliable information from the island:

“ You may set it down as a fact, lads, that Enoch Files was willin’ to make terms with the travellin’ salesman very soon after he found that a certain number of the gang were ready to take his part. Men like them can’t afford to come to very heavy blows.”

“ But they did fight,” Sam insisted. “ All that ammuniton wasn’t wasted for sport.”

“ Ay, lad, I reckon you’re in the right so far as that goes. Enoch Files is a pig-headed fellow, such as you can’t convince without some hard blows, an’ I’m allowin’ he got ’em all right, for Sampson was so wild with anger that he’d stood face to face with death for the sake of payin’ off his score with our third mate. It’s a pity Osborne couldn’t have carried out his plan of ticklin’ the villains up before we leave the wreck, for I’m of the belief that he’d made it right warm for them.”

“ He hasn’t given up the plan, sir,” Sam said with a chuckle of satisfaction. “ He declares he’ll go ashore before we leave, neck or no neck, and he ain’t the kind of a man who says things simply in order to hear himself talk.”

“ He go ashore!” Uncle Amos cried derisively. “ I’m not sayin’ that he hasn’t got the pluck to do it; but it’s the ability he’s lackin’, now his

neck is the same as if it was made of cast iron."

It is not needed I make an attempt at setting down what we said or did during this night when it was so hot that, although weary to the verge of exhaustion, we could not sleep. Sam and I went on deck shortly after midnight, but failed to get any relief, and when day dawned I question if there was a man among the passengers fit to perform an hour's work, for our experience had been the same as that of every other person on board the wreck.

"The ugliest part of this terribly hot spell is that it is likely to breed more wind than we can stand," Mr. Jenkins had said to us when, for lack of anything else to do, we visited his room shortly before dawn, and as Uncle Amos came on deck after daylight, I noticed that he gazed anxiously around as if studying the weather indications.

Instead of trying to eat at the table, women as well as men carried their allowance of food and coffee on deck, and there we remained, with no summons to work, until Uncle Amos asked:

"Is the raft ready for sea, Joe Bragg, that you have given us a holiday?"

"There are plenty of odd jobs to be done; but I'm hopin' we'll get a draft of air from the west'ard before long, an' then will be time enough to put the finishin' touches to our outfittin'."

"Is it decided that we are to pull out of here tonight, Captain Bragg?" Mr. Osborne asked quickly, a flush as of excitement coming over his face.



“ Unless those scoundrels on the island kick up some kind of a bobbery, I see no reason why we shouldn't make a try for it along about midnight, when the tide will be at its flood,” the captain replied as he gazed down at the craft which now looked more like a floating shed than anything else, because of the screens we had put in place. “ I'm allowin' that when night has come we'll send our water, provisions, an' — an' — an' other things aboard.”

He was afraid to speak of the treasure even then, when there was every reason to believe we had none among us whose evil passions could be inflamed by the mention of so much gold.

Mr. Osborne seemed to give little heed to what the captain had said; but shortly afterward, while I was watching him, believing I had a fairly good idea of what was in his mind, I saw him motion Captain Bragg toward the chart-room, into which the two had disappeared.

Five minutes later one of the sailors summoned Uncle Amos, and we saw no more of the three until word was given that we might go below for a siesta. We had done some little work during that forenoon, and to my unsailorly eyes it looked as if the raft would be ready for sea as soon as the stores and provisions had been put aboard.

It seemed to me foolish for us to go below while knowing it was so boiling hot there that we could not sleep, and, besides, I wanted to stay on deck until Uncle Amos came out of the chart-room, therefore I proposed to Sam that we spend our idle time in the open air. The starboard rail afforded sufficient

shade if one kept close alongside it, and we laid down, our heads together.

As a matter of course the chief topic of conversation was as to whether we would be able to get away on the raft, while the mutineers were ready to do all in their power to stop us, and if, should we succeed in getting to sea without too great a loss of life, it would be possible for us to handle the clumsy craft.

All this we had discussed at great length many times before; but it can be well understood that to people in such a desperate situation as we then were, the subject was ever in our minds, since the success or failure of the plan meant life or death.

After a time, however, Sam's eyes began to grow narrow; we were lying near one of the scupper-holes, through which the faintest breath of air came, and the delicious sense of coolness after we had been much the same as roasting was sufficient to lull any fellow to slumber.

It was possible for me to see out across the water for some distance, the scupper-hole being not less than four inches in diameter, and I lay there watching the never-ceasing motion of the waves until a mass of foliage, such as might have been uprooted by the surf, drifted slowly within my range of vision, coming directly from the island.

At first I gazed at it sleepily, idly wondering how it had escaped the undertow, which I knew from bitter experience was strong on the shore, and thus been dragged below to be entangled upon the jagged rocks, and then came the thought that it was drifting contrary to the light breeze, directly against the

current which Uncle Amos had often insisted ran with considerable force and swiftness down past all these groups of islands.

Having assured myself that the floating mass was approaching in opposition to all rules, I opened my eyes a trifle wider, fancying for the moment that some fish was dragging it. Then it seemed as if I could see it urged forward jerkily, and I was soon satisfied that this idea was correct, but curiosity was not sufficiently strong to overcome indolence, and I remained gazing out through the scupper-hole, content with such limited view.

When the mass was come within twenty feet of the wreck it appeared to remain motionless, and I watched, expecting to see it move presently in the other direction, for I said to myself that the fish had tired of such an uninviting meal.

It remained at a standstill so long that I nearly fell asleep, for I aroused with a quick movement as one does who strives to overcome slumber but is making no desperate fight against it. That which had aroused my curiosity again was the sudden movement of the mass, as it came directly toward the steamer with such rapidity that the water was stirred in tiny wrinkles before it.

One, two minutes, and it was so near the hull of the steamer that I could no longer see it from my peep-hole, and I said lazily to myself that it was foolish to watch drift-stuff when I had an opportunity of making up for the sleep lost during the night owing to the heat.

I closed my eyes, thinking to sink into dreamland

immediately; but the desire for slumber had departed, and I could not prevent myself from wondering why a fish would continue to drag a heavy weight which it could not eat. Then came the temptation to peer over the rail to look at the mass again, but that could only be done after some exertion, and why should I move when it was time to rest?

Thus it was that I lay there, quarrelling with my own inclinations, until becoming impatient because of allowing such an insignificant object to interfere with the slumber that was so sadly needed, and with no other thought than to put an end to the speculation, I drew myself up until it was possible to gaze over the rail.

An instant later I was as wide awake as ever a lad could be, for that which I saw was sufficient to arouse suspicions in the mind of the dullest. The mass of foliage had drifted, or been forced, against the hull of the steamer until it seemed fastened to the iron, and as I gazed, seemed to be climbing up toward where one of the mooring-lines which held the raft sagged into the water close upon the smooth side of the steamer.

Even then I was far from realizing what it all meant, when suddenly that which looked like a brown hand appeared from amid the mass, and clutched the rope.

I was so thoroughly astonished that for fully five seconds I stood as if unable to move or speak, and during this time a head — the head of a human being — came up from amid the tangle. Even though I was surprised to the verge of bewilderment,

I recognized the sharp, yellowish-brown features of Tony, the Filipino, who had already done us so much grievous mischief.

Without stopping to think that now had come the time when I might, by the exertion of a little caution, cut short the career of that promising scoundrel, I cried for help at the full strength of my lungs, at the same time raising from the rail near at hand, where it had been carelessly left by one of the carpenters, an iron-bound maul, or hammer, such as shipwrights use for caulking a vessel.

It was as if I had not ceased screaming when from one of the port-holes, directly above where the Filipino hung half out of the water by the aid of the hawser, appeared the head of Miss Hubbard, as she looked eagerly around to learn the cause of the outcry.

Then it was that I saw Tony raise his right hand, in which glittered a two-edged knife which the Malays call a "creese," and with a movement so rapid that my eyes failed to follow it, struck fairly at the young woman's face.

I heard a scream of pain as the miserable villain made ready to plunge into the water, and then I threw the heavy maul at him with such good aim that the blow could be distinctly heard.

By this time the occupants of the chart-room were on deck, Mr. Osborne shouting:

"What's the row, lad?"

"Tony swam out from the shore — I believe he has killed Miss Hubbard — she is in your cabin!"

Mr. Osborne ran swiftly below with a cry of horror,

## 230 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

while Uncle Amos and Captain Bragg came with all speed to where I was standing, both with revolvers in their hands.

"Where is he? Did you kill him?" Uncle Amos shouted, and I pointed to bubbles on the water as I replied:

"He went down right there! I hit him on the head with a maul; but can't say how much I hurt him!"

Half a dozen were on the deck now, and all were gazing eagerly in the direction pointed out by me when, far away toward the shore, almost amid the boiling surf, I saw a round, black object rise to the surface.

"There! There!" I screamed. "He's alive! Shoot him!"

Even before I ceased speaking both Uncle Amos and the captain began to blaze away; but in the shortest fraction of time the head disappeared once more, a dozen pairs of eyes watching for it to rise again.

Second after second passed like minutes, and then, far away in the distance, beyond range of our weapons, we saw the scoundrel staggering through the surf apparently uninjured.

"What was he doin' here?" Captain Bragg demanded, and after hearing all that I could tell, he said thoughtfully:

"It isn't possible that he counted on boardin' the wreck secretly in broad day, even though he did choose the time of the siesta. It must be he hoped to send the raft adrift, though why he should have stopped this side of her I don't understand."

“ He had hold of her hawser, sir,” I interrupted. “ It must be he counted on cutting it with the creese he had in his right hand — the same he stabbed Miss Hubbard with.”

“ Stabbed Miss Hubbard!” Uncle Amos cried as he ran toward the companionway, and in a twinkling Sam and I were the only persons, save three of the crew well forward, who remained on deck.

“ What were you doing while he was here?” I demanded of my friend as we ran side by side in the wake of those who were striving to get below in the shortest possible space of time.

“ Sleeping, I reckon. The first I knew was when you began to yell, and before I could scramble to my feet your uncle was walking over me.”

Great was the excitement and confusion when we gained the main saloon; it seemed as if all the passengers had gathered in front of Mr. Osborne’s door, and strive as we might, it was impossible to force a passage far enough to hear any conversation. Not until we had been there what seemed like a very long time did we get any information, and then it was by hearing one of the ladies who stood nearest the door say, in a tone of relief:

“ Thank heaven the knife went no nearer her face!”

“ Is she hurt much?” another asked.

“ Only a scratch, such as might have been made by the point of a pin; but what a narrow escape! I should think she would be nearly frightened to death even now when the danger has passed. How

## 232 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

stupid that boy must have been, not to give an alarm in time!"

My blood fairly boiled as I heard those words, and I would have given her a very sharp answer had it been possible to get near enough so that she might know who was speaking; but just then some one pushed me aside, and I lost sight of her amid the throng. You may be very certain, however, that I was careful to tell such of the passengers as could be persuaded to listen, exactly how it all came about, although the chances are that very many of them blamed me even then.

When Mr. Osborne came out of the cabin and went up the companionway, Sam and I followed him, and he was glad enough to hear my story.

"I gave the alarm the instant Tony showed himself; but until then I had no idea that I was looking at anything more than a mass of drift-stuff which had floated away from the shore," I said earnestly when the story was at an end. "I hope you don't think I would have delayed when she was in danger. Why, I didn't even know she was on this side of the ship till her head popped out of the port-hole."

"Of course I don't believe there was any delay on your part, lad. Why should you have such an idea?"

Then I told him what I had heard in the saloon, and he said soothingly, as he laid his hand kindly on my shoulder:

"If you allow words such as those to distress you, lad, you'll have a sorry journey through life. So long as a fellow knows he has done what he ought, it is folly to give any heed to that which others say,



for there are many in this world who use their tongues recklessly. We'll let Mr. Tony understand, before we leave this reef, that he is not to have everything his own way."

I failed to understand the meaning of his words just then, and asked concerning Miss Hubbard.

"She truly had a most marvellous escape. The scoundrel struck at random, and the point of his weapon barely touched the skin, without breaking it. The red mark of the knife can be seen; but Mrs. Currier will soon bring her around in good shape if some of those foolish people leave her alone."

"Do you think Tony came out to destroy the raft?" Sam asked, and Mr. Osborne replied emphatically:

"That isn't reasonable, for he knew there wouldn't be time enough before we could see him. I believe that, knowing when we were in the custom of knocking off work, he came out more in a spirit of bravado than anything else, to see what mischief he could work. Coming across the hawser, he may have had the idea of setting her adrift, but that is all."

"Why was he climbing up the side of the steamer, as Young Amos declares?"

"I'm only guessing, you know; but it seems reasonable to believe that, seeing the open port-hole, he decided to look into it, with the hope of being able to work some harm. I'm hoping to come across that fellow this night, in which case he'll never be able to play any more pranks."

Now I understood what he had meant a few seconds previous. He was thinking of going ashore as

## 234 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

had been agreed upon, and had no idea of allowing the wound in his neck to make any change in the plans.

"Am I to go with you?" I asked in a whisper, and he winked — probably because he couldn't nod his head — as he said:

"That's for your uncle to decide, lad. I'm hoping he'll agree to it, for there were no objections made when I named over those I would like to take with me."

"You were discussing the matter in the chart-room just before Tony showed up?"

"Yes, and it was hard work to convince the captain and your uncle that the little scratch on my neck wouldn't prevent me from giving a good account of myself; but they finally came to my way of thinking."

## CHAPTER XV

### A NEW MOVE

**T**HERE is little need for me to say that I was thoroughly excited by the prospect before me. It was only with the greatest difficulty I could remain many seconds in one place, and it is not to be wondered at that my mind was in a ferment.

The raft was finished and everything ready for the venturesome voyage, to which, however, I gave little heed. It only remained to put on board the provisions and treasure, which would not be done until the very last moment, and then would begin such an attempt as sailormen shrink from, save as a last resort. Very little was said by those who should have had a fairly good idea of such a cruise, concerning the danger and possible suffering which was like to be our portion, and I can well understand now that they held their peace lest the more timid be so frightened by thoughts of what might happen, as to absolutely refuse to take passage, even though the alternative was death.

The wreck would soon be left behind by us for better or worse, as fate might dictate; but before that happened I was to take part in the most thrill-

## 236 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

ing of all adventures, when, if we succeeded in reaching the island, there would be an opportunity of settling scores with those miserable villains who believed they yet held the whip-hand. All this was in mind, as I have said, and it is not surprising that I should have been excited and nervous in the highest degree; but amid it all I found time to wonder why it was that Sam Currier had no desire to be numbered among the party which Mr. Osborne was to lead ashore.

He heard the conversation between the leader and me, yet never a word had he spoken, although I had supposed he would be nearly wild with grief because of not being allowed to take part, while it seemed very much as if Mr. Osborne was really anxious that I should go with him. Therefore it was that when we two lads were alone, I said, thinking to console him for what I supposed would be a most bitter disappointment:

"If you had been with Mr. Osborne when we first tried our hand at stirring up the mutineers, he would most likely have thought it only right you should take part in the second expedition; but as —"

"You needn't tire yourself with too much talking, Young Amos, for I am well content to stay on the steamer. I have no desire to take the chances of being shot, when there is really no need of running my nose into so much danger, therefore you have little reason to explain why I'm not to be numbered with the party."

"But don't you think it will be a big thing to stand up against those villains till we have paid off

the old score?" I asked in surprise, and he replied with a laugh:

"The trouble is that you're not certain of standing up very long, and I'd rather not take the chances. In the first place, it won't be any child's play to get ashore, unless the mutineers kindly allow you to use the hawser, which is not probable, and what after you have landed? You'll go sneaking among the bushes fearing each instant lest a bullet crashes through your body, and when the fight comes, for I reckon Mr. Osborne is counting on having one because of what Tony tried to do to Miss Hubbard, your show of being hit is the same as any of the others. I can stay here and hear the whole story at my leisure, when you come back, if indeed you ever do, which won't be anywhere near such hard work, or as dangerous."

It disturbed me not a little because Sam spoke in such a manner regarding what I had allowed would be a very brave bit of work, for which, perhaps, the passengers would thank me with tears in their eyes because of having saved their lives; but on learning that my friend would remain aboard the wreck from choice, it began to seem as if I had been too hasty in showing myself so eager. In fact, I grew just a trifle faint-hearted as I thought over what the lad had said, and if it had been possible for me to back down without seeming to do so, I would have been very glad.

However, there was no help for it now. I had begged for the chance to go with Mr. Osborne; it was too late to retreat save after telling the truth,

## 238 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

and that I would not have done even had it been known beyond a peradventure that I should be wounded by the first shot fired.

I was thinking all this over, and at the same time fancying that Sam could see on my face the fear which was beginning to creep into my heart, when we were startled by hearing a cry from the men forward, and, looking up, I saw that which caused the cold chills of fear to creep down my spine.

From that point of the shore where we had landed while making the attack upon the mutineers, an odd-looking craft was being pushed off by the scoundrels, and it was some time before I could decide what it was.

Then, as it was paddled by three of the mutineers out to sea, all the while being kept beyond range of our weapons, I saw that it was neither more nor less than four or five huge logs, fastened together by ropes made of vines. It was not the nature of the rude vessel which had frightened me; but the fact that the villains had found a means of leaving the island, and I felt certain they were about to make an attack upon us, when we must be worsted because they had all the best of it both as to weapons and ammunition.

Sam and I watched eagerly, as did every person on deck, until the raft was worked around the wreck slowly, and then anchored just within range, in a line with the stern of the steamer. Once this had been done a screen of canvas was set up on the timbers, and the three who had pulled her out to anchorage were hidden from view.

It was not necessary any one should explain this latest manoeuvre on the part of the mutineers, for it was as plain as the nose on one's face. Knowing we were making ready to leave on a raft, they had stationed these men as sentinels to prevent us, and the fact of their having done so told how determined they were to gain possession of the gold.

"It begins to look as if they would succeed in bringing the captain to terms," Sam said in a low tone, and to my increased fear I heard the passengers, who had come on deck at the first alarm, discussing the possibility of forcing our commander to come to terms.

"They count on holding us here, if it can be done," Mr. Osborne said grimly as he came up to Sam and me. "It may be, however, that yonder raft will stay there a good bit longer than they count on."

"Have you such an idea in your mind as that we shall be able to work the villains any great harm?" I asked in surprise, and he replied with a merry laugh:

"Hardly that while we are so short of ammunition; but your uncle tells me the wind sometimes plays strange pranks in these seas, and I heard the captain say that the barometer was falling."

"In that case we'll come to grief while those fellows stand a good show of being able to reach the shore on their raft of logs," I said in alarm. "It doesn't seem possible this hulk can stand very much pounding."

"You're right, so far as that last goes, lad; but the wreck will hold together long enough for us to see yonder raft stove into kindling-wood, which will be no little satisfaction."

"I fail to see how you can figure that out," and I spoke petulantly, angry because he was seemingly so careless as to our fate. "What satisfaction can there be in watching other men drown, when we know our own lives will soon be lost?"

"You see it is like this, Young Amos," and I decided that I did not admire him particularly when he was so flippant. "We can't help ourselves in regard to the weather, and if matters hold as they are when a storm springs up, the only thing we'll have to give us heart is the knowledge that those who would have worked us harm must take the same dose dealt out to us."

Just then Miss Hubbard came up, after which, as a matter of course, Mr. Osborne no longer had any desire to converse with me, and when the two walked off a short distance that their words might not be overheard, Uncle Amos came up, when I asked of him in a whisper:

"Is it true that the barometer is falling, sir?"

"Who told you that?" he cried, as if angry that such information should have gotten among us, and when I explained how I learned, he replied cautiously low:

"It's true, lad, an' the indications are good for a storm within four an' twenty hours."

"In which case this wreck is likely to go to pieces, sir?"



“ I should say there was little doubt as to that, though I’m not a very good judge of how much these iron tanks can stand.”

“ And then what? ” I asked, striving to hold my voice steady.

“ Then it’s a case of trustin’ to chance, my boy, as sailormen are called on to do many a time. Don’t let your mind run many hours ahead of the present, for no good can come of it.”

Then he moved away as if he had no inclination to answer useless questions as to the ill-fortune which might befall us under this or that condition of affairs, and when another half-hour had passed our preparations for defence were as nearly completed as was within our power.

“ Now come with me,” Mr. Osborne said in a whisper. “ I don’t care to let Miss Hubbard have any part in this discussion, and there’s likely to be quite a bit of tongue-wagging between the captain and me.”

“ You are going to make a try at getting ashore! ” I exclaimed as he led me aft where was Uncle Amos and Captain Bragg.

“ That’s exactly it, Young Amos, and failing in getting permission from those who hold command here, I’ll go alone, as Sampson did.”

I could make no reply, for the thought was in my mind of how foolish I had been to show myself eager to accompany him, and now I racked my brain in vain to find some reasonable excuse for remaining behind. The one hope I had was that Captain Bragg would refuse to let him go, in which case I promised

## 242 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

myself that I would do all I could to have him sent below, a prisoner with the other passengers.

"Well, captain, in view of the fact that we are beset from seaward as well as shoreward, and cannot take to the raft even if we would, I'm asking if the time hasn't come for me to make my venture ashore?" Mr. Osborne said quietly when we four stood somewhat apart from the others.

"You are in no condition to make a fight with those scoundrels, sir," the captain replied as if there was no need to continue the conversation; but the gentleman had made up his mind, and was not to be turned from the purpose.

"Of that I should be a better judge than you, sir," he said stiffly, "and I submit that there is now left us only this one course, unless we are minded to make no further effort to save our lives. I am as fit for the enterprise as before being wounded, save, perhaps, for a disagreeable stiffness of the neck."

"But how would it be possible for you to get on the island?" the captain asked impatiently. "There can be no question but that those villains are guarding the shore-end of the hawser, and the sentinels on the raft are not likely to be asleep."

"The night is dark, sir, and we need not count on what may be seen from the raft, for you can hardly make her out with the glasses. By warping our craft well forward, say more than half her length ahead of the steamer's bow, we should be able to make a quick trip of it. I have been studying all the details, sir, and, with your permission, can accomplish so much of our purpose as to gain a footing on the

island without the knowledge of the mutineers."

"You perplex me, Mr. Osborne. I have no right to give consent to any such dangerous enterprise, and yet I know full well that some desperate chances must be taken if we would come out of this muddle. Why not wait until to-morrow night, with the chance that somethin' may turn in our favour before then?"

"Because, as I figure it, the odds will be greater against us. You admit that we have every reason to expect a change of weather shortly, and who shall say that it would be possible to make the land, even though there were no enemies to oppose us, by this time to-morrow night?"

I could see that the captain was not going to make any very strong fight against the venture, and the cold chill of fear began to creep up and down my spine until my teeth were chattering.

All this time Uncle Amos had not spoken, and now he took part in the conversation by saying:

"If you are agreed, Bragg, that Osborne shall try his hand at whippin' the villains, it strikes me that now, if ever, is the time for him to set about it. In case he can get ashore without their knowin' of his movements, then I'm of the mind that the plan will work. I'll even ship under his command, believin' we're bound to attempt what may seem impossible on the chance that good will come of it. By to-morrow mornin' you'll have the liveliest kind of a mutiny in the cabin, an' the odds are even that your crew will take a hand against us, for the passengers

## 244 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

are beginnin' to demand that you give up the gold as the price of our bein' able to go ashore."

As might have been expected, this silenced the captain, for he knew that all my uncle had suggested was among the probabilities, and instead of continuing the discussion, he asked:

"What can I do to help you, Mr. Osborne?"

I was committed to the enterprise, now that Uncle Amos had declared his willingness to go, and even though I had known death awaited me between the steamer and the shore, I would have held my peace, rather than confess myself a coward.

"I will attend to the enterprise, with Mr. Stubbs's assistance," Mr. Osborne said. "You already know that I would like to have with me the chief engineer, the first officer, this lad," and he laid his hand on my shoulder, "together with four of the sailors whom I have already pointed out."

"Very well, sir; I will gather up all the weapons and ammunition which we dare to spare, an' may the good Lord deal mercifully by you, rememberin' that it is in behalf of others you are risking your life."

The captain had no more than ceased speaking when from out the darkness came Sam Currier, who slipped his hand into mine as he said:

"It's easy to guess what Mr. Osborne is trying to keep such a secret, and I've come asking permission to make one of the party which is to go ashore."

"You, Sam?" I cried in astonishment. "I thought it suited you better to stay on the wreck?"

"So it did, Young Amos, when there were plenty to take part in the venture; but now that we have

grumblers — perhaps more mutineers — among us, I'm bound to do my share."

"Don't go if you had rather stay behind, lad," Mr. Osborne said as he laid his hand on Sam's shoulder. "I'm willing to admit that I'd like to have you with me, because youngsters can care for themselves in the water better than older hands, like Captain Grout, whom I believe could be of more service aboard."

"Now that matters are as they've turned, I'd rather go," Sam replied, and I could have hugged the dear lad because of the words. Although such an idea was veriest folly, it seemed as if there would be a shade less danger for me, if Sam was of the party, and I gripped him by the hand that he might know how delighted I was.

"I'll take the lad, and leave you one of the sailors, Captain Bragg," Mr. Osborne said curtly, and then he turned away, being lost to view almost immediately, so intense was the blackness of the night.

As he disappeared I heard Miss Hubbard calling him softly by name, and Sam whispered to me:

"That young woman is no one's fool. She knew as well as you did why Mr. Osborne had button-holed the captain and your Uncle Amos, and now I reckon there'll be something very private said."

"She'll try to prevent him from going!" I exclaimed, and Sam laughed as he replied:

"That's where you're making a big mistake, Young Amos. She told me what you were probably talking about, and believes it is the one thing that should be done."

## 246 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

It began to look as if I was the only coward on deck, and I thanked my lucky stars that I had not had an opportunity to back down.

I was standing holding Sam's hand in mine when one of the sailors amidship struck a match against the woodwork of the deck-house, that he might light his pipe, and the tiny blaze had no more than flared up than we heard the report of a rifle from the shore, but the bullet must have gone wild, for nothing betokened its passage, although we stood directly in range.

"Ahoy there forward! Anybody hurt?" Captain Bragg cried sharply, and the man who had provoked the shot replied with a laugh:

"All sound here, sir, though I hardly thought the beggars were keepin' so bright a lookout!"

"That shows how much of a chance we have for getting ashore without their knowledge!" I exclaimed, and Sam said softly:

"It's for us to take chances with the rest, Young Amos. If we can't play the part of men now, we'll never be able to do so, and Miss Hubbard has brought me to believe that the lives of all hands depend upon what we may be able to do this night."

Captain Bragg had set about moving the raft as Mr. Osborne suggested, and Sam and I ran over to the starboard rail in order that we might lend a hand; but Uncle Amos pushed us aside gently, as he said in a whisper:

"Leave this kind of work for us who are to stay behind. You'll be needin' all your strength before

mornin', an' it would be worse than folly to spend it on a job like this."

His thoughtful care came near bringing the tears to my eyes, and I stepped back silently into the gloom just as an uproar came from the cabin, in so violent a fashion that I made certain those passengers who felt mutinously inclined were bent on taking possession of the ship, therefore hurried to tell the captain, as if fancying he could not hear what must have sounded distinctly in the ears of the sentinels ashore.

Captain Bragg appeared to think the time had come when his passengers must be made to understand that he would have matters run according to his own ideas, even though greater force than had already been used became necessary, and to this end he stepped close to the companionway doors, as he said sufficiently loud for those on the stairs to hear:

"It is absolutely necessary that we should have clear decks for that which is bein' done to the benefit of all. If you insist on comin' on deck, thereby givin' the enemy a fairly good idea of what we are about, I solemnly promise that I will empty my revolver through the panels of this door, believin' the death of some is necessary for the safety of the others."

The uproar ceased as suddenly as it had begun, and then the captain went back to his work, while Sam and I stood near the port rail until Miss Hubbard came suddenly from out of the gloom, as if she had been hunting for us.

I fancied it was in her mind to whisper something,

when she stepped close to me, and was surprised beyond the power of speaking when she clasped my face with both her hands, and kissed me as lovingly as mother might have done. Then she gave Sam the same attention, afterward gliding back into the darkness, leaving us lads standing there like stupid, not knowing what to say.

It was Sam who first recovered from his surprise, and he whispered in my ear:

"If she paid Mr. Osborne the same compliment, he can't be kept aboard this wreck though every one of the mutineers stands on the shore ready to receive him."

"I'm hoping she did," I replied, "not because there's any need of stimulating his courage; but to repay him for all he has done since the steamer piled herself up on this reef. There has been many a time when his words or example have helped me to behave decently, rather than as those cowards in the saloon are doing."

"She's a mighty nice woman," Sam said emphatically, and then we went forward to see what had been done with the raft.

The clumsy craft had been warped ahead until it was as if one end of her was forward of our splintered bow, in a line with the hawser, and it really seemed as if we might be able to swim ashore the remaining distance, now the tide was so high that the waters no longer foamed and boiled over the rocks because of their depth.



## CHAPTER XVI

### ON THE OFFENSIVE

**M**R. STUBBS aided in the preparations by giving to each person who was to act on the offensive, strips torn from the bed sheets, freshly oiled, that the weapons and ammunition might be kept dry while we were in the water, as it was likely we would be for some time, and while he was distributing these Captain Bragg and Uncle Amos ventured out on the raft at risk of being fired at by the mutineers, busying themselves with some labour, the nature of which I could not make out.

Mr. Thompson called aft those sailors whom Mr. Osborne had selected to accompany us, and was giving them certain instructions in a low tone, while Mr. Jenkins was overhauling a quantity of heaving-line, although for what purpose neither Sam nor I could determine.

We two lads were standing idly amidships, not knowing how we could aid in the work of preparation, when Uncle Amos and Captain Bragg came aboard from the raft, their arms filled with life-preservers which had been taken from the double flooring of the craft, and I asked my uncle what he intended to do with them.

“ Joe Bragg an’ I believe you can get ashore with

less work if each puts on one of these cork jackets. Then, with the line Jenkins is overhauling, you will tie yourselves together so that those who are weakest can be helped by the others. You'll slip into the water from the shore-end of the raft, an' swim for it."

Had my opinion been asked, I would have favoured making the attempt as in the first case, remembering the sharks we had then seen; but no one gave me an opportunity to air my views, and because Miss Hubbard came out of the gloom, taking a station near us lads as she watched the labour, I did not feel at liberty to make any protest, lest she should suspect that my courage was oozing away.

Mr. Osborne came toward us very shortly afterward, and we four stood silent and motionless while the others made ready for the venture, which was more likely to be our undoing than a success.

Not above half an hour had thus been spent, and during that time we had not heard so much as a whisper from those who were fastened below in order that we might make ready to do all that was possible toward saving their lives without interruption from them. Then Uncle Amos came up as Captain Bragg went on board the raft once more, and asked in a whisper:

"Has Mr. Thompson distributed the weapons?"

I was about to make reply when the first officer appeared, and to each of us he gave two revolvers and perhaps thirty cartridges.

"We are taking all the weapons save two," he said while we were carefully wrapping the revolvers in the oiled cloth, "an' if it so be we fail to come

back, those cowards in the saloon will have everything their own way."

"It won't be quite as bad as that," Uncle Amos said grimly, "for at the first show the scoundrels are gettin' the best of you, Mrs. Currier an' Miss Hubbard will pitch the treasure overboard; we're not minded that they shall be able to use the gold in makin' terms."

"Which shows that those who remain behind, as well as we who go, are staking all on the venture," Mr. Osborne said as he took Miss Hubbard's hand in his, and I could not repress a shudder of fear as involuntarily I pictured the possibilities of the future.

We were indeed risking everything, and if we failed to get the best of the villains ashore it would be well that we were killed to the last person, for otherwise would we be wholly in the power of those who were under the command of Enoch Files and Mr. Sampson.

When these few preparations were completed we made haste, for no good could come of standing there thinking about what might happen to us in case we succeeded in gaining the island, and it was as if we were feverishly eager to be facing the more imminent danger. I had supposed Miss Hubbard would say something by way of farewell as we dropped softly over the rail to the raft; but she spoke never a word, perhaps because she did not dare trust herself.

Mr. Thompson, with the sailors, led the way, and then Mr. Osborne swung himself over as he whispered:

"It is more than likely you will not hear anything

from us until day has dawned, for there is no good reason why we should hurry matters when a mistake might cost us dearly," and I fancied I detected a choking sob as I brushed by the young woman on my way over the rail.

Certain it is I should have broken down entirely had she spoken tenderly, for my heart was very near my mouth, and I hurried forward to where Captain Bragg awaited us, lest some one suspect how nearly my courage had deserted me.

Captain Bragg was tying the sailors together when I came up, leaving no more than four feet of slack rope between each one, and we ranged ourselves in line that he might serve us in the same fashion. I had Sam on one side and Mr. Osborne on the other; but, because of the darkness, I could have no idea as to the order in which the others were made fast.

All this while we were straining our ears to catch the first token which might tell that the mutineers had discovered our purpose; but nothing was heard save the pounding of the surf upon the shore.

"You must all slip over the side of the raft at the same minute, else are you like to foul the line," Uncle Amos whispered, and then we advanced in a row until within a few inches of the edge.

"Sit down an' slip into the water feet first," Captain Bragg said in a low tone, and as we did so I fancied it was possible to hear Uncle Amos mutter:

"God be with you, lads, an' bring you back sound!"

Then we were over the side, each striking out cautiously, but forced to use great care lest we hit each other with our arms.

I believe it was Mr. Thompson who led the way, and instead of going directly for the shore, as I had counted would be the plan, he swam to the left, at right angles with the position of the ship, as if intending to come upon that side opposite where we had previously landed.

There must have been some strong swimmers among the party, for I was literally pulled through the water with but little effort on my part, and Sam afterward told me that it was not necessary for him to take a single stroke, save when we had come to a standstill in order to reconnoitre as much as might be possible in the darkness, when movement was necessary in order to keep our heads above the surface.

I will not undertake to say how long or how far we swam; but it appeared to me as if this second passage was made much more quickly than the first, and I was surprised when I found that the leaders had gained a foothold upon the rocks.

By making a landing on the western side we were under the lee of the island, and thus it was that the surf was by no means as boisterous as we had first found it. Then again, by being tied thus together, we made better headway against the backward tug of the sea while scrambling ashore, and I dare venture to say that no more than half an hour elapsed from the time we slipped into the water from the raft before all the party were safely landed, crouching

amid the foliage to unwrap the revolvers, which had been tied around our necks.

It seemed surprising that we had been able to land without opposition, when we had good reasons for believing the mutineers were keeping sharp watch; but never the lightest sound had been heard from the shore during our passage, and there could be no question but that we had thus far come in secret. If our friends on the *Queen* could only have known with what ease we had accomplished the first portion of the undertaking!

Now it was that Mr. Osborne really took command, and when we had unfastened the ropes, taking off the life-preservers, he motioned for us to remain where we were, after which he disappeared amid the foliage. I knew, as a matter of course, that he had gone to learn what he might concerning the whereabouts of the mutineers, and once more the cold chills chased each other down my spine, for it was not impossible that, by making a false move, we might suddenly find ourselves in a death struggle amid the underbrush. Then my fears painted for me most disagreeable pictures, until I almost came to believe the scoundrels were aware of our purpose from the first, and had given us every show that they might fall upon us later with the certainty of overcoming all hands in short order.

The ordinary noises of the night sounded to my ears like distant thunder, and the beating of my own heart was as the roll of a drum, until I held my breath from time to time in the effort to still it. It is probable that I was not the only one who shivered

with fear, for being thus forced to remain inactive when, perhaps, our enemies might be crouching close around us, was most wearing upon a fellow's nerves, and I would have welcomed the fiercest kind of a fight in order to be relieved from the terrible suspense.

Sam and I held each other's hand, for, next to being able to speak, this contact was cheering, and at brief intervals Mr. Thompson would touch us on the head or shoulders, as if to say that we ought not be anxious as to the result after having gained the island with far less difficulty than had been anticipated.

When it seemed as if Mr. Osborne had been gone a full hour, the first officer leaned over until his lips were close to my ear, and whispered:

"This long silence is favourable, lad. Osborne is learnin' all it may be necessary for us to know, and because of the absence of any noise, we know he is havin' everything his own way. We shall be in condition to strike a heavy blow before long."

Then we remained silent, our ears strained and every nerve strung to its utmost tension, until I fancied another hour had passed, when suddenly a gentle movement of the bushes in front of me told that Mr. Osborne was returning. It was almost as if he had come back to us from the grave, when the brave fellow was crouching beside us once more, pressing Sam's hand and mine as if in triumph.

"What news?" Mr. Thompson whispered impatiently, after waiting in vain many seconds for our leader to speak.

## 256 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

"We are within two hundred yards, or less, of the sentinel on the point, having worked considerably to the north while coming through the surf," he said at length. "I should judge that the whole gang were awake, gathered around a small fire in front of a camp built of brushwood, hardly more than fifty yards straight back from where the hawser is made fast. I reckon they are so elated by getting sentinels out on the raft that it is impossible for them to sleep."

"Have you made any plans?" Mr. Thompson asked, fingering his revolver as if longing to begin the battle which we knew only too well must take place before many hours had passed.

"Nothing more than that it seems best for us to creep up as near the fellows as may be done without risk of giving them warning. The time to strike will be just before daybreak, when some of them are likely to be asleep. Then we will act as the chance presents itself."

"Shall we move now?" and Mr. Thompson laid his hand on each of the sailors in turn that they might know we were to make a change of position.

"As well now as later. Follow close behind me, the lads first, and you in the rear."

Having said this Mr. Osborne began the advance on his hands and knees, and I followed next, with Sam so close that it would have been impossible to go backward without overrunning him.

We did not progress more than twelve inches each moment; but every foot in distance brought us just so much nearer the enemy, and we were moving as



silently as shadows, therefore did it seem to me our advantage was increasing.

I had almost begun to believe the entire night had been spent in thus crawling like snakes, when Mr. Osborne halted, parting the bushes in front of him, and I could see in the distance the faint glow of a fire, which had evidently been built in order that the smoke might serve to drive away flies and mosquitoes, rather than because the heat was needed.

Advancing on our hands and knees as we had been, amid the foliage where the lightest breath of air was cut off from us, we suffered greatly from the heat; but more cruelly from the winged pests which we could only brush silently away now and then, instead of making a regular attack upon them. We were bathed in perspiration, and I had been bitten so many times by the mosquitoes, which were nearly as large as common flies, that it seemed certain all the exposed portions of my body were swollen and bleeding.

“What time is it?” I asked in a whisper when Mr. Osborne turned his head toward me, and he replied cautiously:

“It can't be much past midnight, but, as you know, the sun rises early, and we haven't such a bitterly long time to wait.”

Then it was that he told me to pass the word for Mr. Thompson to come up, and when the first officer was by the side of our leader I heard the plan of battle mapped out.

“I believe yonder is the hut where the cartridges are stored,” Mr. Osborne whispered. “I

went up in a line with what appears to be a path, and came back, searching closely, but that is the only camp I have seen. The spring, as I know, is in that direction," and Mr. Osborne pointed toward the south.

"Well?" Mr. Thompson asked impatiently, as if the details were of no importance in his mind, eager as he was to know how the first real blow was to be struck.

"We cannot say how we will open the game until after seeing where the men are situated when the time comes for us to act; but this is certain, that having once opened fire it is our business to rush in on that hut, for the capture of their ammunition is absolutely necessary to the success of the plan, and we must be prepared to take big risks in order to accomplish the purpose."

"I'll slip back and give the word to all hands, an' then, perhaps, it will be as well to bring the others up until we are in line ready for work."

Mr. Osborne gave assent to this, and another half-hour was spent in thus changing position, after which there was nothing that could be done save await with whatsoever of patience we might muster until the sun should give the signal for the struggle.

Sam and I crouched side by side, not more than four paces distant from the leader, and but for the sense of companionship which was mine as I pressed close against the lad, it would have been well-nigh impossible for me to remain motionless.

Never have I known the moments to pass more slowly than at that time. I kept my eyes fixed upon

so much of the sky as could be seen through the foliage, flattering myself an hundred times that it was possible to see a gray tinge in the sky long before the advance rays of the sun had given token of its coming. And then it was, after all that long, dreary time of waiting, as if the morning dawned suddenly, giving but little warning before the new day was already come.

There is little need to say that our eyes were fixed upon the point where we had seen the faint glow of a fire, but which had been extinguished an hour or more before daylight, and after a time it was possible to make out the forms of five men stretched on the ground directly in front of a rude hut built of brush. If Mr. Osborne was in the right when he declared that the ammunition had been stored in this place, then were these the guards whom we must overcome before it would be possible to seize upon the cartridges.

Not until after having taken in all the details of the scene did I glance toward Mr. Osborne, and the expression on his face was something to frighten one. He was crouching on his feet, as if ready to spring, a revolver in either hand, and a stranger would have said it was only by the greatest effort that he prevented himself from leaping upon those who would kill us if we did not strike the first blow with sufficient force to cripple them.

“Pass the word that we are to rush out and fire when I hold up my hand,” he whispered to me. “Give no heed to any save those we see before us, and move quickly!”

I obeyed; but it was several minutes before the word could be repeated to each one, and I was trembling with anxiety lest the men, awakening before we were ready, should so change position that we would be forced to work at a disadvantage.

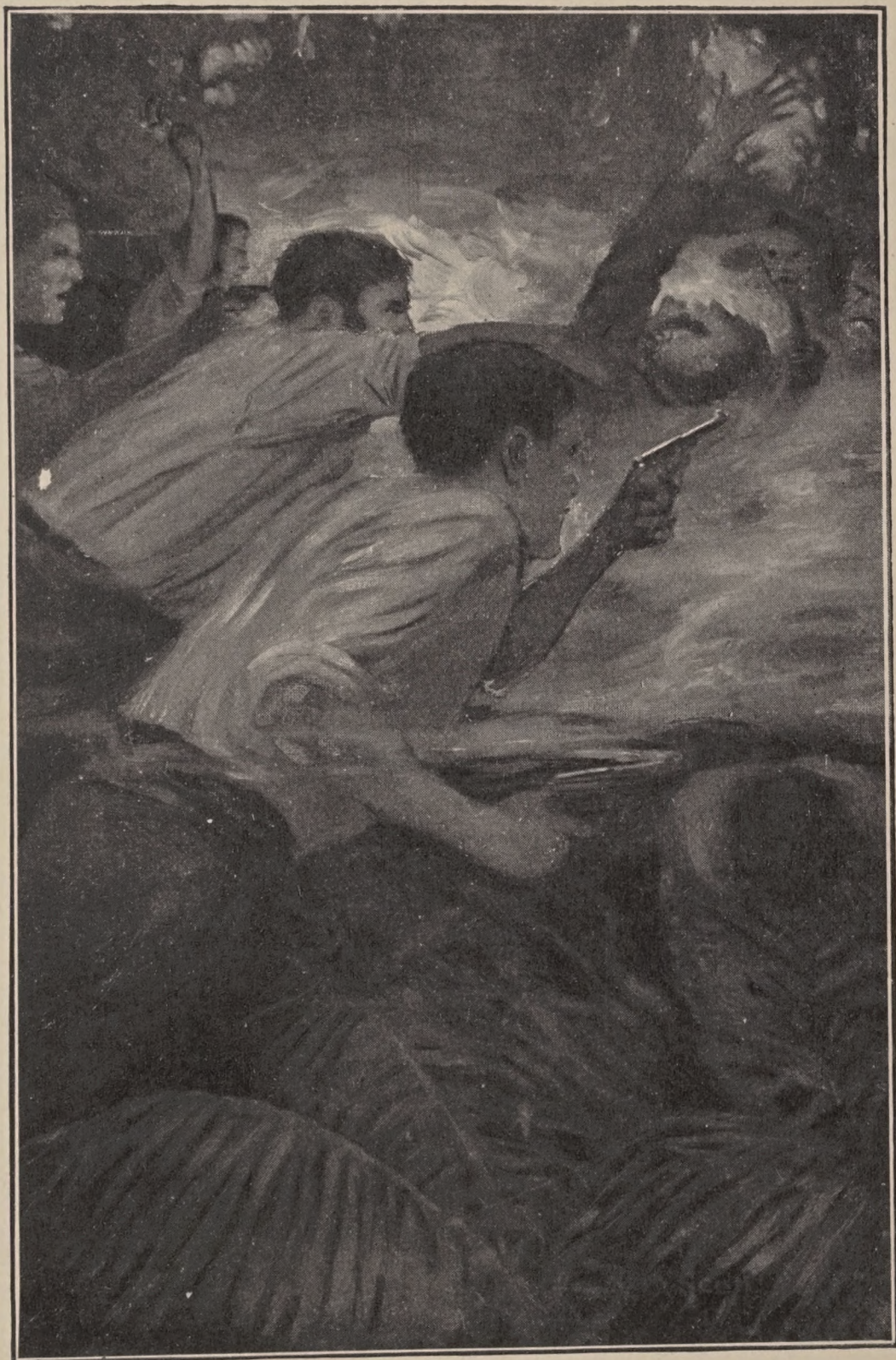
We moved like ghosts, and even though I was so frightened that it was difficult to keep my jaws closed, I took no little pride in the fact that thus far we had made no mistake, either by too much noise, or an unwise movement.

Then it was that every man stood ready, waiting for the signal, and Mr. Osborne did not keep us long in suspense.

His hand was raised high above his head for a second, and then lowered as he began discharging one of his weapons as rapidly as it was possible to take aim while he ran swiftly forward.

It was necessary I keep ever in mind the fact that those fellows would kill us if we did not best them, else I could not have brought myself to shoot deliberately at a human being thus taken at a disadvantage.

Now as to what took place during four or five minutes after Mr. Osborne had given the signal, I have no very clear idea. When two or three volleys had been fired the air was filled with shrieks and yells that appeared to be answered from every point of the compass, and I ran as if in a dream, conscious only that I must shoot at every person in front of me. I also realized that our leader might have distanced us all, had he been so disposed, and the fact that he hung back in order that we should advance



"I RAN AS IF IN A DREAM."



in a line, was sufficient to hasten my steps lest I delay my companions.

We went forward, two men falling before the shower of bullets, and a third knocked senseless by a blow from the butt of Mr. Osborne's revolver, and then, I cannot exactly say how, we found ourselves among the ruins of the hut, for there had not been time to enter through the small aperture which served as a door.

"Gather up the rifles from those who have fallen," Mr. Osborne cried as he began hurriedly turning over the brush which had formed the hut, so it might be learned whether we had come upon the cartridges, and that we had not killed either of the mutineers outright could be seen as the sailors, who sprang to obey the command, became engaged in a hand-to-hand struggle with the wounded scoundrels, who were making ready to shoot at us.

Before the weapons could be wrested from the fellows four or five of their comrades were upon us, and we found it necessary to take shelter behind the trees, else would we have been speedily overcome, for at such range their weapons were far more effective than ours.

However, we found ourselves in possession of three rifles, the magazines of which were filled, and one of these Mr. Osborne took, giving the second to Mr. Thompson, thereby making the odds more nearly equal.

Now it was that I became conscious of all that was going on, having come out of the fever of fear and anger which beset me as we rushed forward to open

## 262 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

the battle, and, strangely enough, I had forgotten my cowardice, having become as eager as our leader to cut down the villains who thirsted for our blood.

And indeed it was necessary each of us fight to the utmost, for now that we had showed ourselves, one side or the other must win a decisive victory, else had we done those on the wreck more harm than good by making the venture.

There were plenty of large trees near the ruins of the hut, behind which we could take shelter, and no sooner were we thus under cover than those who came running up at the first alarm disappeared among the foliage, not having sufficient courage to stand their ground before our fire.

Now that we had leisure in which to get a better understanding of the situation, and even though I could think of little else save that burning desire to work the greatest amount of injury upon the scoundrels, I came to realize that there had been a decided change in the weather since I had had opportunity of seeing the sky clearly. The roar of the surf could be heard unusually loud; the wind screamed among the tree-tops as if giving warning that it was momentarily gathering strength, and the sea-birds were circling round and round high in the air, a sailor's sign of coming storm.

"There isn't much time to be wasted," I heard our leader say sharply as he peered here and there for a target. "The poor old *Queen* won't hold together very long if the wind rises," and Mr. Thompson replied as he discharged his rifle into a



thick bush which was swaying suspiciously to and fro:

“ The raft won't stay long at her moorin's abaft the wreck, unless the mutineers are bloomin' idiots! ”

“ We can't afford to loiter here,” and it was as if Mr. Osborne gave words to his thoughts, instead of speaking for the benefit of any one in particular. “ We must end this with a rush! ”

“ It isn't possible to do anything of the kind when there's nothin' to be rushed,” Mr. Thompson replied sharply. “ It would be much the same as suicide to leave the shelter of these trees just now.”

“ True for you, and yet we must make a break of some kind. Let all hands keep their eyes open wide while I have a search for the cartridges,” and Mr. Osborne would have stepped boldly out into the open, but that Mr. Thompson pulled him back.

“ We can't afford such risks as that. I'll take one of the men an' work around the thicket to drive those scoundrels out, an' then you may get a chance to hunt for the ammunition.”

Without waiting to learn if the proposition was agreeable to his leader, the first officer disappeared among the shrubbery, and before either of us who were left behind had seen a target, the report of a rifle, apparently from some point in front of us, told that the brave fellow had found a foe.

Then it was, as the mutineers retreated from what must have seemed to them like a body of reinforcements, we had good reason to discharge our weapons often, and more than once did we have proof that our bullets had found their billets.

## 264 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

"Now's your time, Mr. Osborne!" the first officer shouted. "They have gone toward the spring, an' I'm allowin' you can show yourself a bit!"

When Mr. Osborne sprang to take advantage of this opportunity, both Sam and I followed, all three of us tearing away the ruins of the hut until having come to that which the mutineers had apparently guarded. Out of all the store of ammunition brought away from the wreck by Tony, less than half a wooden box of cartridges remained partially buried in the ground.

"Fill your pockets, lads. This is what we came for, and we must not leave a single one behind!"

There were, perhaps, two hundred cartridges there, and when we had divided them among the three, all were burdened. We also found four rifles, and on beating a retreat into the thicket once more, as the reports of Mr. Thompson's weapon told that he had found the enemy, or they him, we increased the effectiveness of the force very materially by giving the prizes to the sailors.

The first officer had evidently contrived to keep us in view while driving the mutineers, for no sooner had we thus despoiled the enemy than he came up, saying hurriedly, but in a cautiously low tone:

"The villains have made a break for the spring, as if thinkin' we counted on takin' it away with us. Now seems to be the time when we may work our way up to the point where we shall be able to give an account of ourselves to Captain Bragg, after we've cleared the woods of scoundrels. If we can hold that place, it will be possible for our people to come

ashore whenever it appears dangerous for them to stay on the wreck."

"You're in the right, Thompson, and I am a fool for not having thought of it before. Providing we can hold our own near the hawser, as we should be able to do, the storm won't work us much harm."

Having thus spoken Mr. Osborne led the way toward the north, on a line with the path which had already been well worn by the mutineers as they went to and fro to spy upon the steamer. We were taking no chances, however, but jumped from one big tree to another, lest some of the enemy should be lurking near at hand, and were almost arrived at the desired spot when from out a thick clump of bushes directly in front of us came a bullet, ploughing its way across the leader's cheek sufficiently deep to bring the blood profusely, causing me to believe he must be wounded severely.

Mr. Thompson gave no heed to the possible results of the shot, but led a couple of the men around the thicket, and in a twinkling we saw Mr. Sampson, his face yet bandaged to such an extent that he must have suffered from being so muffled up, scurry from one bush to another as he beat a retreat toward the spring.

I believe we sent no less than five bullets after him, but without checking his flight, and when he disappeared I asked anxiously of Mr. Osborne:

"Are you hurt very much, sir?"

"Nothing worth talking about," he replied while trying to tie a handkerchief around his face. "It has let out plenty of blood, which is likely to inter-

## 266 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

fere with my sighting a rifle; but isn't in any degree serious. Did you get a glimpse of the fellow Thompson drove out from his hiding-place? "

" It was Mr. Sampson, and not one of us hit him! " Sam cried angrily. " That scoundrel must surely have been born to be hanged, for lead don't seem to do him any harm! "

" We'll smoke him out before many hours have passed," Mr. Osborne replied in a tone of conviction, as, having bandaged the wound after a very poor fashion, he pressed on toward the reef, ordering Sam and me to follow close in the rear. " What seems to be of most importance just now is to clear the point of the enemy so we can open up communication with the steamer."

" I'll answer for it every blessed one of 'em is south of us, so if you're minded to push on and hail the steamer, we'll see to it that nobody interferes with you," Mr. Thompson cried cheerily as he came in view.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE RESCUE

**M**R. OSBORNE was a good leader, brave almost to rashness, as he had shown himself to be on every occasion when courage was needed; but he did not disdain to take all precautions while trying to effect his purpose. Instead of going directly to the point, taking Mr. Thompson's word that all the mutineers were in the neighbourhood of the spring, he made the advance in the most cautious fashion, followed by Sam and me, for the first officer had turned about, forming his men in a wide line, that there might be no possibility of the enemy creeping up toward the hawser secretly.

It did not seem possible that we had virtually won the battle at such slight cost, for it amounted to much the same as a victory now we had plenty of rifles and all the spare ammunition, in addition to a very decided advantage in way of position. Yet that we had the mutineers where we could handle them without taking too many dangerous chances, was shown when we arrived at the shore-end of the hawser without having seen one of them.

"Thompson is right about their all being to the south of us," Mr. Osborne said in a tone of satisfaction as he halted just within the screen of bushes

which hid from our view the wreck, and adjusted the rude bandages. "This hasn't been a bad job, if I'm any judge of such matters, and it only serves to show that we might have been out of our hobble before now, if Captain Bragg hadn't been so cautious."

"It wasn't reasonable to suppose everything would work our way," I said with a laugh which had in it more of mental relief than mirth, for now that the keenest of the dangers had been met and overcome, I was really light-hearted. "Perhaps we came just in the nick of time to win success, and at an earlier or a later day might have been whipped out of our boots."

"Well, we won't carry our speculations quite so far as to figure how they might have beaten us," Mr. Osborne replied cheerily, still working at the bandages. "It's enough for us that we can bring the passengers ashore in safety at any moment now, and the opportunity hasn't been brought about any too soon. I'm thinking that such a storm is brewing as will speedily put an end to the *Ocean Queen*, and that blessed raft must be paddled ashore mighty soon if the mutineer sentinels count on saving their lives."

Although we could see only tiny patches of the cloud-covered sky through the foliage, it was possible to hear the ominous howling of the wind, and the roar of the surf, which sounded much louder than at any time since the monsoon passed away. By these tokens it was possible to say, with reasonable certainty, that within a few hours at the most a full gale would be raging.

I could picture to myself the scene in the saloon

of the wreck, particularly if the passengers were yet forced to remain below deck, and it did not require any great stretch of the imagination to paint in one's mind the grumblers as they cried out against the captain, or howled inside the smoking-room threats as to what should be done when they arrived at Manila. I could also fancy how great must be the anxiety of Sam's mother and Miss Hubbard, as they listened to the reports of our guns, and then were well-nigh overwhelmed with despair when the sounds of battle subsided, fearing lest we had been worsted.

It was this last mental picture which aroused my impatience because we were loitering when it was possible to set at rest all their anxiety, and fill every heart with joy and thanksgiving, therefore I asked petulantly of Mr. Osborne:

“ Why don't we go out and hail the wreck? It is cruel to keep those people in such suspense as must be theirs! ”

“ True for you, lad; but it seems best that I get these bandages a bit more shipshape, else they'll believe I'm wounded worse than was Sampson. ”

“ I'll show myself while you're getting ready to look pretty, ” Sam cried as he started up, and Mr. Osborne checked him by saying sharply:

“ Have a care, lad! It isn't safe to show ourselves until they know we are here, otherwise at the first sight of a human being those on the wreck are more than likely to shoot, for you may be certain every one of them is burning with the desire to put lead into a mutineer. ”

Then, while yet arranging the blood-stained

clothes, Mr. Osborne shouted, at the same time taking remarkably good care to keep out of sight:

" Ahoy on the steamer! Ahoy! "

" Well, what is it now? " came the voice of Captain Bragg, and it was evident that he did not intend to spend very much breath in a parley, if so be the mutineers were eager to hold one.

" Don't shoot! " Mr. Osborne cried. " We've got considerably the best of the villains, and hold this end of the island! "

Then the three of us stepped out from amid the foliage, and we shall probably never again hear such a shout of mingled joy and relief as went up from the deck of the steamer. All the passengers were gathered nearabout the forward screens, and when Mr. Osborne had announced his good tidings, they ran aft to some point where it would be possible to have a full view of us, while not a few, among whom were Sam's mother and Miss Hubbard, overhung the rail amidships, shouting, waving whatever chanced to be in their hands, and more than one crying violently.

It was as if those poor people had experienced so much of horror during the past seven or eight days, that now they were stricken with a panic of joy, as they previously had been under the influence of fear. They ran to and fro; many of them knelt on the deck to give thanks to God that He had permitted us to overcome an enemy which had apparently been invincible; others went about shaking each other violently by the hands; some were jumping up and down vigorously, and many stood like statues, feasting their eyes upon us.



It stirred a fellow's blood as he saw the people thus excited because of what had been done in their behalf, and not for all the treasure aboard the wreck would I have exchanged places with any of those who remained on the steamer, for it was as if I had had a large share in the saving of those who were gazing so greedily at us.

Not until two or three minutes had passed was it possible for Captain Bragg to make himself heard, so great was the uproar, and I question if the excited people could have controlled themselves then, had they not heard the reports of weapons from near-about the centre of the island.

"It is Mr. Thompson and Mr. Stubbs driving the mutineers further south!" Mr. Osborne shouted, seeing, as did I, the look of fear which suddenly returned to the faces of those on the wreck. "You need have no anxiety as to the result, for now we are armed with rifles, and have all the spare ammunition!"

Then the people fell to shouting again, and would have continued no one knows how long, had not Captain Bragg and Uncle Amos threatened, or coaxed, them into comparative silence, after which the master of the steamer cried:

"Are you hurt much, Mr. Osborne?"

Almost at the same instant I heard the scream of a woman, and believed that Miss Hubbard was but then aware we had not come off unharmed.

"It isn't as bad as the wound on my neck; simply a deep scratch which a few strips of adhesive plaster will put to rights," Mr. Osborne replied.

"Wouldn't it be a good idea, sir, for you to send a small party ashore? While we have the best of the mutineers thus far, they're not thoroughly whipped by any means, and we should be able to swing a line of men across this end of the island to prevent the possibility of their casting off or cutting the hawser."

"Ay, ay, sir; I'll see to that at once, and you had better come aboard to have your wound dressed," the captain cried, whereupon Mr. Osborne said in a tone which told that it would be useless to argue with him:

"I'm not needing any nursing, Captain Bragg, and I count on bearing a hand so long as there is a mutineer left at liberty on the island!"

"Very well, sir, it shall be as you say; for truly you have the right to say whatsoever you will, since it is you alone, under God, who has saved our lives this day!" and the captain waved his hand as if to call attention to the huge seas which were already smiting the stricken steamer with very nearly as much force as when she first went on the reef.

Then some one came from behind the screen to get into the sling, and Sam said gleefully as he grasped me by the arm:

"It's your uncle, Young Amos! He is coming to take command!"

"And most gladly will we yield it to him!" Mr. Osborne cried, as if thinking Sam had it in his mind to make sport of Uncle Amos. "We are needing him, I believe."

Then it was, while the sailors were hauling the old gentleman slowly across the hawser, that I, quite by

accident, glanced in the direction of the mutineers' raft. She was making heavy weather of it indeed, and one did not need to be a sailorman in order to understand that she could not remain at her moorings much longer. She was being tossed about by the wind and waves until it seemed positive her cable would be snapped like a strand of yarn, and each time the logs rose out of the hollows of the seas the water which poured from them told that the waves were making a clean sweep fore and aft.

I would have watched the rude craft longer, believing it must speedily go adrift; but before it had been possible to get more than one fair view of it, Captain Bragg called to Mr. Osborne:

"If you get the chance, I wish you would send Mr. Thompson on board to take charge of the ship while I go ashore. I'm not thinkin' I can make any better, or even as good, a showin' as you've made but I'm itchin' to have a finger in the pie, even though I do come in at the tail end of the game."

"We shall be glad to have you here, sir, for the work is far from being finished. I'm reckoning that the villains will fight like tigers when they're cornered — at least, those who are responsible for all this are certain to do so."

By this time Uncle Amos was on shore, and Mr. Osborne went up to meet him. He was hardly out of the sling before he gripped my hand so hard that I was like to have cried out with pain, but managed to muster a smile, knowing it was his way of giving thanks because we two were together once more.

The noise of the firing from that portion of the

island where we believed the mutineers to be had died away, and Mr. Osborne said in reply to a question from my uncle:

"I fancy it was nothing serious, sir. We had a tussle with Sampson, who had been separated from the others, and most likely Mr. Thompson stumbled upon him again."

Instead of setting off at once to rejoin our comrades, Uncle Amos insisted that we wait until three or four of the men could be sent ashore, and, therefore, we delayed ten minutes or more, at the end of which time the sailors, who were speedily armed with our revolvers, appeared eager to take a hand in the matter; but that Mr. Osborne mistrusted their honesty I understood, when he asked my uncle if it was his belief that the fellows could be trusted.

"They can so long as we seem to have the upper hands; but let the fight go against us, an' they'll need lookin' after, which is what I count on doin'. At the first wrong move I'll wipe out one or two, an' of that you can make no mistake."

Uncle Amos spoke the last words so loud that the men could not fail to hear him, he being minded to give them fair warning, and I saw the fellows look at each other in a way which was hardly to my fancy. However, it was not for me to borrow trouble after the wonderful success which had been ours; but I motioned Sam to fall back, when the party was led by Mr. Osborne through the underbrush, that we might be in the rear to make certain they did not try to harm the leaders.

We marched directly down the path which had

been worn by the feet of the mutineers, without seeing any one till we were come to the spring, and there stood Mr. Thompson and two men refilling the magazines of their rifles.

“Where is Mr. Stubbs?” Uncle Amos asked, and the first officer replied:

“He is holdin’ a line directly across the island, sir, to make certain our villains stay on their own end till we get ready to smoke them out. Mr. Stubbs believed that at least two should remain here by the spring, an’ now that you have come I’ll join him, for we propose to advance till all the enemy have been driven to the most southerly end, where we can keep ’em cornered.”

“Your share of the fight is at an end,” Sam cried. “The captain wants to come ashore, and you are to take his place on the wreck.”

Just for an instant the first officer hung in the wind, as if not minded to let another take part in the finish, and I could not blame him, for it was provoking, after Mr. Thompson had borne the brunt of the venture, to step aside for a fresh hand. However, he put the best face possible on the matter, giving his rifle to Uncle Amos as he said:

“I will go directly back, so that he may come up with you here. We got a glimpse of Sampson, an’ it’s not certain we drove him through our line, therefore sharp watch had best be kept.”

“See that two men are set to guard the shore-end of the hawser,” Mr. Osborne cried as the first officer disappeared up the path, and then it was that Uncle Amos took advantage of the opportunity to congrat-

ulate me on what little I had been able to do, saying in conclusion:

" You didn't get around to the point any too soon, lad, an' I'm questionin' if there'll be time to finish the job before this storm breaks, in which case it must be all hands to the rescue, for once the wind is upon us as it's likely to blow, there'll be no comin' across the hawser."

" Will the steamer hold together during another gale, sir? " Sam asked, and my uncle shook his head very decidedly as he replied:

" I misdoubt it, lad, as does Joe Bragg. He had said to me not above five minutes before you hailed, that those who were aboard the wreck two hours from then would be the same as dead, for the hulk has been weakened more than he cared to admit."

He had but just ceased speaking when one of the men came down the path at full speed, shouting while yet some distance away:

" Captain Bragg has sent me to say that all who can must come on the point to help the passengers ashore! The gale is close at hand, an' there's little time for what is needed to be done."

" Did you see the first officer? " Mr. Osborne asked sharply.

" Ay, sir, an' he told me to hurry along; he's hikin' it at full speed for the shore."

" Shall it be you or me, Osborne? " Uncle Amos asked, and one could understand by the tone of his voice that, now he was so near the enemy, it was distasteful to turn back.

" If it is a question of rescuing the passengers,

Captain Grout, and the work is like to need careful handling, then it should be you, who understand such things. I will stay here, or search for Sampson; but it isn't probable we shall be able to do very much if the storm breaks soon."

"You'll follow me, lads," and Uncle Amos started back on the path to prevent us from seeing the look of disappointment on his face, as I believed, and that was no time for us to question a command, however little inclined we were to obey.

The nearer we approached the shore the more apparent were the tokens of the coming storm, and when, finally, we stood where it was possible to see the wreck, it seemed to me that it was already too late to effect a rescue. The waves were rolling in over the reef at such height that the deck of the steamer was often awash, and the eager surges leaped against the coast with a force that flung the spray far inland.

Already had the work of sending the passengers ashore been begun, Mr. Thompson looking after the shore-end of the hawser, while Captain Bragg was stationed on the shattered bow of the *Ocean Queen*. The screens had been washed away, or torn down that the work might not be impeded, and we had a full view of the deck whereon the passengers were gathered, clinging to life-lines which had been stretched, some noisy in their fear that death was coming at the very moment when it seemed certain they had been saved, and others silently despairing.

The fat lady who had a seat at the captain's table, and two other women, were ashore, while Sam's

## 278 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

mother was in the sling, Miss Hubbard standing well in the bow as if awaiting her turn.

There were so many hands at the pulleys that Sam and I could have been of but little assistance there, and I proposed that we stand by to help the women as they landed; therefore it was the lad had an opportunity of greeting his mother while the rescue was still going on.

"Run 'em back in the bushes, where they'll be out of the way, an' sheltered from the wind!" Uncle Amos cried, and this we did, literally obeying the command in the case of the fat lady, who suddenly fell helpless as a baby once her feet touched the land, though goodness knows she used her lungs in fine shape while coming across the hawser.

We dragged the frightened woman into the bushes, and no small task it was, returning in time, as I have said, for Sam to help his mother out of the sling, after which I waited for Miss Hubbard, knowing without being told that Mr. Osborne would have wanted me to do so.

"Were any of you hurt very badly?" the young lady asked while I was walking with her to find the other women, and knowing she was thinking only of Mr. Osborne, I said promptly:

"Indeed he wasn't hurt very much; it was the bandage that made it appear as if he had been shot nearly to pieces. The bullet cut less than half an inch deep, entirely across his cheek, but he will always have something to show that he did more than a man's full duty when the *Ocean Queen* was wrecked."



She squeezed my arm as if pleased because I had praised him, and then we were come to where Sam and his mother were hugging each other as if there was nothing else the lad could do at such a time.

It is not my purpose to set down here the details of the rescue, for that story of itself would fill a book, and before it was come to an end we had good reason to fear lest more than one of our company would be left behind.

I must give credit to the most bitter grumblers for behaving well when some of the men were actually fighting for a place in the sling, believing each time it was sent across that that would be an end of the work, because the surges were running so high and with such fury it seemed positive that portion of the wreck to which the hawser had been made fast must be carried away. Those who had been inclined to mutiny when the mutineers' raft got into position did all they might to aid Captain Bragg, making no move to climb into the basket of ropes until he gave the word, and then they came ashore in silence, although the pallor of their faces told of the fear in their hearts as the boiling, hissing waters engulfed them more than once during the passage.

Sam and I could do no more than lead the women into the bushes as they came ashore, and then we had nothing to do save watch, with our hearts seemingly in our mouths, as man after man was hauled ashore, until Captain Bragg alone remained on the wreck.

“ I will send you somethin' in the way of cargo! ”

## 280 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

he shouted, and it was difficult to make out the words owing to the tumult of the storm.

"You'll come ashore yourself, Joe Bragg, an' this minute, or I'll go aboard!" Uncle Amos cried threateningly. "It is worse than a fool's trick to concern yourself about Spanish gold when there's scant time to save yourself!"

The captain waved his hand as he turned to go aft, and Uncle Amos, discharging his revolver as the speediest means of attracting attention, began to clamber into the sling.

"Go back! Go back, Amos Grout! There won't be time to get both of us and the gold ashore! Keep out of that sling!"

"I pledge my word to go aboard an' prevent you from the same as killin' yourself! The saloon is flooded by this time, an' I can see the hulk give a good foot every time a sea strikes it!"

While uncle was speaking he had one leg in the sling, as if bent on carrying his threat into execution, as I firmly believed he would do. The captain hesitated; looked toward the shore, and aft at the companionway. Then it was that a mountainous sea reared its crest directly over the stern, and but for the fact that Captain Bragg leaped for one of the life-lines, he would have been carried away when it came in over the stern, ripping up the planking of the deck a distance of twenty feet or more. The following flood, while by no means so heavy, had in it sufficient of strength to stave the after deck-house into kindlings, shutting off by the wreckage all entrance to the saloon, thus ensuring the loss of the

gold which was stacked in Mr. Osborne's cabin and mine.

When Uncle Amos saw that the huge wave was likely to break over the stern, he hauled back the sling until it was aboard the wreck, working for very life as he did so, and thus it was that when the mountain of water swept outboard, Captain Bragg had an opportunity — an opportunity so slight that the loss of ten seconds would have been fatal — to scramble into the ropes.

Even though the hawser had been completely under water, he would have come through the surges alive, so swiftly was he dragged by those on shore. Every person tailed on to the rope, running inland at full speed, and at the very second he staggered out from the sling twenty feet or more of the shattered bow was carried away, taking with it, as a matter of course, the hawser.

We had saved none of our belongings, save such as each one had about his or her person; but as to the loss we gave no heed, for every soul had come off from the wreck alive, despite the elements or the enemies ashore and afloat.

The rain had long since begun to fall, the wind whipping it into one's face until the drops stung like needles, but I question whether a single person was aware of the fact until Captain Bragg stood on the shore, and Uncle Amos said to him boisterously:

“ You have need to thank your Maker, Joe Bragg, that there wasn't time for you to get into the saloon, else you'd been there now! ”

## 282 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

"It was my duty to save the treasure, Amos Grout!"

"Duty fiddlesticks! It couldn't have been done, an' if you'd been allowed your head, nothin' save death would have come of it. Don't look so glum, man, you've got more to do than before, for here we are, with the mutineers on the other end of the island waitin' a chance to shoot us down, an' not a blessed thing to eat. Stir yourself, Joe, an' keep a stiff upper lip as you did when we were in a worse plight."

It is a fact that the captain was near to giving up in despair because he had not been able to save for the Spanish government that treasure which should never have been shipped on a merchantman, unless it was put aboard secretly, and the words of Uncle Amos were what he needed to arouse him from a fit of apathy.

Sam and I gave very little heed to what those around us did just then. We had crept amid the outer fringe of foliage, where we would be partially sheltered from the wind which turned into needles the rain-drops and flying spray, there to watch the raft, for as yet it remained at moorings, jumping at the cables with every heave of the sea.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### MR. OSBORNE'S INVITATION

**W**E had not long to wait for the end of the raft. Higher, yet higher in the air rose the logs, until I verily believe they towered above the point on which we crouched, and then, like a missile from a gun, they were hurled onward, directly upon the stern of the wreck the men had counted to rob. There was a tumult of waters, and when the flood was swept backward by the undertow, only a raffle of the steamer's plates remained amid the jagged peaks of the reef.

Search as we might with our eyes, no sign of a human being could be seen, and Sam exclaimed with a sudden indrawing of the breath, as when one is suddenly plunged into cold water:

“They must have been crushed to death, and their bodies held beneath the surface by the iron of the *Ocean Queen's* hull. It was a more merciful death than the mutineers would have dealt out to us!”

“And more cheerful than we may yet be called upon to meet!” I muttered half to myself. “We are ashore, but without provisions or shelter, and there are so many people in our company that such sea food as may be come at will be as nothing.”

The terrible spectacle of death which had just been

## 284 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

presented robbed me of all that sense of exultation which had been mine on having virtually taken possession of the island, and, even though we were escaped as by a miracle, hope had for the moment fled from my breast.

"I wonder which of the mutineers was on board the raft?" Sam questioned as we arose to join the company, who were doubtless crouching amid the foliage where we had led the women to shelter themselves so far as might be from the fury of the tempest, and I replied carelessly:

"One of the leaders was there, of course."

"Then it must have been Files, for we know only too well, with the proof written on Mr. Osborne's face, that Sampson remained ashore."

Just at that moment I had little care as to which of the villains had gone to their punishment; I was so downhearted that it was possible for me only to keep in mind the fact that even yet must we fight for a foothold on the tiny spot of land where a lingering death by starvation menaced.

Understanding somewhat of that which was in my mind, Sam cried cheerily as we forced our way through the thicket:

"You have no right, Young Amos, to despair after all the mercies that have been shown us! It is better to be thankful that Mr. Osborne succeeded in convincing Captain Bragg his plan might succeed, for if he had not done so in time, we would be dead, or dying, amid the shattered frame of the *Ocean Queen*!"

"You are right, Sam Currier! I am worse than a

fool to search for trouble in the future when we have come out from the shadow of death so wonderfully; but there is yet a battle to be fought before we can even starve in peace."

I said this as if I had regained my courage, and yet I was far from being brave at the moment. I now believe that the cowardice was born of idleness. If we had been called on to face some real danger, to accomplish that which seemed well-nigh impossible, I would, as I had in the past, have forgotten the possible dangers in the effort to overcome that by which I was confronted at the instant.

We went back to where the company were huddled together as if for mutual protection against the raging elements, for the wind and the stinging rain found their way even amid the tangled foliage, and as we came up Miss Hubbard asked concerning the raft, for it seems that she understood why we had lingered behind the others.

Sam had not yet come to an end of the short story before we heard Uncle Amos's voice calling me, and I obeyed the summons, Sam Currier following close at my heels.

"We are goin' to make a try at drivin' the mutineers into the sea," my uncle said as we lads stood by his side, and I cried in surprise:

"What can be done in the way of opposing them while this gale rages? It is as much as we can do to stand before it in the open, without measuring strength against those who will now fight most desperately, knowing that defeat means a shameful death."

## 286 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

"The gale won't be any harder on us than it is on them, an' we all — meanin' Joe Bragg, Mr. Osborne, an' the mates — believe that we should fall upon them when they're least expectin' an attack; but if it so be you'd rather stay behind, do so, for no man can call either of you lads a coward after what you've done since last the sun went down."

"We don't want to be left behind!" Sam cried eagerly. "Young Amos wasn't thinking of that when he spoke; but only had in mind the difficulty of moving about while the wind is sweeping across the island with such force."

"It has been decided that we'll settle matters with the mutineers at once, before makin' any attempt at shelterin' the women an' such of the men as are too cowardly to help themselves, an' the others have already begun the job," Uncle Amos replied as he started down the path, and it can well be understood that Sam and I followed without hesitation, for surely anything was better than huddling together like chickens, trembling at every fresh gust of wind, as the remainder of our company were doing.

We had only to make our way to the spring in order to find Mr. Osborne and three of the sailors who had come ashore before the passengers were taken from the wreck, and it could be seen that the gallant gentleman was eager to get about the task which bid fair to result in the death of some of our party, as soon as possible.

"Thompson and two others have gone down to the right of the line," he said hurriedly to Uncle Amos as we came up. "Captain Bragg went ahead



as soon as he landed from the wreck, and sent back word a few minutes ago that we were to come straight down the path, for both shores are well guarded. There is no longer any question but that Sampson has been driven south with the others of his gang, and it is only a question of holding our line stiffly, when we shall have them penned in beyond reach of fresh water. Then we'll give them a taste of what they dished up for us."

We were standing in the cleared space near where the tents had been set up, and here the wind had such a sweep that we were drenched in a twinkling, being as wet as if having fallen into the sea.

The fact that we were about to measure strength finally with the mutineers was sufficient to keep our blood warm, and that which under more pleasant circumstances would have been most disagreeable was now unheeded.

We began the advance, walking in a line stretching across the path east and west, at a distance of four or five paces apart. Mr. Osborne, with Uncle Amos by his side, led the way, moving at a slow pace that we might have ample time to scan every bush or tangle of vines as we passed, and thus we knew beyond reasonable doubt that we had left none of the enemy behind us.

Not until having come to a small spring within an hundred yards of the extreme southerly point of the island, did we see those who had been driving the enemy, and then it was Captain Bragg whom we met. He was standing on the alert, gazing intently into the thicket in his front, as if believing some of

the mutineers were hidden there, and did not even turn his head when we stood close beside him.

"I reckon we are snug upon 'em," he said as if Mr. Osborne had asked the question. "It is certain they can't be far away, for Mr. Jenkins tells me that, as nearly as he can remember of his hurried survey of the island, this is the last cover they will find. Put your men in line with ours, an' see to it that they are standin' so near together the mutineers cannot slip through. Thompson is lookin' after the western end, an' Jenkins the east, while I hold the centre. You had better keep movin' from one shore to the other to make sure our people are doin' full duty. If any inclination to favour the villains be shown, shoot the traitor without warnin'; this is not the time for mercy."

"Where is my station?" Uncle Amos asked when Mr. Osborne started off quickly in obedience to the command.

"Near me, for I'm allowin' that the hottest part of the work will be done hereabouts."

Thus it chanced that Uncle Amos stood at the left of Captain Bragg, three or four paces distant, and we two lads were next beside him, with the not overly pleasing assurance that we were honoured by having been given the post of danger.

"Pass the word along the line that all hands are to advance one pace, count ten, an' then take another step, keepin' up the march till we strike the scoundrels," Captain Bragg shouted, and when the order had been repeated on either side, we began the forward movement, keeping, as can well be fancied, a

sharp lookout meanwhile, for a fellow's life depended upon his eyes.

We had crashed through the thicket five paces when, from directly in front of where I stood, came a cry:

"Ahoy! Ahoy there! Hold up a bit!"

"We haven't come for tongue-wagging," Captain Bragg replied sharply. "If so be any of you have got a bellyful of this business, let him come out with his hands above his head, an' we'll see what can be done for him."

"Don't run away with the idea that you've got us so foul we can't strike a blow," the voice continued, and I fancied I recognized it as that of Mr. Files. "There's a chance we're willin' to make a trade; but if you ain't inclined, we'll show what can be done in the shootin' line."

"Why don't you set about it, instead of makin' so much talk?" the captain replied jeeringly. "We're ready to take as much of a dose as you can give; but after all has been said an' done, there won't be any of you scoundrels alive! We've got the same kind of weapons you have, an' all the ammunition, to say nothin' of the fact that we're between you an' fresh water, so I'm allowin' we hold the whip-hand at last."

"Me had 'nough of this, me surrender, me no want be killed here like snake," a second voice cried, and then came a movement among the foliage which was not caused by the wind, telling that one of the party was ready to surrender. "Don't shoot, captain amigo, I'm comin' out. No got carbino."

## 290 The Wreck of the "Ocean Queen"

"Get back there, you dog, or I'll put a bullet through your yaller hide!" Files shouted, and an instant later the report of a rifle rang out sharp and ominous above the roaring of the tempest, while from the thicket came the body of Tony the Filipino as if he had been hurled by his comrades.

Files had fired with deadly aim, and the fellow who would have surrendered without trying to make terms lay in full view of us, his face upturned to the rain, with the faintest smudge of crimson on the yellow skin near the left eye.

"That's the way I'll serve every coward who tries to go back on them he's sworn to stand by to the end!" Files shouted warningly, and the captain added:

"Then it's certain death for every one of you reprobates who would have doomed women to death in order that you might plunder a wreck! We'll kill like dogs all who resist!"

"Here's a man who has come over empty-handed; what shall be done with him?" Mr. Osborne shouted from a distance on our left, and the captain replied:

"Hand him over to any one of our party who can be trusted, with orders that he be shot at the first attempt to give us the slip."

Then came from different points of the line similar information, until, as I counted, not less than six of the mutineers had surrendered unconditionally, and the shouts of Files could be heard here and there as he ran to and fro, threatening to kill all who made any effort to desert him.

"If matters keep on at this rate there can't be such a very hot battle," Sam said to me as we remained motionless until the prisoners could be secured in one place, and at almost the same moment I heard Uncle Amos say to the captain:

"We're weakenin' our line by havin' to care for so many of the scoundrels. Why wouldn't it be a good idea to send the whole boilin' back to where those gentlemen who are hidin' under the women's petticoats can watch 'em."

"It's a good plan, Amos. Look after the matter, will you?" Then Captain Bragg shouted to the left and right of him. "Bring those who have surrendered up here, an' while that is bein' done let all hands stand in line, with a sharp lookout lest some of the others try to break through, for this job must be finished 'twixt now an' night."

"What trade will you make if I — Enoch Files — surrender?" the former third officer of the *Ocean Queen* cried from his hiding-place in the thicket, and our captain replied passionately:

"I had rather you stayed where you are, so that I may have the pleasure of shootin' you down, you reproach to all sailormen! If you surrender, however, I shall be forced to spare your life, much as it goes against the grain, for I'm holdin' you an' that reprobate Sampson responsible for all the trouble."

There was no reply to these words, and an instant later Uncle Amos called out for Sam and me to come up to him.

When we had obeyed the command we saw seven of the mutineers standing in a group, sullen but

frightened, with two of our sailors keeping guard over them, and my uncle said hurriedly:

"You lads must take these scoundrels to where our idle gentlemen can look after them. Leave your rifles with those who are willin' to undertake the job, an' by the time you get back here we'll have other weapons for you."

There was no task more disagreeable which could have been set me; had I been alone with my uncle I would have protested against the injustice of sending as guard over the villains two who had done their full share in all that had been accomplished since the day previous, but now I realized that I had no good right to refuse, and took up the duty by asking:

"Who among those with the women shall we trust the prisoners with, sir?"

"I'm thinkin' the two who sat opposite us at table will do the trick to a turn, so give it as the captain's orders that they undertake the job, an' then, if you're still minded to have a hand in the windin' up of this 'ere mutiny, come back along the path till you are at the spring, when it may be a good idee to give warnin' you're near at hand, for by advancin' carelessly there's a good chance of gettin' a bullet instead of thanks."

The prisoners were disposed to obey like children; they had come to understand that there was no longer any possibility they could get the best of us, and must also have realized that it was too late to think about the treasure. The only chance now to save their lives was to make as little trouble for us as possible.

When Uncle Amos had turned away to rejoin Captain Bragg, leaving Sam and me in charge of the men, I said in as fierce a tone as could be assumed:

“ You know what will be the result if you turn rusty. We shall open fire on you at the first show of trouble, therefore it will be safer to keep your backs well toward us. March in close order, remembering that if the foremost attempt to make off through the thicket, we will shoot those nearest in order to lessen the number who might make trouble.”

“ We've had enough an' to spare of mutineerin',” one of the fellows — a second-class passenger — said emphatically. “ Don't think that because we were fools awhile ago, we're minded to keep it up. The cap'in has got the biggest end of this 'ere business now, an' you've only to say what must be done in order to have us dance to your pipin'.”

“ March straight ahead; you know the way to the point where the hawser was made fast, and move in close order. We're not likely to be thrown off our guard by soft words, and shall shoot at the first wrong step. Now go!”

Then the march began, Sam and I side by side with our eyes fixed on the prisoners, and there was no halt made until we were come to our destination, having had no trouble with those who so foolishly and wickedly had made of their lives worse than a ruin.

When I delivered the message sent by Uncle Amos, the gentlemen took the rifles which Sam and I handed over to them, and as we two lads hurried away without stopping to answer any of the many

questions which were showered upon us, it was possible to see that the mutineers would be well guarded.

Now that the disagreeable duty had been performed, we lads lost no time in returning. Before we were well away from the shivering, frightened, yet thankful company in the thicket, I fancied it was possible to hear the reports of firearms in the distance; but the wind was blowing toward that quarter with such fury that the heaviest cannonading might have passed unheeded.

There was no need to give warning of our approach when we neared the most southerly spring, for, much to our surprise, we found Mr. Osborne and half a dozen men huddled under the bushes as if there was no longer any necessity for them to remain on the alert.

"What has happened? Have you been wounded again?" I cried anxiously, and the gentleman to whom we were all indebted for our lives replied cheerily:

"I have come off without any more scratches, and I really think it high time some others of the party take a hand at stopping bullets. We have finished this job in fine style, and if any are left to do us mischief, Sampson is that person, for all the others have surrendered, or been put out of the way."

"All over!" I cried in astonishment. "Didn't they show fight after the loud talk made by Files?"

"Ay, that they did, lad, and we had it hot for five minutes or more, although very little blood was spilled, for in this gale it isn't possible to shoot with very good aim. We rushed that precious Files within



five minutes after you left, and he got two bullets in his body before giving us the slip. Then we were delayed by the surrender of four men, and from them learned that the supply of ammunition was about exhausted. We went after Files again, but got out of the thicket only in time to see him take a header off the little bluff on the southern point."

"A header? What do you mean?" I asked in bewilderment.

"He had played the game to the limit, and knowing there was no longer any possibility of making fight, because all his cartridges had been spent, he very wisely put an end to himself by jumping from the point into the surf, where no man could have kept himself above the surface ten seconds. The only one of the mutineers unaccounted for is Sampson, and all hands, save those who are here, have gone out searching for him. I stayed behind because that blessed bandage, which I can't keep in place, needs my attention."

I was yet trying to realize all that had occurred during the short time which elapsed while Sam and I were taking the prisoners up to the northerly point of the island, when Uncle Amos and Captain Bragg came out from amid the underbrush.

"Have you finished your work?" Mr. Osborne cried, and the captain replied:

"Ay, an' in a fashion that cost us little trouble, save of walkin' through the tangle. Mr. Thompson came upon his body on the rocks near the western shore. He had been badly wounded, an' must have died while tryin' to get at the water. There is nothin'

left for us now, except to do what may be in the way of makin' the people more comfortable, though I'm thinkin' we'll show a poor fist at that job with no materials for a tent."

Well, there is no good reason why I should use very many more words in the telling of this adventure, for with the overcoming of the mutineers the end was very near at hand.

That night we — meaning all the company — remained in close companionship, like chickens during a shower, and such a shelter as it was possible for the men to put up only served to show what might have been done with tools to make Robinson-Crusoe huts. We had nothing to eat, and until the gale abated so that we might search for shell-fish on the shore, there was no chance we could satisfy our hunger; but the fact that there was water in plenty went very far toward comforting us.

About midnight the wind began to subside, and when day broke there was not a cloud in the sky. Then we roamed about at will, for there was no longer anything on the island to be feared, and ate whatsoever we came upon in the thicket that promised to still the gnawing in our stomachs, speedily forgetting all the mercies which had been granted us as we looked forward into the future to that time, seemingly so very near at hand, when the direst pangs of hunger would be felt.

Now it was that Uncle Amos seemed to lose heart, and when I reproached him with having broken down just as the most imminent of the dangers had been met and overcome, he replied mournfully:

"I'll keep my upper lip stiff, lad, ready to take whatsoever may come so long as I'm afloat; but give me hard lines ashore, an' I'm a good deal like a lobster, makin' a heap of fuss with my flippers, but clean out of soundin's."

As a matter of course the *Ocean Queen* had vanished, torn to pieces by the waves, save as to a small part of the bottom which could be seen among the rocks when the tide went down.

I do not like to think of that day, nor of the night which followed, when Sam and I laid down by the side of his mother, striving to close our eyes in slumber, but finding it impossible because of the hunger which assailed us. Miss Hubbard and Mr. Osborne were together a goodly portion of the time; but whenever they came upon one of the company who was on the verge of despair, the two seemed to forget their own troubles in the effort to soothe others. And as Mr. Osborne strove to encourage and cheer on the night when the *Ocean Queen* piled herself upon the reef, so he did when we were suffering keenly for food, showing himself not only the kindly gentleman, but the bravest, most unselfish man it was ever my good fortune to meet.

During the day after the storm the men were busy heaping up piles of bushes, decaying branches, or anything that was inflammable, on the highest portions of the island, that we might be able to make signals if any craft hove in sight; but never dreaming that both from Hong Kong and Manila steamers had been sent out in search of us.

It was on the second morning after the tempest

that those of us who were vainly trying to close our eyes in slumber, thus struggling because it was better than roaming around looking for food where was no longer any to be found, were startled into a fever by hearing Captain Bragg shout from near one of the stacks of fuel:

"Lend a hand lively, my hearties! Fire all these piles as quickly as it may be done, for yonder comes a steam craft, headin' straight for us!"

I won't make any attempt at describing the scene when all of us, women as well as men, ran at full speed to where the captain was standing, and from there had in full view a steamer much like the *Ocean Queen*, heading as if to make port at the island. The reason why I do not dare to picture the scene is because I acted as insanely as the others, and can remember but little of what occurred.

The beacons were set on fire by discharging at close range all the chambers of a revolver into a heap of dry leaves, and in a very few moments smoke was mounting to the sky from four different points.

"They can't fail of seein' us!" Uncle Amos shouted, and he had no more than spoken when the steamer had colours flying fore and aft, in token that we were to be rescued without loss of time.

It was hardly more than two hours after that before all hands of us were seated at the tables in the main saloon, eating ravenously of the abundant supply set before us. Oh, how good a slice of bacon tasted! It seemed as if the coffee had a fragrance such as I had never smelled before, and a slice of roast

beef looked so beautiful that it seemed almost a shame to eat it!

Then it was learned that we were on one of the steamers of the same line to which the *Ocean Queen* had belonged; she had left port two days after we should have arrived at Manila, with no other purpose than to search for us.

And it was right there at the breakfast-table, after one and another of the gentlemen had made a little speech expressive of gratitude to Captain Bragg and the captain of the steamer on which we then were, that Mr. Jenkins proposed three cheers for the man to whom, next to the commander of the *Ocean Queen*, we were most indebted, and how we did yell in honour of Mr. Osborne!

But for a clean bandage which he had contrived to get from the first officer of the rescuing steamer, we might have seen how red his face was as he rose to make reply, and then, instead of talking glibly, as he had done when words of cheer were sadly needed, he hesitated and stammered like one tongue-tied, until he finally contrived to blurt out in the most awkward fashion, that he would thank us for the honour by inviting all hands from the *Ocean Queen* to a wedding as soon as we arrived in Manila.

If we had been at a loss for his meaning, even the dullest among us might have understood after one glance at Miss Hubbard's face, for it was as red as any rose I ever saw, and she seemed trying to hide it in her coffee-cup.

THE END.



# BOOKS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

---

## THE LITTLE COLONEL BOOKS

(Trade Mark)

By *ANNIE FELLOWS JOHNSTON*

Each 1 vol., large 12mo, cloth decorative, per vol. \$1.50

### **The Little Colonel Stories.**

(Trade Mark)

Illustrated.

Being three "Little Colonel" stories in the Cosy Corner Series, "The Little Colonel," "Two Little Knights of Kentucky," and "The Giant Scissors," put into a single volume.

### **The Little Colonel's House Party.**

(Trade Mark)

Illustrated by Louis Meynell.

### **The Little Colonel's Holidays.**

(Trade Mark)

Illustrated by L. J. Bridgman.

### **The Little Colonel's Hero.**

(Trade Mark)

Illustrated by E. B. Barry.

### **The Little Colonel at Boarding**

(Trade Mark)

#### **School.**

Illustrated by E. B. Barry.

### **The Little Colonel in Arizona.**

(Trade Mark)

Illustrated by E. B. Barry.

### **The Little Colonel's Christmas Va-**

(Trade Mark)

#### **cation.**

Illustrated by E. B. Barry.

### **The Little Colonel, Maid of Honour.**

(Trade Mark)

Illustrated by E. B. Barry.

## The Little Colonel.

(Trade Mark)

## Two Little Knights of Kentucky.

## The Giant Scissors.

## Big Brother.

Special Holiday Editions

Each one volume, cloth decorative, small quarto, \$1.25.

New plates, handsomely illustrated, with eight full-page drawings in color.

"The books are as satisfactory to the small girls, who find them adorable, as for the mothers and librarians, who delight in their influence." — *Christian Register*.

These four volumes, boxed as a four-volume set . \$5.00

## In the Desert of Waiting: THE LEGEND OF CAMELBACK MOUNTAIN.

## The Three Weavers: A FAIRY TALE FOR FATHERS AND MOTHERS AS WELL AS FOR THEIR DAUGHTERS.

## Keeping Tryst.

## The Legend of the Bleeding Heart.

Each one volume, tall 16mo, cloth decorative . \$0.50

Paper boards . . . . . .35

There has been a constant demand for publication in separate form of these four stories, which were originally included in four of the "Little Colonel" books.

## Joel: A Boy of Galilee. By ANNIE FELLOWS JOHNSTON. Illustrated by L. J. Bridgman.

New illustrated edition, uniform with the Little Colonel Books, 1 vol., large 12mo, cloth decorative . \$1.50

A story of the time of Christ, which is one of the author's best-known books.



**Asa Holmes; OR, AT THE CROSS-ROADS.** A sketch of Country Life and Country Humor. By ANNIE FELLOWS JOHNSTON. With a frontispiece by Ernest Fosbery.

Large 16mo, cloth, gilt top . . . . \$1.00

“‘Asa Holmes; or, At the Cross-Roads’ is the most delightful, most sympathetic and wholesome book that has been published in a long while.” — *Boston Times*.

**The Rival Campers; OR, THE ADVENTURES OF HENRY BURNS.** By RUEL PERLEY SMITH.

Square 12mo, cloth decorative, illustrated . . . \$1.50

Here is a book which will grip and enthuse every boy reader. It is the story of a party of typical American lads, courageous, alert, and athletic, who spend a summer camping on an island off the Maine coast.

“The best boys’ book since ‘Tom Sawyer.’” — *San Francisco Examiner*.

**The Rival Campers Afloat; OR, THE PRIZE YACHT VIKING.** By RUEL PERLEY SMITH.

Square 12mo, cloth decorative, illustrated . . . \$1.50

This book is a continuation of the adventures of “The Rival Campers” on their prize yacht *Viking*. An accidental collision results in a series of exciting adventures, culminating in a mysterious chase, the loss of their prize yacht, and its recapture by means of their old yacht, *Surprise*.

**The Rival Campers Ashore.** By RUEL

PERLEY SMITH, author of “The Rival Campers,” “The Rival Campers Afloat,” etc.

Square 12mo, cloth decorative, illustrated . . . \$1.50

“The Rival Campers Ashore” deals with the adventures of the campers and their friends in and around the town of Benton. Mr. Smith introduces a new character, — a girl, — who shows them the way to an old mill, around which the mystery of the story revolves. The girl is an admirable acquisition, proving as daring and resourceful as the campers themselves.

**The Young Section-Hand;** OR, THE ADVENTURES OF ALLAN WEST. By BURTON E. STEVENSON, author of "The Marathon Mystery," etc.  
Square 12mo, cloth decorative, illustrated by L. J. Bridgman . . . . . \$1.50

Mr. Stevenson's hero is a manly lad of sixteen, who is given a chance as a section-hand on a big Western railroad, and whose experiences are as real as they are thrilling.

**The Young Train Dispatcher.** By BURTON E. STEVENSON, author of "The Young Section-hand," etc.  
Square 12mo, cloth decorative, illustrated . . . . . \$1.50

The young hero has many chances to prove his manliness and courage in the exciting adventures which befall him in the discharge of his duty.

**Captain Jack Lorimer.** By WINN STANDISH.  
Square 12mo, cloth decorative, illustrated by A. B. Shute . . . . . \$1.50

Jack is a fine example of the all-around American high-school boy. He has the sturdy qualities boys admire, and his fondness for clean, honest sport of all kinds will strike a chord of sympathy among athletic youths.

**Jack Lorimer's Champions;** or, Sports on Land and Lake. By WINN STANDISH, author of "Captain Jack Lorimer," etc.  
Square 12mo, cloth decorative, illustrated . . . . . \$1.50

All boys and girls who take an interest in school athletics will wish to read of the exploits of the Millvale High School students, under the leadership of Captain Jack Lorimer.

Captain Jack's Champions play quite as good ball as do some of the teams on the large leagues, and they put all opponents to good hard work in other summer sports.

Jack Lorimer and his friends stand out as the finest examples of all-round American high school boys and girls.

**Beautiful Joe's Paradise ; OR, THE ISLAND OF BROTHERLY LOVE.** A sequel to "Beautiful Joe."  
By MARSHALL SAUNDERS, author of "Beautiful Joe."

One vol., library 12mo, cloth, illustrated . . . \$1.50

"This book revives the spirit of 'Beautiful Joe' capitally. It is fairly riotous with fun, and as a whole is about as unusual as anything in the animal book line that has seen the light. It is a book for juveniles — old and young."— *Philadelphia Item*.

**'Tilda Jane.** By MARSHALL SAUNDERS.

One vol., 12mo, fully illustrated, cloth decorative, \$1.50

"It is one of those exquisitely simple and truthful books that win and charm the reader, and I did not put it down until I had finished it — honest! And I am sure that every one, young or old, who reads will be proud and happy to make the acquaintance of the delicious waif.

"I cannot think of any better book for children than this. I commend it unreservedly." — *Cyrus Townsend Brady*.

**The Story of the Graveleys.** By MARSHALL SAUNDERS, author of "Beautiful Joe's Paradise," "'Tilda Jane," etc.

Library 12mo, cloth decorative, illustrated by E. B. Barry . . . . . \$1.50

Here we have the haps and mishaps, the trials and triumphs, of a delightful New England family, of whose devotion and sturdiness it will do the reader good to hear.

**Born to the Blue.** By FLORENCE KIMBALL RUSSEL.

12mo, cloth decorative, illustrated . . . . . \$1.25

The atmosphere of army life on the plains breathes on every page of this delightful tale. The boy is the son of a captain of U. S. cavalry stationed at a frontier post in the days when our regulars earned the gratitude of a nation.

**In West Point Gray.** By FLORENCE KIMBALL RUSSEL.

12mo, cloth decorative, illustrated . . . \$1.25

West Point forms the background for the second volume in this series, and gives us the adventures of Jack as a cadet. Here the training of his childhood days in the frontier army post stands him in good stead; and he quickly becomes the central figure of the West Point life.

**The Sandman; His Farm Stories.**

By WILLIAM J. HOPKINS. With fifty illustrations by Ada Clendenin Williamson.

Large 12mo, decorative cover . . . \$1.50

"An amusing, original book, written for the benefit of very small children. It should be one of the most popular of the year's books for reading to small children."—*Buffalo Express*.

**The Sandman: More Farm Stories.**

By WILLIAM J. HOPKINS.

Large 12mo, decorative cover, fully illustrated \$1.50

Mr. Hopkins's first essay at bedtime stories met with such approval that this second book of "Sandman" tales was issued for scores of eager children. Life on the farm, and out-of-doors, is portrayed in his inimitable manner.

**The Sandman: His Ship Stories.**

By WILLIAM J. HOPKINS, author of "The Sandman: His Farm Stories," etc.

Large 12mo, decorative cover, fully illustrated \$1.50

"Mothers and fathers and kind elder sisters who put the little ones to bed, and rack their brains for stories, will find this book a treasure."—*Cleveland Leader*.

"Children call for these stories over and over again."—*Chicago Evening Post*.

**Pussy-Cat Town.** By MARION AMES TAGGART.

Small quarto, cloth decorative, illustrated and decorated in colors . . . . . \$1.00

"Pussy-Cat Town" is a most unusual delightful cat story. Ban-Ban, a pure Maltese who belonged to Rob, Kiku-san, Lois's beautiful snow-white pet, and their neighbors Bedelia the tortoise-shell, Madame Laura the widow, Wutz Butz the warrior, and wise old Tommy Traddles, were really and truly cats.

**The Roses of Saint Elizabeth.** By JANE SCOTT WOODRUFF, author of "The Little Christmas Shoe."

Small quarto, cloth decorative, illustrated and decorated in colors by Adelaide Everhart . . . \$1.00

This is a charming little story of a child whose father was caretaker of the great castle of the Wartburg, where Saint Elizabeth once had her home.

**Gabriel and the Hour Book.** By EVALEEN STEIN.

Small quarto, cloth decorative, illustrated and decorated in colors by Adelaide Everhart . . . \$1.00

Gabriel was a loving, patient, little French lad, who assisted the monks in the long ago days, when all the books were written and illuminated by hand, in the monasteries.

**The Enchanted Automobile.** Translated from the French by MARY J. SAFFORD.

Small quarto, cloth decorative, illustrated and decorated in colors by Edna M. Sawyer . . . \$1.00

The enchanted automobile was sent by the fairy godmother of a lazy, discontented little prince and princess to take them to fairyland, where they might visit their story-book favorites.

**The Red Feathers.** By THEODORE ROBERTS,  
author of "Brothers of Peril," etc.

Cloth decorative, illustrated . . . . \$1.50

"The Red Feathers" tells of the remarkable adventures of an Indian boy who lived in the Stone Age, many years ago, when the world was young, and when fairies and magicians did wonderful things for their friends and enemies.

**The Wreck of the Ocean Queen.** By  
James Otis, author of "Larry Hudson's Ambition,"  
etc.

Cloth decorative, illustrated . . . . \$1.50

This story takes its readers on a sea voyage around the world; gives them a trip on a treasure ship; an exciting experience in a terrific gale; and finally a shipwreck, with a mutineering crew determined to take the treasure to complicate matters.

But only the mutineers will come to serious harm, and after the reader has known the thrilling excitement of lack of food and water, of attacks by night and day, and of a hand-to-hand fight, he is rescued and brought safely home again, — to realize that it's only a story, but a stirring and realistic one.

**Little White Indians.** By FANNIE E.  
OSTRANDER.

Cloth decorative, illustrated . . . . \$1.25

The "Little White Indians" were two families of children who "played Indian" all one long summer vacation. They built wigwams and made camps; they went hunting and fought fierce battles on the war-trail.

A bright, interesting story which will appeal strongly to the "make-believe" instinct in children, and will give them a healthy, active interest in "the simple life."

## PHYLLIS' FIELD FRIENDS SERIES

By *LENORE E. MULETS*

Six vols., cloth decorative, illustrated by Sophie Schneider. Sold separately, or as a set.

Per volume . . . . .	\$1.00
Per set . . . . .	6.00

**Insect Stories.**

**Stories of Little Animals.**

**Flower Stories.**

**Bird Stories.**

**Tree Stories.**

**Stories of Little Fishes.**

In this series of six little Nature books, it is the author's intention so to present to the child reader the facts about each particular flower, insect, bird, or animal, in story form, as to make delightful reading. Classical legends, myths, poems, and songs are so introduced as to correlate fully with these lessons, to which the excellent illustrations are no little help.

## THE WOODRANGER TALES

By *G. WALDO BROWNE*

**The Woodranger.**

**The Young Gunbearer.**

**The Hero of the Hills.**

**With Rogers' Rangers.**

Each 1 vol., large 12mo, cloth, decorative cover, illustrated, per volume . . . . . \$1.25

Four vols., boxed, per set . . . . . 5.00

"The Woodranger Tales," like the "Pathfinder Tales" of J. Fenimore Cooper, combine historical information relating to early pioneer days in America with interesting adventures in the backwoods. Although the same characters are continued throughout the series, each book is complete in itself, and, while based strictly on historical facts, is an interesting and exciting tale of adventure.

# THE LITTLE COUSIN SERIES

The most delightful and interesting accounts possible of child life in other lands, filled with quaint sayings, doings, and adventures.

Each one vol., 12mo, decorative cover, cloth, with six or more full-page illustrations in color.

Price per volume . . . . . \$0.60

*By MARY HAZELTON WADE (unless otherwise indicated)*

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Our Little African Cousin</b>                               | <b>Our Little Irish Cousin</b>                                |
| <b>Our Little Alaskan Cousin</b><br>By Mary F. Nixon - Roulet  | <b>Our Little Italian Cousin</b>                              |
| <b>Our Little Arabian Cousin</b><br>By Blanche McManus         | <b>Our Little Japanese Cousin</b>                             |
| <b>Our Little Armenian Cousin</b>                              | <b>Our Little Jewish Cousin</b>                               |
| <b>Our Little Brown Cousin</b>                                 | <b>Our Little Korean Cousin</b><br>By H. Lee M. Pike          |
| <b>Our Little Canadian Cousin</b><br>By Elizabeth R. Macdonald | <b>Our Little Mexican Cousin</b><br>By Edward C. Butler       |
| <b>Our Little Chinese Cousin</b><br>By Isaac Taylor Headland   | <b>Our Little Norwegian Cousin</b>                            |
| <b>Our Little Cuban Cousin</b>                                 | <b>Our Little Panama Cousin</b><br>By H. Lee M. Pike          |
| <b>Our Little Dutch Cousin</b><br>By Blanche McManus           | <b>Our Little Philippine Cousin</b>                           |
| <b>Our Little English Cousin</b><br>By Blanche McManus         | <b>Our Little Porto Rican Cousin</b>                          |
| <b>Our Little Eskimo Cousin</b>                                | <b>Our Little Russian Cousin</b>                              |
| <b>Our Little French Cousin</b><br>By Blanche McManus          | <b>Our Little Scotch Cousin</b><br>By Blanche McManus         |
| <b>Our Little German Cousin</b>                                | <b>Our Little Siamese Cousin</b>                              |
| <b>Our Little Hawaiian Cousin</b>                              | <b>Our Little Spanish Cousin</b><br>By Mary F. Nixon - Roulet |
| <b>Our Little Hindu Cousin</b><br>By Blanche McManus           | <b>Our Little Swedish Cousin</b><br>By Claire M. Coburn       |
| <b>Our Little Indian Cousin</b>                                | <b>Our Little Swiss Cousin</b>                                |
|  | <b>Our Little Turkish Cousin</b>                              |

C-10

12 3699









**LIBRARY OF CONGRESS**



00024781884

